



Dartmouth-AUKuwait Internship Program Intern Newsletter – Spring 2012 Jackeye Waugh '13



Arriving in Kuwait

I have to be honest. The thing that initially shocked me most about Kuwait was the prevalence of palm trees. Talking to Laurel Stavis, the executive director of the Dartmouth-AUK Project, prior to my departure, I learned that one of the first things AUK interns did upon their arrival to Dartmouth



Walking along the corniche

each summer was climb a tree because apparently

you couldn't do that very easily in Kuwait. So while I did quite a bit to prepare myself for this new adventure, I must admit that most of my time was spent trying to imagine a city with absolutely no trees.

Because I had applied during the winter term of 2011 and wouldn't be going to Kuwait until the spring of 2012, I had a lot of time to try and figure out exactly what to expect. In addition to talking with Laurel, I read previous interns' newsletters, met the AUK students who came to Dartmouth during my sophomore summer, and Googled every scrap of information and every picture that I could find on Kuwait. In spite of all of this, however, nothing could have prepared me for the dazzling night skyline of Kuwait City as my plane descended towards the landing strip.

Upon landing, I met Tadd Kruse, the Assistant to the President and Intern Coordinator at AUK, who drove me to my apartment for the term, gave me a basic introduction to Kuwait as we drove through the city, and told me that I would be heading to AUK the next morning for orientation about my placements at the university.

AUK

In providing recommendations for my placements prior to coming to Kuwait, I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to get out of my time at the university. I knew I enjoyed doing research and as an Anthropology and Government major focusing on the Middle East, the Center for Gulf Studies (CGS) seemed like a perfect fit. Beyond that, however, I wasn't sure how I could contribute to the day-to-day functioning of a university. My only concrete desires were that I be in at least one position that let me work with students and that I be placed somewhere I was needed, whichever department that might be.



AUK

was in the Center for Gulf Studies, where I acted as a sort of research assistant to the faculty. I had a wide range of different projects there based on the goals of the Center. One objective was to build the Center into a hub for scholars interested in research on the Gulf so I compiled an extensive list of various resources on the Gulf which would aid in research. Another goal was to soon provide a Gulf Studies minor to students so I

helped put together potential resources for a comparative politics course focusing specifically on the region. In addition to these projects, I attended CGS events held at AUK. My primary projects, however, were assisting CGS faculty in their own research. This varied from statistical work on the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict to walking up and down Gulf Road (the main street in Kuwait City running along the shore) distributing surveys about Kuwaiti citizenship and government benefits to conducting interviews with leaders of different civil society organizations around Kuwait.

My second primary placement was in the Education department working primarily with Kimberly Suffi on the First-Year Education (FYE) course. FYE was my favorite placement during my time in Kuwait. The semester-long course is intended to introduce new students to what it means to be a college student. Attending the weekly team meetings (consisting of the four



Kuwait City skyline at sunset

faculty who teach the current FYE course) and the task force meetings focused on developing a proposal for a follow-up course, I got to see firsthand all of the politics and work that go into designing a course and making it work. As I learned through the task

force meetings, even simple things that I, and most students I think, take for granted such as designing a syllabus, course objectives, and mission statement required significant negotiation and time for a course proposal that could easily be rejected. And even after a course was approved, the team meetings showed me how much effort professors must put into courses (beyond simply showing up to class and grading papers) to help students succeed.

In addition to attending meetings, I was in charge of conducting two-hour group tutoring sessions for students in the course and helping to train previous successful students to act as peer tutors after I left. This was a simultaneously fulfilling and frustrating project. I learned firsthand just how difficult teaching could be as I would try to get students to understand concepts or work together in groups, only to receive blank stares and to receive increasingly fewer students each week. However, as I also saw students' grades improve and helped a group of promising students develop into skilled tutors, it was fantastic – I felt like I was actually making a tangible difference in my short ten weeks.

My final placement was in the Intensive English Department working with two sections of Level III students (Level III is the highest IEP level before students can matriculate to the university completely.) Both my male and female sections were reading *Bram Stoker's Dracula* throughout the term. My main project in IEP was helping out in the student's lab sessions each day where they were engaging in reading circles to discuss the



Some of my IEP students and the final Dracula display

book. I would work individually with students on this and other projects, having them practice reading to me and helping with other projects they worked on. As part of these reading circles, students produced a lot of artwork related to the book which their teacher wanted to display publically, so I helped coordinate a small group of students to put together an extensive display for the end of the semester.

and confusing, it really actually felt like work because of the warm environment created by the students and staff. From the first day, my IEP students were offering to take me out around Kuwait. Kym Suffi was like an adopted mother for the entirety of my time there. I became close friends with the two student workers in my IEP labs. I could easily joke around with everyone in CGS. And because I was known and easily recognizable on AUK's small campus as "The Dartmouth Intern," other students and faculty members I hadn't met directly through work would greet me and offer to take me around Kuwait.

I must say that while things at AUK occasionally got hectic

Living in Kuwait

When people ask me what it was like living in Kuwait, I describe it as living in a more luxurious, if occasionally illogical and slightly dysfunctional, United States. Living in a lovely two-bedroom apartment right next to the university and just minutes away from literally every restaurant you could possibly think of (Hardees? TGI Fridays? Nandos? Nathan's Hotdogs? Check, check, check, and check.), there was almost no real adjustment I felt that I needed to make for the short time I was in Kuwait. I easily went grocery shopping for all my normal junk food addictions at the nearby Sultan Center with Dilara - another new AUK hire - wore my normal clothes without any issue, and never really felt like I was missing out on something I would normally have at home.

This was, in large part, also due to Kym who made sure I got to experience what American expat life was like in Kuwait. From the beginning of my term, she invited me to everything from softball games and movies to happy hours at the US Embassy to shopping at the Indian Heritage souk to days on the beach by a Kuwaiti chalet (I finally learned how to operate a jetski!) She even took me to a Kuwaiti wedding during my first weeks in the country. Kym also brought me to the hospital and made sure I was taken



One picture from the Kuwaiti wedding

care of after I broke my tailbone while ice skating (How I survive winters in Hanover without injury and then manage to break my tailbone ice skating in Kuwait in the spring is beyond my comprehension.) Without Kym, the adjustment to Kuwait probably would have been much more difficult and I would have missed out on a lot of Kuwait's hidden gems.

I also partook in some of the more traditional touristy things Kuwait has to offer – Failaka Island (an island 30 minutes off the coast that has been almost deserted since the Gulf War), wandering around mosques, going to museums, and walking along the corniche (the developed walkway along the shore). I also spent a day at the traditional open market – Souq Mubarakhiyya – with Dilara, Nada (one of the AUK interns at Dartmouth during the 2011 summer term), and some others enjoying browsing through traditional and modern goods and eating delicious Persian and Kuwaiti food outside in the sun. It was a nice change of scenery from Kuwait's numerous mega-malls, as beautiful as they may be.

Up until the very last hours that I left Kuwait, my time was filled with work, dust storms, and fun. After cramming all of my things into two very overweight suitcases and departing my apartment for the last time, I still managed to have a lovely visit with Hala

(another AUK-Dartmouth intern), stop for *bouza* (chewy, delicious Arabic ice cream), and attend an end-of-term party for the CGS before finally hauling my luggage to the airport. I left Kuwait wanting at least a couple more weeks to experience all I could with these wonderful welcoming people. Looking back on it now while writing this newsletter makes me very nostalgic. It was an experience truly unlike any other I've had and I intend on returning to visit as soon as I get the chance.