

IAESTE JORDAN 2004

Before I received the notification of my internship in Jordan I had very little knowledge about the country and the Middle East region at large. I chose Jordan just because I saw it as a great opportunity to see the area that everybody has opinions about and sometime even are a bit afraid of.

My stay in Jordan was excellent, from the beginning to the end! Many things differ compared to Sweden, i.e. the nature, the people and the way of life - but I adapted very fast and started to feel as home.

Culture

The people in Jordan are very friendly and wherever you go you can here: "Welcome to Jordan!" The majority doesn't talk English, but this doesn't stop anyone from talking to you. ☺ I was invited to different families on "shai", the Arabic word for tea. During one of my many tea sessions the male members of a family decided to perform a music piece for me. Great fun!

The basic food is hummus with bread and then you can order extras to it. Falafel and kebab are the two most common fast foods; at least this was the case for me. The food is different but not spicier than it is in Sweden. *Mansaf* is a traditional dish that I was lucky enough to try; you are supposed to eat it with your left hand. It's mainly rice, meat, yogurt and a lot of fun.



A mansaf evening in the lobby.

Clothes

During the summer it's very hot in Jordan. I was luckily in Amman, the capital, which is the coolest place in the country.

My biggest concern going to Jordan was the clothes issue. I didn't know what to bring. There are two different camps in Jordan concerning the clothes issue. One part of the population is dressed traditionally while the other part is westernized.

In my company everything goes that would be alright in a European office. Some other trainees had to wear long sleeves, especially the ones that worked in the Downtown or on building sites. The ONLY time I had to cover my hair was entering a mosque.

Wests and skirts above the knee are only worn in tourist places like Aqaba and Petra. Women should try to cover their shoulder in other places. When I was going to pubs and nightclubs I dressed in the same way as we do in Sweden.

Work

I had my practical training at the IT Company, E-dimension. On my first day I got a desk and a computer. The rest of the day I spend mostly sitting in different interviews with managers as they wanted to found out where I fitted best in the company. It turned out that I would work parallel with the programming team and the graphical team. I got several tasks. My tasks were mixed; some were new to me and required some studying.



Some of my coworkers.

Social life

The IAESTE friends from Jordan were worth a fortune. They were there for us 24 hours a day. If there were any sign of problem they came running to solve it. Everybody was picked up from the airport and they drove us to work on the first day. All trainees were living at the same hotel during the trainee period. Staying at the same place was really nice; the lobby on the third floor was the natural meeting point for all of us. I never felt lonely, since there were more than 30 trainees in the same situation.

During the week the IAESTE friends arranged different outings to café shops, cinemas, pubs and malls. There were always options to do something.

On the weekends there were trips to different sites in Jordan. One of my personal favorites was the Dead Sea day. To float on the sea was something really nice and the black mud we used to cover ourselves from top to toe was great for the skin. But I could never imagine that it would sting that much when floating in the Dead Sea. After about 10-15 minutes you start feeling every scratch you have had the last weeks. An advice: do NOT shave before going floating / "swimming" into the Dead Sea...

The last weekend it was time for the "Golden Trip". This was a trip for five days, to Petra, Wadi Rum and Aqaba, the two first mentioned are the two most famous sites in Jordan. During our trip we were camping in the desert and staying in five stars hotels across the country. It was a trip from the fairy tales that I will remember forever. In Aqaba I went wreck diving and it was amazing.



A picture from Wadi Rum, a desert area in the south of Jordan.

I would recommend everyone to do their traineeship in Jordan!!