

Meet Maite Bottcher, Oranim International Student from Germany

Maite is Oranim College's first international student from Germany. How did she find her way to Oranim, and what have her experiences been here? Maite told her story in an interview for our newsletter.



In an interview with the Oranim International School newsletter editor, Maite shared her experiences as a first year international student at Oranim College and told us about her unique path to Oranim from Darmstadt, Germany. The following are some highlights of her story.

When Maite finished high school in Darmstadt, she was curious to see the world beyond Germany. So, like many of her German peers, she decided to volunteer abroad. She chose Israel because of the unique program at Kfar Tikva, a residential community for 200 adults with developmental and emotional disabilities in Kiryat Tivon, not far from Oranim. After a year volunteering at Kfar Tikva, Maite continued volunteering in Israel, this time at Beit Elisha, another residential community for adults with disabilities, on Kibbutz Harduf.

Learning about the Middle East

While volunteering, Maite became fascinated by the Middle East. What are the roots of the conflict in the Middle East? What are the relationships between the various Middle Eastern countries and the history of those relationships, including the relationship between Israel and Arab countries? The questions were never ending. Maite decided to do her undergraduate degree in Israel to pursue these questions.

Maite is now a first year undergraduate student at Oranim College, studying History of the Middle East and Sociology. She is also studying Hebrew language together with two students in the MASA-Nativ program.

Mastering Hebrew and Arabic

During the course of her studies, Maite hopes to master both Hebrew and Arabic. Oranim College, with its mixed Jewish and Arab student body and faculty, is an excellent place to do so. Maite is now taking Arabic in private lessons, and hopes to begin studying in an academic course when her Arabic skills have improved sufficiently. When she returns to Germany after her undergraduate degree, she is considering working with Arabic speaking immigrants.

Integrating into Israeli Society

Unlike some universities in Israel, where the International School is separate from the rest of the university, at Oranim Maite is part of the Israeli student body. Aside from the Hebrew language course, Maite is studying in regular departmental courses in Hebrew, alongside Israeli Oranim students. She is also living in the dormitories together with Israeli students. She has formed a group of Israeli friends through her studies.

Maite appreciates the warm, supportive atmosphere at Oranim. Because classes are small, she can build personal relationships with the lecturers who teach her classes. Her lecturers are always accessible, willing to answer her questions and provide advice as Maite navigates her studies in a foreign country and foreign language. Students have also been happy to help her with whatever she needs.

Returning Home

Now, when Maite returns to Germany for vacation, her friends and family ask many questions about Israel. They worry that it is dangerous, and they have prejudices against the Arab population. Maite explains that they do not understand because they are not here; they only know the German world in which they live. She asserts: "To have an opinion, you have to go and see." That is exactly what Maite is doing at Oranim.

Note: This profile will be the first of a series of profiles of students and other participants in Oranim International School programs.