

Infectious Diseases and Clinical Genetics, Hadassah, Jerusalem

Placement

I completed my 8-week elective at Hadassah Hospital in Ein Karem, Jerusalem – four weeks in the Department of Infectious Diseases and four weeks in the Department of Clinical Genetics. I applied for the elective through the Jerusalem Society of Medical Students (JSMS) whose Exchange Officer and secretary were very helpful throughout the process.

My placement in Infectious Diseases (ID) was interesting as I got the opportunity to see cases of infections that are rare in the UK, such as measles, Q-fever. I was unaware that in Israel ID is a consulting specialty only, and not a ward-based one so I spent most of my time shadowing the residents who were happy to talk me through cases and answer any questions I had. However, at times there was very little to for me to do in the department due to a lack of new cases or the unavailability of some residents. Overall, I was treated well by all the staff and I had a very positive experience in the department.

The second half of my elective in Clinical Genetics was also intriguing, especially since this is a specialty that I am interested in. I observed consultations in clinics, led by doctors and genetic counsellors, with Jewish and Arab families from the region. The consultations involved a range of symptoms and I learned about the standard tests that the department uses to narrow down the list of differential diagnoses. Besides the general clinics, I also attended specialist paediatric and genetic oncology clinics and shadowed doctors on hospital consultations. Overall, the placement was enlightening and educational.

Accommodation

After being informed by the JSMS Exchange Officer that accommodation in the university dormitories was not guaranteed, I set about searching online for a place to live. Through a classified adverts website, I found a flat in Baka' (Ge'ulim) in south Jerusalem which I shared with some other foreign students. Unfortunately, the flat was not in the best shape, but the area was nice, populated by American, French and British *olim* and only a short bus ride away from the center of Jerusalem.

Food

Food is definitely one of the strengths of Israel; good food was ubiquitous and relatively cheap. Due to the multi-ethnic nature of the country, I had the opportunity to try lots of different cuisines such as Iraqi, Ethiopian, Italian, Yemenite, Sephardic, vegetarian, Palestinian, traditional Jewish food like challah, and of course the local favourite: falafel in pita.

Social Activities

I toured the historical sites in the Old City of Jerusalem, and visited Yad Vashem and the Israel Museum which were all interesting. Each weekend, I tried to visit a different city and managed to go to Tel Aviv/Jaffa, Akko, Haifa, Tiberias, Hebron, Bethlehem and the Dead Sea – these trips were very enjoyable and informative.

Natives

Despite their legendary chutzpah (which I experienced in its full force) and complete inability to form a queue, Israelis are quite friendly and helpful – although less so in Jerusalem where the natives are presumably fed up with tourists. The local medical students even included me in their friends' circles and I got the chance to improve my Hebrew and experience Israeli culture first-hand. In my experience, people were friendlier and more welcoming in the northern towns.

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