

Experiences from Abroad

“Time Goes By Fast When you’re Having Fun”

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I’m writing this two days before the exam period begins here in Zurich. I tried to think about a particular experience to share with you, and started to look through my pictures file when I realized that six months have gone by... and I’ve got so much to tell you. The old cliché – “time goes by fast when you’re having fun” could not have been more true for me and my feelings right now. In this file I have 36 folders of pictures from different events, including trips, parties, barbecues, sport events, restaurant and shopping excursions, and more. I’ve lived a full life here already, not to mention engineering studies in German...

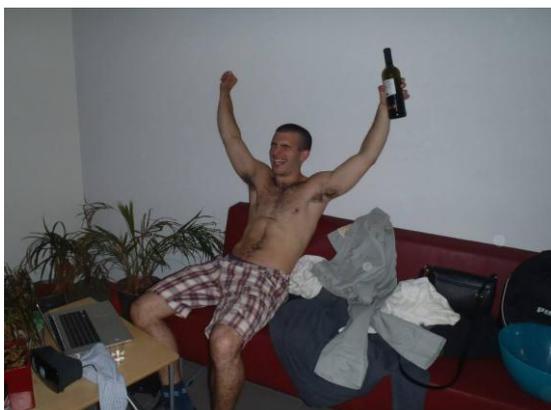
Over the past six months I’ve experienced many things ‘for the first time,’ for example, my first Passover in the snow, running in temperatures below 10 degrees, no more ‘Sunday Blues,’ and not to mention the first time I ever celebrated my birthday outside of Israel without surrounded by family and best buddies.

My birthday is at the beginning of June and this year it fell on the end of the semester, which was especially pleasant as it also marked the end of winter. I decided to invite some close friends (Alberto and Larissa from Italy, Karlos from Spain, Sadat from Turkey and Vivian from Serbia) to dinner, and a few others for a party right after.



The Birthday Meal: Tunesian Sandwiches.

I made them Tunisian sandwiches, which they all loved. Although it’s a simple meal, in comparison with Italian or Turkish foods that I’ve become accustomed to eating with my roommates, it was a real hit.



Dancing to *Infected* playlist in our undergarments.

As soon as the meal was over (around 10:00 PM), we started to play a drinking game (known as ‘melon racing’ where you halve the melon in two, remove the seeds and pour rum inside. Once this is done you split up into two groups and each team gets a straw, the rules are simple – the winning team is the first to drink it all up. Ultimately, everyone is a winner☺). The rest of the guests started to arrive... and within the hour, the apartment was packed; I think there were about 30 people. The party officially started when Alberto put on his *Infected* playlist and we were left with no other choice than to strip down to our undergarments and start dancing. From here on in the versions of how the rest of the evening went begin to differ – depending on who you ask...

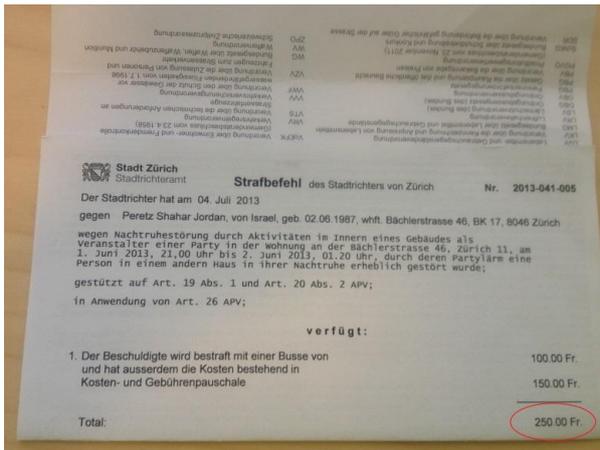
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I just remember being really happy that so many people came and that everyone was having a great time.



I woke up in the morning on the couch, covered with a blanket and a bowl beside me (you can imagine for what) and it felt like the movie “The Hangover” (AKA ‘Stopping in Vegas on the Way to a Wedding’). I started to piece the pieces of the puzzle about what had happened the night before from the pictures we took. I couldn’t remember the part with the cake and the candles and the birthday song, or the part about the shower or the cops showing up...

The inevitable next day hangover.



We sat at home all day long, trying to recover from last night’s events. Even with the hangover I couldn’t stop laughing! I was given a 250 Franc fine, which wasn’t at all pleasant, but the guys agreed that we’d split it. The party was a real hit, and people talked about for days to come. I got some presents, but mostly a lot of love and affection, which made me feel good and not homesick, just as I’ve felt over the past six months.

The Fine: 250 Francs

I believe that the greatest importance of “student exchange programs” is to study abroad, and an opportunity to experience living in a different place, reside like a local and not as a tourist – and there is a big difference between the two. To see and hear people’s opinions from different parts of the world (one of my roommates is Iranian and the other is Lebanese), and naturally to give your own opinions, to be a goodwill ambassador for Israel and draw people to my country. Forming relationships, learning to love, immersing yourself in local culture and food, and not to mention taking part in different academic experiences, checking out the local job market, and opening doors to my future career –ultimately this is what it’s all about.

I don’t think I have any complaints about my experiences here. Yes, it’s been a little expensive and not easy to survive through a really cold winter, but one can always find solutions for such setbacks. There is no doubt in my mind that one day I’ll return.