

Here's my Study Abroad Story

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**SIT Jordan: Modernization and Social Change
Amman, Jordan**

Major: International Relations



Program: With SIT's study abroad program in Amman, Jordan, you'll have the opportunity to spend a week living with a Bedouin family in the rural Badia, explore castles in Karak, dive into the Red Sea and meander in old cities with winding paths along open-air markets. In a matter of months, you will have visited centuries of history throughout Jordan.

In Amman, the program's base city, you'll take intensive Arabic classes in Modern Standard (written) and Levantine "Amiyeh"/dialect Arabic. In addition to studying Arabic, you'll also take classes on Jordanian history, politics, and culture. The program encourages hands on learning, which means during your classes you will meet prominent Jordanian intellectuals, government officials, lawyers, economists, filmmakers, activists, feminists, environmentalists, NGO leaders, indigenous leaders, and more. I especially loved our discussions about women's rights and learning about the work students our age were doing to combat harassment.



One of my favorite trips was to Dana, where a Jordanian gave a tour of all the plants in the valley and we learned how they were used as tools and medicine.

Typical Day: I would typically wake up at 8 am to get ready as my other host-siblings slept and my mother also got ready for work. After a breakfast of pita, hummus, eggs, cucumber, tomatoes, cheese, and a sip of tea, I would rush out the door to walk to a friend's house and together we would hail a taxi. From 9:00 am – 12:15 pm my SIT group would study a topic related to our program's focus –

Modernization and Social Change. The discussions were engaging and my peers had great questions. Then for lunch, the other students and I would walk to the main traffic circle to eat falafel or to a grocery store nearby. And, of course, we would have another cup of tea.



After lunch, we would return for Arabic class from 1:30 – 4:15 pm. These classes were in small groups of 4 or 5, which meant we had a lot of specialized attention and language help. Sometimes after class I would complete homework with other students at the center or a coffee shop. But sometimes the actual homework could be finding small shops downtown and taking pictures! I also had written and spoken practice with my host family. If it was Thursday, I would often go with some friends to a café, reflect with friends, and sip Turkish coffee, a personal favorite!



Highlights: I loved my Independent Study Project (ISP). All SIT programs end in a month long ISP, and I know for a lot of people this is very intimidating. After having experienced it, I also know that it can be an infinitely rewarding experience!

For my project, I researched the politics of oil and gas prices in Jordan. The country is unique because it must import its sources of energy from neighboring sources. I gained a life-long mentor in the process of my research. We're even friends on Facebook!

Challenges: Jordan is a resource-poor country. Water had to be rationed in an 9-person apartment. I often had to take cold "sprint" showers and buy bottled water. I also had to learn how to take a taxi and direct the taxi in Arabic. It was quite a challenge at first! I also gained a sense of when I was safe and what to do if I did not feel safe (i.e. at night or downtown in the evening). I began to feel much more comfortable with these challenges as I continuously addressed them and adapted.



Advice: 1) Spend as much time as you can with your host family! This will allow you to fully immerse yourself in Jordanian culture and build strong relationships with Jordanians. You can often spend time with friends in your program and get to know their family!

2) Get to know the program's Arabic teachers. They are all lovely, hilarious, and are a great source of cultural insight.

3) Get to know the speakers for the cultural seminar! Many of them are potential mentors for your SIT project. Speaking with locals is the best way to learn in a meaningful way — and they are right there in the classroom! In the process you can exchange unique perspectives and fascinating insights about your cultural experience.

