

Dartmouth-AUKuwait Internship Program
Intern Newsletter- Spring 2013
Emily Estelle '15

Arriving in Kuwait

Having spent my whole life in New England until this past fall, I left for the Gulf feeling a bit mystified by the opportunities that had landed me in Morocco, and now Kuwait, in less than a year. Naturally, Massachusetts sent me off to the desert with a farewell blizzard. I spent my flights watching the moving map and wondering what on Earth I had gotten myself in to. Sure, I had read plenty about Kuwait, but I had no idea how it would feel to live there, without the safety net of a Dartmouth program. Between all of my map-watching and the plethora of new movies offered by the British Airways entertainment system, I didn't sleep at all on the plane. Needless to say, my first day in Kuwait is a blur. I remember being surprised by the Claire's store in the airport, which made me wonder if I had really flown across the world or just wandered into my local mall. Tadd Kruse drove me to the Sultan Center in Salmiya, where my struggle to convert Kuwaiti dinar to U.S. dollars was overshadowed by my excitement upon finding Skippy peanut butter. I spent the rest of my first day moving into the apartment, discovering the delightful array of Arabic TV channels, and unsuccessfully fighting jet lag.

Working at AUK

Though I would have enjoyed spending the spring practicing my Arabic by watching Scooby Doo and classic Batman cartoons, I was eager to get started at AUK and find the rhythm of my life in Kuwait.

The Library

I spent my mornings interning in the AUK Library. At first, I worked in the library office, where I learned how to catalog new materials. I also took on the LibGuides, which are online reference guides that are organized by subject and assembled by the librarians in order to gather useful resources for students and faculty. The LibGuides bring together relevant books from the library catalog with online databases, periodicals, multimedia content, and more. I began by updating existing guides, including Anthropology and English Literature. Then, I moved on to creating my own guides based on the AUK curriculum, including Religion, Academic Writing, Education, Fitness & Nutrition, and Mathematics. After a few weeks spent learning the ropes, I could contribute to the daily operation of the library as a member of the team. Eventually, I knew the system well enough to move to the front reference desk, where I worked alongside student workers and served as a research resource for students and faculty. Though this move caused me to interact with the

library office staff less often, it was definitely worthwhile for me to get to know AUK students more directly. Most importantly, the staff eased this transition by making sure that I never missed out on the baked goods, fatayer and falafel sandwiches that always seemed to appear in the office! Along with helping students and cataloging materials, I also completed several specialty projects. I developed two presentations to educate students about the LibGuides and an online citation tool called RefWorks. At the end of the term, I interviewed the Collection Development Librarian and wrote an article about his work and the behind-the-scenes library operations for the AUK Voice. Ultimately, I hope that my presence in the library helped the staff as much as it helped me; the enthusiasm with which they incorporated me into their work allowed me to truly feel like a coworker rather than a temporary intern.



Last day in the library

The Writing Center

Three days per week, I worked in the AUK Writing Center as a tutor. At Dartmouth, I am a student tutor in the Center for Research, Writing & Information Technology, so I came to AUK feeling fairly confident about my tutoring skills. However, I faced more challenges and transitions during the first few weeks than I expected. All writers run in to the same problems with argument, organization, and clarity, but I had to learn how to communicate what I meant to students who speak English as a second or third language. Overall, I was very impressed by how well AUK students write; given my present struggle to learn Arabic, I cannot imagine

needing to use it at the college level! I enjoyed interacting with students with a wide range of writing experience; this variety challenged me to tutor both basic grammatical skills as well as higher level sentence fluency and style. Most of the time, I helped English students at a variety of levels with argumentative and research papers. I also came across a lot of history papers and public speaking presentations. In addition, the Writing Center hosted a special event to proofread the impressive final portfolios of the senior graphic design students. Personally, the most rewarding part of the Writing Center was the opportunity to work with students multiple times; I found it extremely gratifying to watch these repeat students learn and improve. The Writing Center was a wonderful place to meet AUK students, whether as clients or coworkers, along with staff members. As much as I enjoyed tutoring, sometimes the downtime between clients was just as valuable because it allowed me to get to know my fellow tutors.

The Department of Student Life

When I was not tutoring in the Writing Center, I spent my afternoons in the always-entertaining Department of Student Life. I am not totally sure what my job description was, which may be for the best- I was able to work with a lot of people and help with whatever was necessary at any given time. My second week at AUK was International Week, so I kicked off my internship by carrying the American flag in the Parade of Nations. I remember being very impressed by the student groups' detailed displays, delicious food, and strong sense of national pride. True to its name, Student Life gave me plenty of opportunities to work with students; we assembled gifts for International Labor Day and went on field trips to the Kuwait Riding Center and the Ali Abdulwahab Company. This second trip was part of the LEAD program, a student-run leadership group for which I helped to revise future goals and design a new application. I also created a list of goals and an application for next year's Campus Activities Board and helped plan the end of year Awards Night. Finally, I contributed to the more serious side of Student Life by transcribing adjudication hearings and categorizing incident reports. Student Life provided a unique opportunity to experience the non-academic side of AUK; I had a lot of fun interacting with students and staff in lively and informal settings

Living in Kuwait

Cliché though it may be, the people I met in Kuwait shaped my whole experience. Kuwait directs its resources toward Kuwaitis, not tourists; thus, it is not a country geared toward much solo wandering and exploring. Movies, malls and restaurants are meant to be experienced with friends. I made it my policy to say yes whenever someone invited to take me somewhere- thanks to the generosity of everyone I met at AUK, this happened all the time! I made it to a respectable number

of malls: Avenues, 360, Hamra, Marina, Fanar, Souq Sharq and Olympia. My co-intern Maggie and I tried to visit every site that was recommended to us. We explored the Friday Market a few times, enjoying the eclectic mix of goods from around the world and bargaining for a few funky pieces of jewelry. Souq Mubarakia also made for a good visit, though we spent most of our time there ogling vintage gold jewelry well beyond a college student's budget. We took the ferry from Marina Crescent and spent a lovely day at Failaka Island, relaxing on the beach and swimming in the Gulf. Gatherings in Kuwait are always entertaining because people come to the country from so many places scattered around the world; I went to one fun get-together, on top of an apartment with a great view of the city, and found people from Kuwait, America, Egypt, Lebanon, Canada, Australia, Britain, Ireland, Brazil, Serbia, and who knows where else.



Failaka Island

One of my favorite spots in Kuwait was the walking path along the Gulf. I always feel drawn to the ocean, wherever I am in the world, so as soon as I realized that I could see the Gulf from the window of the apartment, I took a walk. The path and the park areas surrounding it, especially near Marina Mall, possess a wonderful, lively atmosphere. Maggie and I thoroughly enjoyed the people watching (the best way for a pair of anthropology students to learn about Kuwait!), as well as the stunning sunsets over the Kuwait City skyline. We took full advantage of the nice

spring weather and picnicked by the water, knowing that once the summer temperatures arrived, our New Hampshire tolerance for heat would keep us inside. After a dinner out with friends, walking along the Gulf always felt like the perfect end to an evening.



Sunset on the Gulf

Many people told me that food was a defining characteristic of Kuwait, but I did not understand what they meant until I saw the huge variety of restaurants, not to mention the online take-out smorgasbord that is Talabat. I discovered Lebanese food for the first time, and went on to try the lentil soup everywhere I went. Maggie and I frequented a small restaurant on Salem Al-Mubarak Street called Free Time. From its gently swinging booths, we could spend hours watching the activity on the street and enjoying our favorites (chicken shawarma in her case, and, naturally, lentil soup in mine). Since I returned home, I have already gone to Boston for hummus and falafel, and cooked my own lentil soup. Given my historically picky and repetitive eating habits, my family is still surprised that my stint in Kuwait managed to impact me so much.

AUK itself provided plenty of things to do outside of work. The lectures put on by the Center for Gulf Studies always seemed to align with my interests. The Library's American Corner also provided great programming- I found the panel

discussion about the Boston bombings especially interesting. As a Massachusetts native with friends and family in the city, the support I received in the bombings' aftermath really made me feel like part of a community. The American Corner talk gave my understanding of the event a whole new dimension; being in Kuwait forced me to look beyond the immediate impact in my own state and country to the bombings' global repercussions. On a less academic note, I thoroughly enjoyed the AUK student production of *Jekyll & Hyde* in the Black Box Theater. I loved the interpretation of the screenplay, and I think that the students and faculty did a wonderful job pulling off the psychological thriller.

As I said before, friends made my experience in Kuwait worthwhile. Muneera, one of the AUK interns coming to Dartmouth this summer, took me under her wing and made sure I saw the sights of Kuwait. I went to Kuwait Riding Center several times with her family to watch her younger sisters' lessons; as a member of the equestrian team at Dartmouth, a little bit of barn time always makes me happy. We went out to dinner and the movies, and Muneera's little sister Hassa always made sure to quiz me on my Arabic vocabulary along the way! I learned the most about Kuwaiti culture from Muneera and her sister Sharifa, who is also an AUK student. Our incredibly interesting conversations ranged from school and work to family and relationships; sharing thoughts with girls my own age made me think about my own culture more than any lecture or book could.



With Muneera's family at Hamra Mall

As anyone who met the two of us can attest, Maggie and I became great friends during the course of our internships. Though Tadd might not believe it because of how often we finished each other's sentences, we met for the very first time at the Kuwait airport. We faced the challenges of navigating a new country together: visiting every grocery store in Salmiya in an attempt to find spinach, fighting with our recalcitrant washing machine, and battling the slow internet in our quest to watch Downton Abbey. Luckily, we still liked each other enough to book an impromptu trip to Jordan, where we explored ancient ruins and climbed every hill or mountain we could find. Though I know I would have enjoyed Kuwait on my own, it would not have been the same without someone to explore with. Furthermore, Maggie's internship allowed me to meet the wonderful members of the PR department, who went out of their way to help us (even if they brought so many cakes to our farewell dinner party that I did not know what to do with them).



At the top of Jabal Haroun (Aaron's Mountain) in Petra, Jordan

Takeaways

When Maggie and I flew back to Kuwait after our long weekend in Jordan, we were both struck by the feeling that we were coming home. This was strange, given that we would be returning to our real homes in the States in less than two weeks. Looking back, I see Kuwait not as a place that I visited, but as a place where I lived and a place that I will return to at some point in the future. I made real friends there,

some with whom I will keep in touch online, and others with whom I will spend this summer at Dartmouth. This whole experience has taught me that place does not matter nearly as much as people; no matter how far you fly, or how different the culture you land in, you can find friends to teach you about their world and make your time there worthwhile.