

Meet Zsofia, Visiting International Student from Hungary

Study abroad gives students the opportunity to experience a foreign country, not as tourists, but as insiders. We are thrilled to welcome international students to Oranim College through the Erasmus+ mobility program. Zsofia Almadi shares her experiences at Oranim here.



Zsofia Almadi, a graduate student from the University of Pecs in Hungary, was a visiting student at Oranim College this past semester. She is the first student to study for a semester at Oranim through the European Union's Erasmus + mobility program, which enables student exchange with universities throughout Europe. Oranim currently has Erasmus+ mobility agreements enabling student exchange with four European universities, and we plan to sign more agreements for next year.

In this interview, Zsofia shares how her experience studying at Oranim helped her learn about herself and advance academically.

Why Oranim?

When Zsofia's professor recommended that she study at Oranim in the framework of the Erasmus+ mobility program, Zsofia was very grateful for the opportunity. She had always dreamed about studying abroad, and the scholarship provided by Erasmus+ enabled her to do so. She was excited to travel to Israel for the first time, since "I never tried falafel!" On a more serious note, she explained why she was drawn to Israel and particularly the north of the country: "'I love that so many people of so many different religions live here relatively peacefully, especially up here in the north.'" Her fears about the security situation were calmed by a friend who had visited Israel before.

Pioneering Erasmus+ Exchange Student

As the first Erasmus+ exchange student at Oranim, Zsofia was the only visiting student in many of her classes. This meant that she had the opportunity to become friends with Israeli students in her classes, as well as young people from all over the world participating in other Oranim International School programs. She was happy to find that the students were warm and openminded.

Oranim faculty and International School staff were "super welcoming" and supportive. They helped her to set up her apartment and invited her to their homes for dinner. "I had never experienced anything like that... it was way beyond my expectations. Staff texted her to check up on how she was doing and make sure she wasn't feeling lonely: "I was so grateful."

Zsofia enjoyed travelling throughout Israel. Some highlights for her were the Dead Sea and the Bahai Gardens in Haifa.

Inspiring Academics

Zsofia is working on a master's degree in teaching English as a foreign language, and Oranim offered a variety of courses that fit her interests. Zsofia's courses ranged from "20th Century American Women

Poets” to “Individual Differences in Foreign Language Learning.” She received credit for her coursework at her home university.

Zsofia reported that Oranim faculty were so knowledgeable and passionate about what they teach that she was inspired to write her master’s thesis on the subject of one of her courses. Her thesis will be a case study of one-on-one English language instruction for a young Hebrew speaking boy who is at risk for dyslexia, using a remedial method called “clue-phonics” developed by Maartje Shilo-Smith, a faculty member in Oranim’s English Department.

Why Study Abroad?

Zsofia recommends that everyone study abroad, because you get into the “inner circle” when you go to a local university and study with the people there. You have the opportunity to gain friends from all over the world.

In addition, when you study abroad, “you learn so much about yourself.” Zsofia learned practical skills (like cooking!) but also that every day she has to push herself to take advantage of the opportunities she has. Rather than sit in her apartment and feel homesick, she pushed herself “to get out of my comfort zone” and “look up where to go and go there!” as well as to say yes whenever someone invited her to go somewhere new. “This is a time that I have to cherish because I got this huge opportunity of a very good international scholarship at a great university... I have to enjoy it as much as I can!”