

# Welcome to Israel



# ברוך הבא לישראל

My main reason for coming to Israel was that I had no idea what would await me in this small desert country between Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. I came with a blank sheet, ignored the depressing middle-east-news for once and had no expectations except finishing the semester. This worked so well for me, because Israel is different. Israel is beautiful and shocking at the same time. Israel means diversity. At home, I have heard this word every single day until I got tired of it, however, nobody could have prepared me for the diversity of languages, religions, cultures, and cuisines that Israel held

ready for me to discover.

Jerusalem itself is to me the most interesting place in the world, not only from a touristic point of view, but also from that of a person just living there. Apart from the world-known tourist attractions that are without any doubts mind-blowing and can occupy you for months or even years, there are so many nuances to the city that only unravel themselves to the most patient and attentive.

There is nothing more relaxing than walking through the silent streets of Rechavia on a hot Saturday and lying in

the grass in Independence Park with a good book. Every Friday afternoon, the Machane Yehuda Shuk turns into a boiling mass of bodies, each of them attempting to get the last scraps of edibles before everything closes for the weekend. Jerusalem offers limitless possibilities for exploration, sight-seeing and personal development. In this melting pot of religions and cultures, you are constantly challenged to find your own way and perspective which was, for me, the best possible environment for an exchange.

The Dome of the Rock



4<sup>th</sup> semester BSc Architecture, University of Liechtenstein  
Year 2, 4

Erasmus+ exchange semester  
Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design  
Jerusalem, Israel

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# Finding a home



# למצוא בית



Finding a place to live in Jerusalem is infamous amongst international students - for a reason. Flats and rooms are expensive (prices around 2500 NIS, approximately 630 €, and higher are to be expected), there are usually no dormitory rooms available for internationals and the cultural and religious barriers must not be underestimated.

After many fruitless conversations, texting with a bot and hours spent on Facebook and Craigslist, I

surprisingly got an offer through the friend of the niece of an Israeli colleague of my mother's only one month before flying to Israel. I got her room in a student dormitory in the city centre for 1500 NIS all inclusive, while she spent her exchange semester at my home in Liechtenstein. Most of my friends from the exchange group, however, were not so lucky and only found their accommodation after a few weeks in one of Jerusalem's (excellent but expensive) hostels. It helps a lot to have

personal contacts among the locals to find something suitable.

Houses in Israel are not automatically well-insulated, and the winters can get very cold. I was lucky enough to live in a brand-new building with good ventilation and heating possibilities. My friends who lived in older or not so well-maintained houses, however, often had to come up with creative ideas and extra blankets.



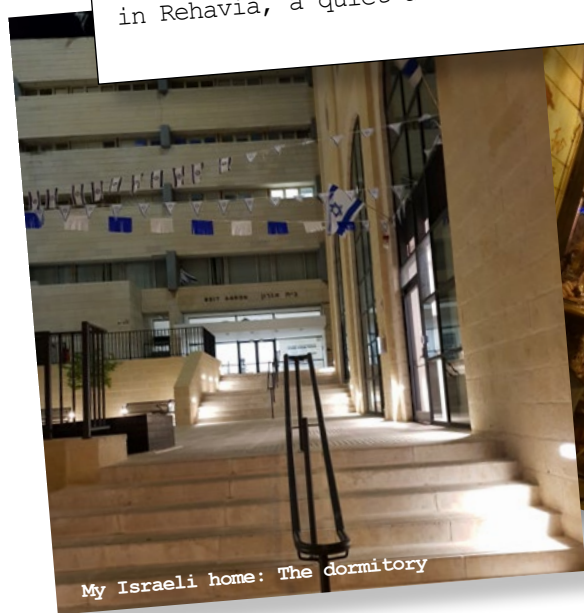
Seeing the Old City's wall from my window



My second home in Israel: only complete with the national flag



The Old City of Jerusalem



My Israeli home: The dormitory



The Sira Bar behind my house

The dormitory I lived in, is located in the Downtown Triangle in Nahalat-Shiva, 2 minutes from King-George-Street and Jaffa Street. I could walk to the Architecture Department and the Old City in 10 minutes and to the Mahane Yehuda Shuk in 20 minutes. This is, in my opinion, the best place to live in Jerusalem (as long as it is only for a limited time), because there is literally everything. However, right behind the house is also a street with many bars and clubs, so that it can be very noisy.

Many of my friends live(d) in Rehavia, a quiet and neat

residential area close to my place. It is still very well connected to the downtown life, but a bit further away from the Old City and the Bezalel Campus on Har HaZofim.

Whenever I had to get somewhere in Jerusalem, I usually went by foot. The distances are manageable and the buses not very fast, so that it was easier and healthier to walk. But public transportation is cheap compared to Liechtenstein and my hometown Munich and the buses and the new light train are a great alternative to move around the city.

# Life and culture



# אדמה ותרבות



The Mount of Olives

Shabbat is the Jewish weekend, but it is also so much more than that. Every Friday evening, the family gathers for a special dinner with friends and extended family members. In religious households, no electricity will be used until Saturday night and the car stays in the parking lot. All public transportation stands still from Friday afternoon until Saturday night, so weekend trips must be planned care-fully. My recommendation is to get as many different Shabbat experiences as possible as everybody handles it differently.

I had huge potluck feasts with the other exchange students, a family party at my mother's Israeli work colleague's where we watched a film after dinner and went for a hike the next morning, a small but delicious dinner with the friend of a friend I hadn't known before and last but not least the many times I visited my friends in the Galilee, who took the day of rest very seriously but got up at six to care for their ten dogs.



En route to the Dead Sea

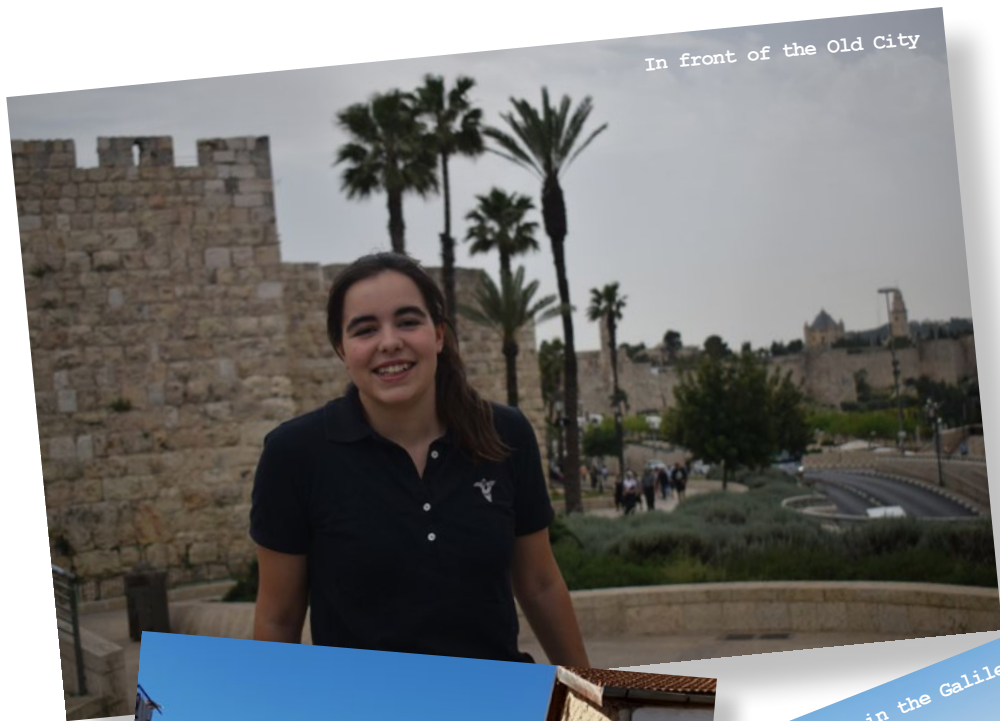
Adapting to Israeli culture and lifestyle was a matter of a few weeks, then I spoke Hebrew in the Shuk, knew how to cook Shakshuka and came late to appointments. The clocks in Israel run differently and what first seemed strange and sometimes rude, was soon normal for me. However, what really made me feel at home in no time, was the openness of the people. This generosity and readiness to embrace strangers into the community is a typical Israeli trait along with endless capacities for discussion, so

that connecting was a very natural process and different to anything I have ever experienced before.

With my Israeli friends, I often spent hours discussing anything from everyday school and family stuff to international politics and even religion. What is treated as a taboo topic in the Germanspeaking countries is usually casual small talk in Israel. Most people encourage you to find your own point of view and discuss it openly.



The Western Wall during my last Shabbat in Jerusalem



In front of the Old City



Jaffa Street during Shabbat



Visiting my friends in the Galilee



Nahlaot - one of the most famous neighbourhoods



In the Old City on my last weekend

# Studying at Bezalel



# למידה בבצלאל

The Bezalel Academy is one of the most renowned art and design schools in the Middle East and famous all over Israel. Even though the Architecture Department in the centre is geographically and spiritually a bit isolated from the rest of the Academy on Har HaZofim on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the quality of the classes I attended was very high. Sadly, I could only take three classes, one of them the mandatory design studio you have all over the world, due to severe language problems. The teaching language at Bezalel is Hebrew, but

attending classes without knowing the language is possible, as long as the classmates translate the essentials and/or the teacher adapts.

Generally, due to this problem exchange students do not attend theoretical classes in the Architecture Department and only take part in the 12 ECTS (6 Bezalel Credits) design studio. To get more credits, there are interesting electives in English for exchange students about the history of Jerusalem and photography which I highly recommend.

In preparation of the semester, I participated in the 10-day Hebrew course the Academy offered. The teacher was excellent and barely spoke English, so that we were quickly able to introduce ourselves and order food in Hebrew. We even learned how to read and write in Hebrew. However, I and many other exchange students would have loved to learn more in regular classes during the whole semester, but that was no possibility.

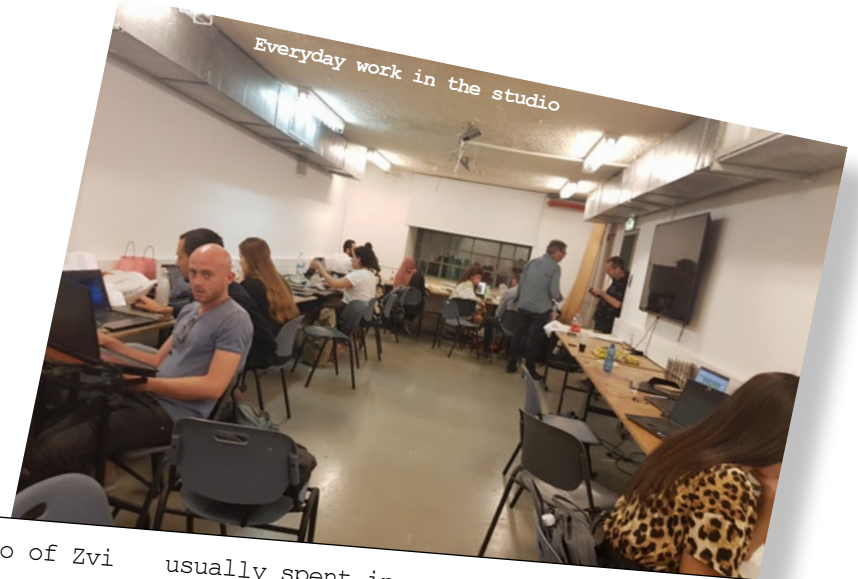


The courtyard of the Architecture Department

Signing up for classes and getting everything I needed was surprisingly difficult. Although there was a big information event on the main campus for all the internationals that answered many questions, finding my way around the Architecture Department was a completely different thing. On the first day of the semester, the eight of us went to the office to get a course list and sign up, but I turned out to be the only Bachelor exchange student in the department and nobody was prepared for that. I had

to take different classes and got a Hebrew course list I couldn't read. A teacher tried to translate it for me, but his own English was not quite up to the task and finally, I just went to the studio whose professor had been recommended to me.

On this first day, I did not understand a single word of what was being said in the three hour studio class. In the evening, I wrote an email to the teacher and the problem was quickly resolved.



In the studio of Zvi Efrat, I was lucky to work with a partner who spoke English well and translated during presentations. When discussing our project privately with the professor, he and his assistant spoke English. At Bezalel, each studio has its own room, so there is hardly any interaction between the different classes. However, breaks are

usually spent in the courtyard where everyone meets for lunch, coffee or a cigarette.

According to the professor, our studio was very demanding compared to the other studios. Every Monday and Thursday, we had private discussions or presentations, so we spent almost every day preparing for the next class. But there

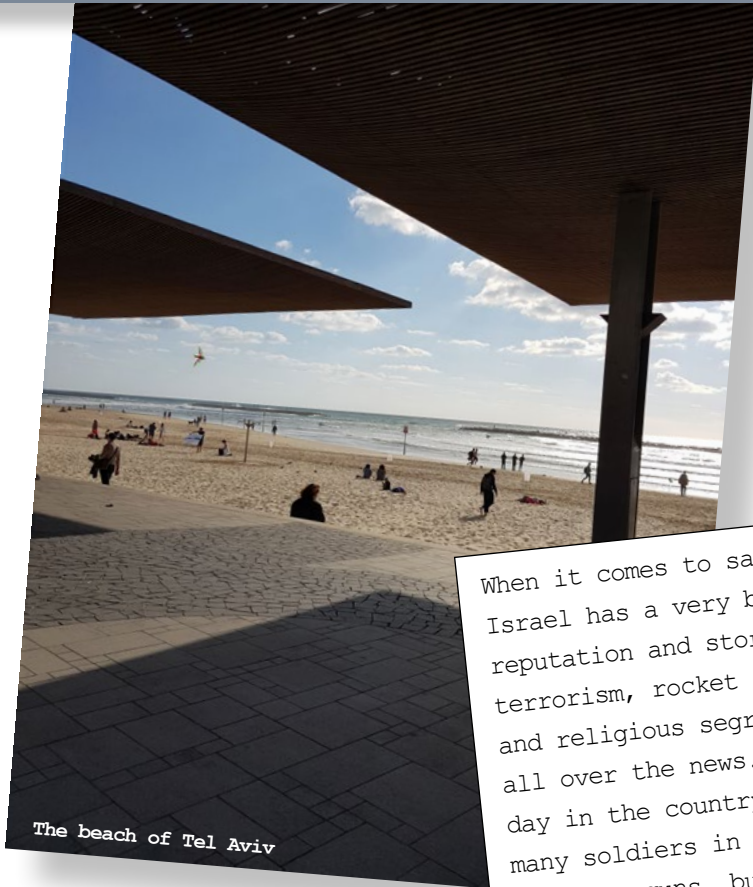
was considerably less pressure than in Liechtenstein and even though I did not have as much free time as, for example, the Fine Arts students, the semester was comparably relaxed, also due to the fact that I only had three classes in total, and I could regularly take off a day or a weekend to travel.



# Safety and traveling



# בטיחות ונסיעה



The beach of Tel Aviv

When it comes to safety, Israel has a very bad reputation and stories of terrorism, rocket attacks and religious segregation are all over the news. On my first day in the country, I noticed many soldiers in the street carrying guns, but since then I have never had a reason to pay any more attention to them than to any other passenger. During the semester, I travelled the country (often alone) and never had any bad experience. Sometimes I felt

a bit uncomfortable when moving in Arab areas being the only woman in the street, but neither I nor my friends were ever harassed and usually everybody was very friendly.

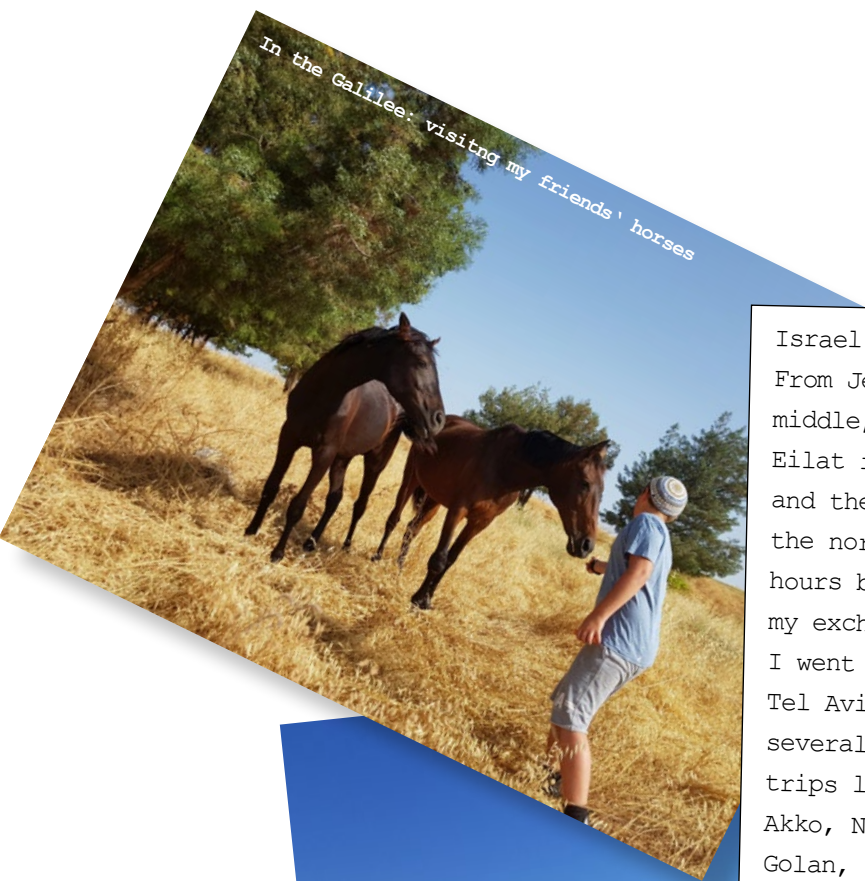
All over the country, whether I was at the beach of Tel Aviv, in the Old City of Jerusalem, in the desert or in the Golan Heights, I wore my normal clothes I had brought from Europe and short pants whenever the weather allowed it.



Nimrod's Fortress in Golan is a spectacular place



In the Galilee: visitng my friends' horses



Israel is a small country. From Jerusalem in the middle, one can get to Eilat in the very south and the Golan Heights in the north in about four hours by bus. During my exchange semester, I went to the Dead Sea, Tel Aviv and the Galilee several times. Further trips led me to Haifa, Akko, Nimrod's Fortress in Golan, two springs in the

desert, Bethlehem and Ein Kerem.

And even though the country itself is small, there are endless possibilities of traveling and discovering and I only scratched the surface. There are a few trains connecting the big cities Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, but one can travel the whole country very cheaply by bus.

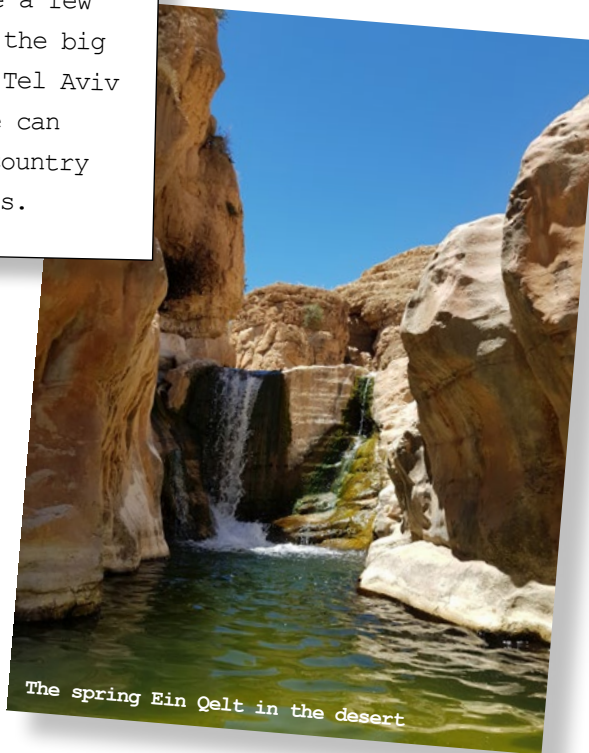
View onto the desert and the Dead Sea from the fortress Mezada



Hiking in the Wadi Qelt - the mountains in the distance are the Jordanian border



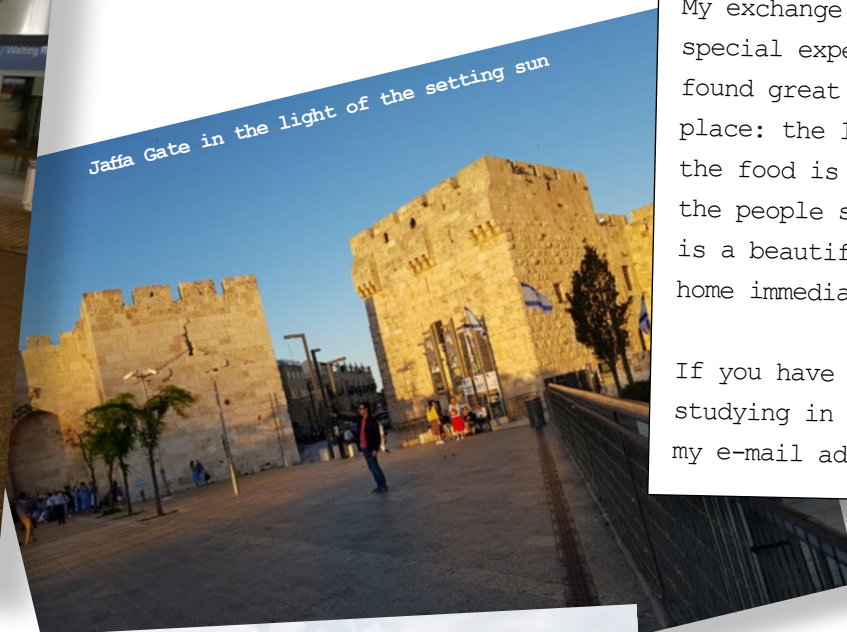
The spring Ein Qelt in the desert



# Goodbye, Israel! ✨ ! ישראל, להתראות,



With my family back in Munich



Jaffa Gate in the light of the setting sun

My exchange semester in Israel was the most special experience, I enjoyed every minute and found great friends. It is a very challenging place: the language resembles nothing we know, the food is sometimes spicier than expected and the people seem to behave differently. Still, it is a beautiful country to discover, I felt at home immediately and can't wait to come back!

If you have any more questions about living and studying in Israel, feel free to contact me via my e-mail address [carla.sauvant@uni.li](mailto:carla.sauvant@uni.li)



My neighbourhood in Jerusalem