

Auslands-Studienaufenthalt an der

Universität: Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design

Stadt/Land: Jerusalem, Israel

besuchte Studienrichtung an der Gastuniversität: Architektur

Aufenthaltssemester / -jahr: Wintersemester 2017

Studienrichtung an der KUNI: Architektur

Meine Erfahrungen

- about the study (courses / professors / students / exchange office)

At Bezalel, architecture studies are divided into two levels: a 4-year undergraduate and 1-year graduate level. Even though being a master student in Linz I attended the undergraduate level and I strongly recommend this. The 1-year graduate studies at Bezalel are taking place at a different campus, are much less intensive, focused strictly on urbanism, with professors coming mostly from technical university of Haifa coming only once a week to Jerusalem for lectures. The campus for undergraduate architecture studies is located in the old building of Bezalel Academy and is the only department located in the city center of Jerusalem (the Down Town).

Courses

At Bezalel, a local student can earn maximum of 15 Israeli credits per term, which equals 30 ECTS, however, 3 Israeli credits are reserved for theory, which is only in Hebrew and therefore unsuitable for exchange students. Therefore the maximum is 12 Israeli credits/24 ECTS for exchange students. Since theory courses are always on Sunday, exchange students are free then and there is special course organized for them called "Making of Jerusalem" which explores the urbanistic development of the city in a form of a guided tour with the lecturer Noah Rubin. I highly recommend this course, even for non-architects.

Photography course

Another special course for exchange students is a photography course by Yosaif Cohan scheduled on Friday morning, when there are no other courses at the whole Academy. This is an experimental course of learning how to see with our own eyes. Yosaif is a very kind and passionate teacher and his class is always very exciting. Open to everybody, highly recommended.

Architecture studio

I took the Architecture Studio by prof. Senan Abdelquader(<https://www.senanarchitects.com/>), the only Palestinian professor at the Architecture department, if not the whole Academy. He studied in Germany and has a very contemporary style focusing on the discourse of the formal and informal face of architecture. I can very much recommend him as a studio tutor.

Language courses at Bezalel

Bezalel Academy offers two Hebrew language courses for exchange students and I very much recommend to attend those. The intensive Hebrew course starts one week before the semester and takes place 5 days in a row for the half of a day. Costs are 460 NIS/110€ for the intensive course and 640 NIS/150€ for the continuation course. Continuation course runs once a week throughout the whole semester (Sundays).

Exchange office

Sarit Morad is a very helpful person and was always ready to help the exchange students with anything needed. She is always informing about all the important notices with an email.

- about the staying (culture / accommodation / food/ transport/ living costs/ language)

Accommodation

Finding an apartment from home before coming to the country is very difficult. The danger of accepting a room without seeing it live is also quite big – Jerusalem is an old and poor city, as are its buildings. Very many apartments are of a poor quality – dark, humid, cold, small, without sunlight or fresh air. When already in Jerusalem, I recommend search an apartment on Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) or Facebook in groups like: Secret Jerusalem, Looking for an Apartment in Jerusalem, Sublet Jerusalem, etc. You will need a google translator to translate the adverts from Hebrew – the facebook translator does not work well. The location is crucial as the public transport is limited on one tram and buses being stuck in traffic jams. I recommend quarters like: Downtown triangle, Rechavia, Nachlaot, Musrara, Mamila, Talbija, Jemin Moshe and the Old city, which might surprisingly be cheaper than the newer quarters, but also of a poorer living standard (no transport at all). Usually the only way of contacting the announcer of the advert is via a cellphone call, so You need an Israeli phone number first, otherwise its very expensive and people might not respond/call You back.

A special term when searching for an apartment is SS/SK meaning Shomer Shabbat and Shomer Kashrut. This basically means the person obeys the Jewish rules of Shabbat which affects the cooking and eating habits and also the usage of electricity on Shabbat. Sharing an apartment does not have to be a problem, but it requires a portion of will, motivation and understanding to be able to adapt to such rules in the apartment. Because once these rules apply to the apartment, everybody must follow them.

Food

Cuisine is one of Israeli highlights, best suited for vegans or vegetarians. As all Israeli restaurants are kosher, milk products have to be separated from meat products, so You find a dairy restaurant and a meat restaurant. There is no cheeseburger! ☺ Many places are vegan and cheap and of a great quality. Shopping vegetables is also very cheap and happens in great amounts. The Mahane Yehuda market is turning rather touristy and tends to expensive. The Palestinian market at the Damascus gate is much cheaper and it is open on Shabbat.

Transport

There is tram called Light Rail in Jerusalem and there are public buses. Bikes are also a possibility and walking is totally fine as well, even in the night. The city center is not very big, so getting around on foot is the most reliable way, because You do not get stuck in traffic jams as the buses do. Buses have a schedule and they mostly follow it - when the traffic is easy. Trams have schedule as well and they work properly. There is no public transportation on Shabbat at all in the whole country, in Jerusalem there are also almost no cars on the roads, in Tel Aviv there will be some traffic.

Appart from a system of Israeli public buses, there are the Palestinian ones. They are hidden, they don't have a schedule and You have to know at which bus stops they stop because the have no signs or information there. But they are reliable and they work on Shabbat as well. They will take You to the Palestinian part of Jerusalem and to the important parts (such as Ramallah, Betlehem, Jericho or Nabulus) of Palestine as well. The Palestinian bus station is by the Damascus gate divided into three stations: 1) at the gate itself for direction Betlehem, 2) difficult to find – in front of the Jerusalem Hotel for direction to the Dead Sea – Jericho, 3) even more difficult to find – next to the Golden Walls Hotel direction to the north – Rammalah.

Driving a car in Jerusalem is quite complicated and it is difficult to find a parking spot. When travelling around Israel, renting a car is a very good choice to visit remote highlights. The drivers act a bit like in Italy and the gasoline is rather expensive – around 6,5 NIS (1,6€). Cars are in American style and they all have an automatic gearbox, even if You ask for a manual.

Single ride on a Jerusalem public bus or the light rail (tram) costs 5,90 NIS (1,5€), a monthly pass for students with Rav-Kav card is 106 NIS (26€). A bus ride to the sea by Tel Aviv (1 hour) would be 16 NIS (4€), to Eilat (5 hours) 70 NIS (17€)

Living costs

Israel is an expensive place to live, even compared to Austria. It depends dramatically on personal habits and comfort, but having about 4000 (700 - 950€) NIS per month is necessary. I found a room for 2400 NIS (570€) per month. I was lucky to have such a fair-priced accommodation. An average fast food meal is 30 NIS (7,5€). At the University you have to pay a security fee of 275 NIS (68€) per semester. Phone could be between 50 to 125 NIS for a prepaid card (12 to 30€) but generally much more expensive than in Austria.

Language

Even though I tried my best in learning Hebrew, I did two language courses in Israel and also a course prior my stay there, I am not able to speak it. For somebody who wishes to learn it properly, I recommend the summer ULPAN course in Israel. They happen in many places around the country and offer a great

cultural experience. Fortunately almost everybody speaks English, so it is easy to get around. It might be very difficult without English. Many people also speak Russian. The Palestinians on the other hand don't speak English, so learning Arabic might actually open more doors than learning Hebrew.

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