

Welcoming A Different Way of Life A Recap of My 10 Weeks in the Middle East

Allahu Akbar
Ashhadu alla ilaha illallah
Ashhadu anna Muhammadar Rasulullah
Hayya 'alas-Salah
Hayya 'alal-Falah
Allahu Akbar
La ilaha illallah



My ten weeks living in Kuwait can be described as nothing less than transformational. Stepping into this region meant immersing myself into a culture and landscape vastly different from my own and different from one I had ever experienced, yet, it was precisely this unknown that excited me for this opportunity. This internship experience came with the promise of exploration, self-discovery, and the opportunity to continue to expand my knowledge of the world, and there was nothing that could have prepared me for what I learned and experienced, and I'm glad for it.

Experiencing Ramadan

I began my Kuwait experience during the second week of Ramadan, and while I was accustomed to the rituals of fasting and prayer in the United States for the Holy Month, the Middle East offered a profound sense of belonging and unity. I hadn't done prior research of Ramadan in a Muslim country, but I quickly learned that *everything* changes from the time businesses operate to the amount of traffic on the roads. My work day started at 10am and ended at 3pm so I used the extra time in the day to venture out and explore. Reflecting back, the differences between Ramadan and after are like night and day. Crowds at malls, stores and museums during the day were non-existent which contrasts differently with my Ramadan experience in the US. However, the long days of fasting, in Kuwait especially, encouraged self-discipline and a deeper level of mindfulness as my routine was able to align more with the Ramadan hours. Despite the differences, Ramadan in Kuwait was a reminder that regardless of our backgrounds, we are all bound together by shared values of faith, compassion, and humanity.

Access to Travel

Living in Kuwait also offered me ample opportunity to travel to other countries quicker and more affordably. Situated at the crossroads of the region, Kuwait provides easy access to neighboring countries in the Middle East, and during my time, I was able to visit Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and also Turkey. Speaking of Kuwait, Qatar, and



the UAE, I was surprised at how different the countries were. When visiting countries in close proximity, I've typically seen similar infrastructure, architecture, food, and a similar way of life, but these GCC countries provided a completely different experience. In the UAE, I found that it offered a great all-in-one experience from tours and activities to well-known tourist attractions. If you're looking for food, Kuwait is the place to be. Under the advice of my work team, I made it a mission to try a new restaurant every few days, and there was no place I went where the food was not amazing. I visited Qatar during one of the hottest weekends of May, and I was able to walk the streets during the day alone and during the night with a lively crowd. I particularly enjoyed the dining experience in Qatar, because during the day, I could have a whole restaurant to myself with impeccable views of the Gulf. In Turkey, I was only able to visit

Istanbul, but just this city alone has me planning a trip back. I've been to many countries as a solo traveler, but this one was definitely my best solo-experience. From the sights to the experiences, I'm glad I made this trip possible. I advise everyone with the opportunity to take advantage of the travel destinations located close to Kuwait.

The Teams

During my ten weeks, I interned with the AUK Library and the Academic Advising Center. I don't know if my experience is a representation of all the offices at AUK, but my teams made my time in Kuwait a ten out of ten. Their encouragement, guidance and support were unlike any I had ever experienced. In the AAC, I learned about the process of advising a student on the collegiate level. I met with new students daily and was able to learn about the academics AUK had to offer and also learned more about academics in

Kuwait. In the library, I assisted with events such as the Earth Day Event that featured information on how to live a more sustainable life. In addition to my daily task, my teams also had a wealth of knowledge to provide about Kuwait, the Middle East, career development, life skills, and so much more. I can't put into words how grateful I am for my teams, so I'll say that their dedication to my success during my ten week internship and afterwards is something I will cherish for a lifetime.



Before this trip, I couldn't have ever imagined that I would have visited Kuwait or have had the opportunity to live there. Living here has been a journey of personal growth that has forever changed the way I view the world and my place within it. I've been able to step outside of the bubble that Mississippi, the US, and the West allows its citizens to become trapped in. Not only have I learned that there is a life (arguably better and safer) outside of my bubble, I've seen it, and I'm excited to continue to explore it.