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Jordan – Experiencing the Middle East from the Perspective of an Exchange Student

My arrival in Jordan was quite chaotic: The airline lost my luggage and had no clue where it was until it appeared in London after five days. After calling the airport staff many times I finally received it a week later – quite an experience with the bureaucracy in this country. It could only get better.

Welcome to Jordan

Thanks to the other exchange students in my apartment building I had everything I needed for the first days. In general, I felt very welcome from the very beginning. After a week the semester at GJU began and although not all the courses I picked were satisfying I enjoyed every single day there. I found many Jordanian friends – beginning with Yasmin, my study buddy. Despite our different cultural backgrounds, I could identify with many Jordanians of my generation. I had learned Arabic from the beginning of my studies and had an interest in this region in general and I always wanted to visit an Arab country.

In love with the City

The cooperation between my university in Regensburg and GJU is quite strong and many German students that had been to Jordan told me of their experiences, and so I decided to spend my fifth semester here. Every day since I arrived I wished the semester would be longer. Even though some things in Amman, like traffic or garbage problems, non-existing bus schedules or the cold in our flat during winter time, I fell in love with the city. Its hidden cafés, the view from the citadel, crowded downtown, Friday's silence and especially the friends I got to know here have made this semester unforgettable. With time we discovered the country step by step, visiting different places each weekend. The first trip almost immediately after arriving was to Wadi Rum, which was breathtaking. Barbecuing on the rooftop or simple get-togethers with friends were always a pleasure and visits to families of friends and even once attending the Friday prayer allowed me a deeper insight into the local customs.



Christmas in Jordan

Celebrating Christmas in this country was also a different experience. It is nice to see how different religions live here side by side. My personal highlight during Advent was a choir and orchestra concert of a friend in a church nearby. A good impression of how young Jordanians think about their country I gained from a course I took at GJU. Changing the attitude from passive to active and moving them to be the generation that makes the difference in the Arabic world was the topic of the lecture. I enjoyed it so much that I think about writing my Bachelor's thesis about a related field.

I am thankful that I had the opportunity to spend five months here. The experience is now part of me and will probably shape me even long after my return.