

DHV

-American University in Cairo, Arabic Language Institute—2006-2007—

1.
 - a) I stayed in AUC-run apartment in Garden City. They apartments were generally clean and serviceable, though we had to share rooms with one other student.
 - b) The AUC orientation was in a resort on the Red Sea and was very nice; UW should continue to send students to the AUC orientation. The ALI orientation was also effective.
2.
 - a) The classroom structure was similar to UW. The instruction (all Arabic) was similar. The teacher/student relations were better, as the classes were about 10 people total. The grading/exams were similar. The administration was similar. The library/computer/classroom facilities were similar.
 - b) The quality of instruction was generally fairly good but very much depended on the individual teacher. While some teachers were fantastic others were mediocre at best, and the student had little choice in which teacher they got.
 - c) Any electives offered by ALI are often interesting and unique; I took a "Qur'an Readings" class with a total of 4 people taught by a very capable and learned teacher.
 - d) My study abroad coursework only fulfilled language requirements for both my majors.
3.
 - a) As a UW Direct Exchange student I had to stay in AUC-run apartments for one semester. Then, paying (much higher) tuition directly to AUC I stayed in an apartment independent of school
 - b) Though the AUC-run apartment was fine, there was a great deal of petty oversight by the university and gender-discrimination. As the floor was all girls, we had male security guards, restricted visiting hours, and visitors who were not AUC-affiliated had difficulty visiting us.
 - c) I would recommend an independent apartment because it affords more freedom and individuality in location/roommates/ambiance and is also a better deal in comparison to the dorms.
4. As of 2006-2007 the AUC/ALI campus was located in central Cairo, Egypt near the Egyptian Museum and on Tahrir Square. The campuses are enclosed and have limited access/exit points guarded by security. The surrounding area is becoming fairly local and English is not spoken consistently beyond the AUC walls. The area and nearby Tahrir Square are very noisy and congested at all hours of the day, and there is a lot of commerce in the nearby neighborhoods and streets.
5. I never had a problem with any 'unsafe districts'. In general Cairo is incredibly safe to walk around at all hours of the day and night, as are the public transportation, and most areas of town. The medical facilities, mainly the doctors provided by AUC and the hospital they recommend (Assalam) as far as I have heard are fairly efficient and clean. I never had a problem with outright theft in Egypt. However, a relative once tried to send birthday money in cash in the mail, and it was stolen out of the envelope, and thus unadvised.
6.
 - a) I rowed for AUC for a few weeks. I also participated in all the ALI Cairo day-trips on Saturdays throughout the year (highly recommended). I also attended a variety of fairs/concerts/lectures held throughout the year at AUC. I also tried to shop at local markets

rather than the large Western markets in Zamalek and lived in a district closer to campus than where the dorms/most students live.

b) There is a widely-pervasive negative and derogatory stereotype of Western/American women in all classes and venues. I attempted to dress conservatively at all times, but was consistently verbally harassed on the street and a few times physically harassed by men on the streets. Sometimes I took cabs, though these are also vehicles of harassment, even more so than walking sometimes. Mostly I played my Ipad very loud, walked purposefully, and dismissed the rude and derogatory advances. The best defense is an optimistic obliviousness to all the insults and cat-calls and a very good soundtrack.

7. **a)** I used ATMs and my credit card, though I did arrive with 500 USD in local Egyptian currency I'd gotten from my bank. This was not necessary, ATM cards are widely accepted, there are many local and foreign banks that accept them, and the rate and fees are generally the most competitive.

b) I had a few special circumstances (I am a vegetarian, and lived in a lower-class neighborhood than most other students that was very close to campus) and it is quite possible, probably more normal, to spend more than I did. My rent (including utilities and misc tips to doormen, cleaning ladies, etc in a three-bedroom apartment with my own room in "Monira" neighborhood near campus) was about 650 Egyptian pounds a month (approx 120 USD). I spent on average around 50 Egyptian pounds a month on food (approx 10 USD) and perhaps another 50 Egyptian pounds on transportation (including cab rides, busses/trains to nearby cities/suburbs etc). I lived comfortably on approximately 200 USD a month, though most I knew lived on much more. However, I did travel a fair amount, including trips to Turkey, Jordan and Israel, as well as around Egypt, and this considerably raises the budget.

c) I did not have any unexpected expenses, except travel. Given that airfares/distances are cheaper/shorter from Egypt to Europe and the Middle East, the study abroad experience is greatly improved by trips to southern Egypt (~400 USD by plane on the ALI trip for 5 days), Turkey (8 days, 700 USD, by plane), Jordan (300 USD by bus/taxi across Sinai/Israeli border for 4 days including Petra/Wadi Rum) and Israel (300 USD by bus across Sinai for 6 days).

d) I did not use financial aid, though I did receive an IP&E scholarship which covered the IP&E fee. There were no complications.

8. **a)** The administration was not clear enough on credit requirements for UW and how the credits would transfer over. I am still struggling with how I took a 'full load' of credits at ALI/AUC and yet will barely have the minimum 12cr/quarter when they transfer back to UW. Outgoing UW students should be made aware if they need extra credits beyond the average at ALI.

b) The ALI/AUC administration, especially concerning housing and financial issues, is painfully slow and disorganized. However, it is Cairo, so expected. The NY office of AUC is fairly put together.

9. This program is best suited for a student who is comfortable being on their own, unsupervised, making their own friends/connections/groups, can live by themselves, (females) can adjust to a chauvinistic, male-dominated society, is interested in making independent travel plans and accommodations, is flexible with schedules, timeliness, and will be comfortable in the face

of fairly ubiquitous poverty, deformity, and political stagnation. This is NOT the ideal program for someone who wants to learn/speak Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as this is not spoken on the street and the ALI program is not focused on teaching Arabic *in* Arabic only to English-speaking students. The classes are getting a bit large, given the amount of tuition they charge. Lastly the ALI program uses a different textbook than the UW program which is VERY IMPORTANT for outgoing students who would like to test back into the UW program. This textbook discrepancy is a great detriment to the program and for UW students who are intent on returning to Arabic at UW.

10. My academic expectations were that after a year of Arabic, and only Arabic, in an Arabic-speaking country I would surpass my fellow students who had taken Arabic for a few hours a week at UW. Coming back I was very surprised to learn that passing beyond those students is not the norm, though it is done sometimes. My personal expectations were that it was going to be a difficult, trying experience. I was wrong on both accounts. Cairo has been, and in some ways still is, a cosmopolitan third-world city. There is a middle class, however small, and the legacy of culture and cross-civilization history makes for an interesting situation. You can buy almost anything in the supermarkets, including exported Washington apples, for fairly decent prices, considering the import process. Most Cairenes and city-Egyptians have seen foreigners before and are comfortable with them. And due to the colonial history of Egypt as well as the timeless tourist trade dating back centuries, if not millennia, you can often find people who speak a multitude of languages, including English, in the tourist areas but also on the streets/cabs.