



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

TORY SAMPSON

FROM

USA

TO

ISRAEL

DURATION

7 MONTHS



0123456789



Travel Your Heart Out

In one of the remaining Arabic fishing villages on the coast of Israel, Jisr Az'Zarqa, Tory Sampson and her best friend found themselves in a rundown, corrugated steel restaurant. It had “the most amazing” fish dishes. Afterwards, they wandered into a shisha (hookah) bar, and ended up watching a soccer game between Barcelona and Real Madrid with the locals.

For Tory, who was studying abroad in Israel for seven months, this day offered up a surreal moment still vivid in her mind. Yet, it is just one of many memories in Israel and beyond.

“My family always traveled when I was growing up, and then my brother got a trip to Turkey for his high school graduation gift, and I got to tag along. That was the turning point for my love of traveling.”

Tory's brother later studied abroad in China for a year and strongly encouraged her to study abroad too. With her archaeology major through Boston University, she knew she wanted to study in the Middle East even though the choice of countries in that region were few. The University of Haifa in Israel became her choice, partly so she could continue to take Arabic language courses and do an internship at its sign language research lab.

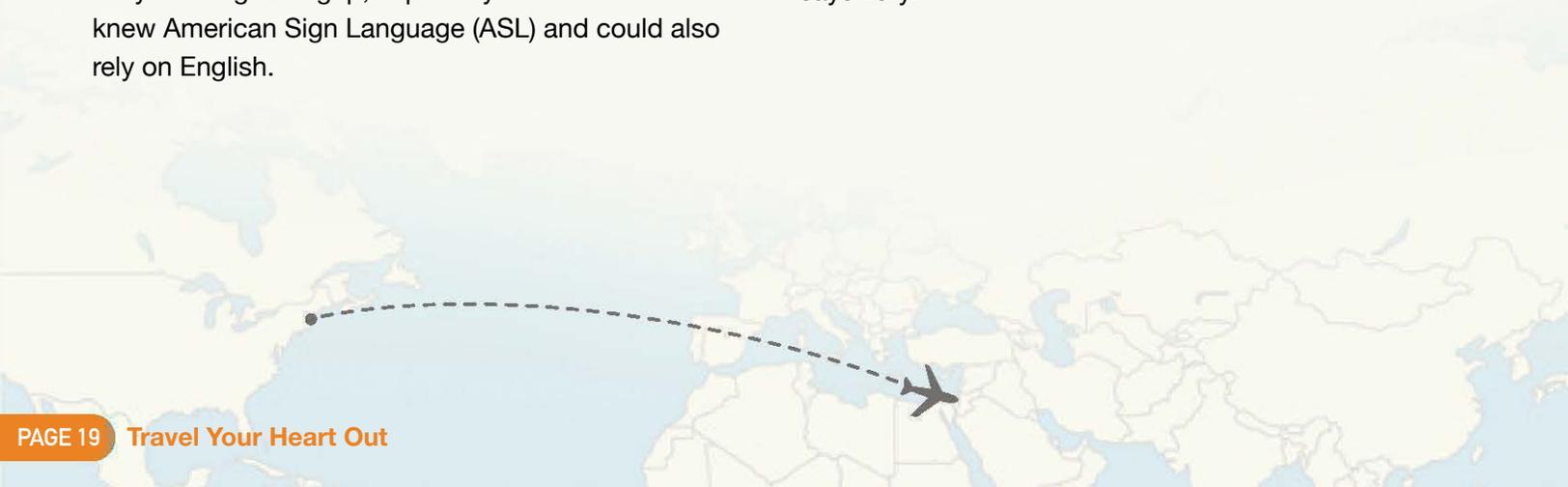
Tory, who is Deaf, found she could use her Arabic extensively in Israel (and on trips to Jordan and Egypt) and also begin to learn some Israeli Sign Language. Communication with the Deaf community was fairly easy to bridge the gap, especially since some locals knew American Sign Language (ASL) and could also rely on English.

“I didn't look for the Deaf community as soon as I got to the country, and I definitely regret it. I had only two months of hanging out with them, and I absolutely loved every minute of it.”

In the classroom, she had an ASL interpreter who resided in Israel that teamed up with a second interpreter in the United States who woke early to connect through video relay interpreting (VRI). This isn't easy to arrange but between Boston University's interpreting coordinator and the University of Haifa's study abroad office, it worked out well. Having the local interpreter helped when the VRI encountered slow or frozen connections, and when the program involved field trips.

“Boston University made sure that I had full access to everything. The local faculty also understood the interpreting situation, and made sure the interpreter was in the loop at all times. I was really impressed as I was expecting them to be a bit lax about it, but they were on top of it.”

The local Deaf students weren't as fortunate, as Tory learned. They told her they only receive 40 hours of interpreting services for a year – that includes education beyond high school, doctor's appointments, judicial issues, etc. A friend had to stop her undergraduate degree when she could no longer pay for interpreters on her own. While students at Israel's Deaf schools know Israeli Sign Language, the emphasis is on learning how to speak and lipread, and many have cochlear implants, says Tory.





I know now that I want to live abroad for a while; maybe teaching at a Deaf school, since I met so many Deaf people there who were frustrated with their educational opportunities.

Since the Deaf community is small, Tory also hung out with other university students, both Israeli and American, at the moadon (a common room for all of the university), at the gym or sports fields, at the beach, and on weekend trips to other cities in Israel.

“I was assertive in making friends. I used my phone extensively to communicate with people who didn’t know sign language, until I taught some people enough sign language to communicate effectively. It’s not good to be cooped up in your room waiting for the semester to end.”

In the final six weeks of the program, Tory got to participate in an archeology dig with other students. All these interactions didn’t just create memories, but other changes in Tory as well. “I am now more adventurous, confident, mischievous, and less judgmental. And way more tan and blonde too!”

