

Fulbright recipient reflects on time teaching in Jordan

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Hanan Rimawi, a recipient of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program and an alumna of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, spent her summer teaching English in Amman, Jordan. When not teaching, she visited several places near Jordan including the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi. (Photo provided by Hanan Rimawi)

Hanan Rimawi, who graduated from Tulane in May 2018 and studied public health and neuroscience, was a recipient of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. She wrote the following reflection in May near the end of her time as an English teacher in Amman, Jordan:

Right now, I live almost 7,000 air miles away from home, acting as an English teacher in Amman. I'd visited Jordan before, but only in little spurts, with each of a total of three trips never spanning more than a few days. Even with my part Palestinian background, passable Arabic, and previous projects in the Middle East, I still underwent a period of adjustment at first. Now eight months into my grant, Jordan almost feels like a second home.

My students have been delightful to teach. In the fall semester, I was matched with an institution that trains teachers to be better educators. Through my second assignment, which is ongoing, I teach 5th, 6th, and 7th grade boys. I noticed early on that shyness was a big obstacle for students, so creating a low-judgement, high-enjoyment learning atmosphere has increased their confidence; it's also made them comfortable expressing their ideas and values. Helping my students develop their English, and getting to know them as individuals in the process, has been fun and enriching.

My work schedule isn't hectic, giving me time to pursue other activities. A local nonprofit with which I volunteer is called Collateral Repair Project. It serves civilian victims of war and conflict. In my role at CRP, I've taught English to displaced adults from Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq. Many of them face insurmountable challenges finding jobs in Jordan, so class has served as a crucial outlet for community and purpose. It's really meaningful to spend time every week learning about and supporting them.

Outside of teaching, there's abundant opportunity for sightseeing. I've gasped at the grandeur of Petra and gazed at the Red Sea from Aqaba, watched the sun set in Wadi Rum and slathered mud on my body at the Dead Sea. Thanks to Fulbright's generous travel policy, I was able to visit Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and surreally experience Bethlehem during Christmas. Soon I'll be touring Istanbul and, from there, bussing to the dreamlike Cappadocia.

Right now I'm fasting, along with almost everyone in Jordan. In about an hour, at around 7:30 p.m., the call to prayer will ring out from every mosque. I will sit at the table with my host family, and we will devour dates and down water before digging in to the riotous profusion of mouthwatering food in front of us. In a classic gesture of Jordanian hospitality, my host mom will insist I take more food and then, when my plate is clean, even more. I will graciously oblige, because "when in Rome..." We will stay up late into the night, stocking our bellies with tea, sweets, and fruits in preparation for another day of Ramadan tomorrow.

It's hard to capture the fullness of my experience in description. My hope is that these photos help.



Rimawi visiting Petra.



Rimawi with her students at the Islamic Educational College Boys' School.



Rimawi in Dubai.



A view of downtown Amman.