

Knowing absolutely nothing about Oman before I came here, I was expecting vast cultural differences, scorching heat, personal growth, and an adventurous time in a foreign country – and I got all that. Read on to get an impression of how studying abroad turned out for me.

Organisation

Being used to German directness I was thrown off at first at the way our enrolment was organized. In the end, everything turned out smoothly. Everything was handled with ease; the visa and its costs were handled in full by the university, the confirmation was sent in time and the flight was relatively cheap. Everyone was reassuring and whatever questions I had I felt comfortable to ask them at any time. One thing I had to get used to, is that the usage of WhatsApp here is common, so you won't only find yourself texting friends but lecturers, organizers, authorities and even restaurants as well.

Arrival

Having never stepped foot into a Gulf country, I was appropriately nervous upon arrival. The first thing that calmed me was that at whatever ungodly time you arrive, you will be picked up. I found myself being warmly greeted by three people at 4am, Mr Salim, the driver, and lastly the apartment manager. Depending on what time of the year you arrive be prepared however to be hit by a wall of heat and humidity. The weather is something some people might need time to adjust to. I thoroughly enjoyed having summer heat and beach days in December though, while all my friends back home had to get out their winter coats.

Accommodation and Living

The international off-campus residence is a tall building around 3 km away from the University, surrounded by a residential area and some fast-food chains. There is a sense of solidarity between the international students in knowing that we are all foreigners, so everyone is very easy to chat to and open to spend leisure time together. Having arrived at 4 am in the morning, I was promptly invited to join a hike less than 12 hours later, which led to me meeting most of the house in one afternoon. The flats are all equipped with a washing machine, oven, stove, storage, fridge, cooking utensils and some rooms even have their own private fridge and bathroom. AC in every room is a given, the windows are big, and the rooms flooded with light.

SQU and Academic Culture

All newcomers were taken to see the university and assisted in enrolment and course choosing. The campus itself is beautiful, with bright buildings, a botanical garden and (for political science students) a brand-new canteen. The campus is huge, and some buildings cannot be reached by foot (not advisable in the midday heat), classrooms are easy to find however and after two weeks I got around campus just fine. Something else I had to get used to though is that the academic culture is very different to Berlin. Classes take place twice a week, active participation is a requirement, classes cannot be missed without a good reason and presentations, quizzes and midterm exams are common assignments throughout the semester. To balance the workload, I was a frequent user of the on-campus gym and swimming pool. These are free to use for all students and provided a great balance for my daily routine.

Leisure Activities

The university provides a social program which allows you to explore the country. The Omani students will most likely also be happy to show you around and depending on your interests take you hiking, to fancy cafés or the beach. Living off-campus, we were free to come and go as we liked, to spend the weekends camping or with friends and were invited to people's homes, to go hiking, diving, to restaurants, or malls.

Intercultural

Overall, the experience here has taught me a lot. Going abroad always requires a level of flexibility. Being in a foreign country can at times be a lonely or challenging experience but the added value is well worth it. I am thankful for the opportunity provided by FU and SQU and to all people who helped me organize this semester. The chance to reflect on our own cultural values, our perspectives on the world and our own positionality in it should be used by every young adult and I advise you that if you are thinking about going abroad, go for it!

Some impressions below:

