

# **Semester abroad at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel**

In the winter semester of 2021/22, I had the opportunity to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for one semester as part of my psychology studies at the University of Innsbruck. I had actually planned this one semester earlier but had to postpone my plans in reason of covid. Overall, I can look back on a very intensive, but also wonderful time, in which I made many international friends and was able to learn a lot about the country.

## **Planning**

My planning phase was influenced by the Corona pandemic. In reason of getting no visa in the summer semester due to the pandemic, my stay was postponed by one semester in consultation with my university in Innsbruck and in Israel. Everyone involved was very understanding.

Overall, the planning phase for the semester abroad turned out to be rather time-consuming. One of the biggest challenges was the creation of the learning agreement, which regulates the crediting of the courses. The Hebrew University offers unfortunately only a few psychology courses in English, so this process took a bit longer. Applying for the visa, on the other hand, was very straightforward and was delivered to me barely two weeks after I applied for it. It should be noted that health insurance is already required for the visa. I decided against the health insurance that was offered directly through the Hebrew University (Clalit), because it was relatively expensive in comparison and took a German insurance (Hanse Merkur).

An important topic is also the search for housing. In principle, it can be said that housing and also living in Israel is rather expensive. However, Jerusalem is much cheaper than Tel Aviv, but even here you have to calculate with 600 Euro to 800 Euro. Searching for housing in Israel is very difficult, especially while I am still in Europe, so I decided for the easier option and applied for the student dormitory.

## **Arrival**

Arrived at the airport, after a Corona test and a cab ride to Jerusalem, a quarantine awaited me. Arriving at the so called "Student Village" I was first a bit impressed. The dormitory is located a bit above the city on Mount Scopus, which offers a fantastic view of the old city. The quarantine apartment was much larger than I would have thought, so it had a spacious kitchen, several bathrooms, and an extra sink. The apartments are designed for a maximum of 5 people, but in my case we were only three. The condition of the apartment was okay, although not as clean as I am usually used to from Germany and the organization is often chaotic. After a week I was able to free myself from the quarantine.



## **Study**

About 10 minutes from the dormitory is the Hebrew University, where all my classes took place. After a security check, you enter a beautiful and leafy campus. Especially since I had just finished two years of online university, going back to the university was a special highlight for me. As an exchange student, you are usually at the Rothberg International School (RIS) most of the time, which offers a variety of English-language courses, which is a bit physically separated from the Hebrew students. However, since Rothberg International School did not offer any courses in my subject, this fortunately did not apply to me.

Overall, I was able to take very exciting courses. There were a few changes on site, for example, one course was already full, but my schedule was still filled. Since the psychology program in Innsbruck includes 10 ECTS for interdisciplinary competencies, I also had the opportunity to attend courses on other topics. I found it very enriching to get an insight into other fields of study.

## **My Courses:**

The Nature and Nature of Social Behavior

Neuroendocrine Basis of Social Stress

Psychological and Media intervention for Conflict Resolution

Psychological and Creative Processes in Management of Interpersonal and Political Conflict

Israel: Politics, Media and Society

Propaganda! Origins and Developments

One of the main differences between courses at my university and in Israel was that courses at Hebrew University included significantly more different examination units, even during the semester. So, in almost every course I had to give a presentation, sometimes even several or even write smaller papers already during the semester. At the end of the semester there was usually another larger task, such as an exam, a seminar paper, or a project. In the course "The

Nature and Nature of Social Behavior", for example, there was also a weekly quiz, each about the past lecture. Overall, I found this rather positive because I actively took more during the semester.

## **Travel**

Israel is a very diverse country and offers great opportunities to travel. I mainly use the weekends to see as much of the country as possible. While the fact that there is no public transportation on Shabbat was always a challenge, I didn't let that get me down. The gigantic desert landscapes, the blooming oases or even the beautiful beaches always inspired me. Although Corona made it difficult for me to enter the country, I was allowed to experience Israel completely without tourists - which was a unique experience.



## **Conclusion**

Overall, I had a very eventful and great time which was a personal and academical enrichment. Although the organization at the Israeli university, with authorities or even with the Ministry of Health was often chaotic, I learned to see many things with serenity. Academically, the courses on social stress and social behavior were very enriching, but also the opportunity to look beyond my own nose. In conclusion, I can only advise anyone who has the opportunity to spend a semester in Israel to take it.