

CET Jordan, Summer 2025 | Micah Draper

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Who are the intended audience(s) of your Perspective Piece? "Students who have never spent large amounts of time abroad, students from small town backgrounds."

From Rural America to Urban Amman

As a student born and raised in a super small town in the American South, I was extremely apprehensive about traveling across the world to study Arabic in Amman, Jordan. In high school, my small, under-resourced district only offered Spanish classes, and I had very little experience with any other global cultures different from my own, much less experience in an immersive environment similar to that provided by CET Jordan. I say all these things because I feel that they truly spotlight the amazing job that CET Jordan does in meeting all of their students' wants and needs. Despite my lack of international experience and proficient knowledge of the Arabic language, CET provided me with the appropriate resources to grow, not only as a student but as a person.

I think the most memorable show of hospitality and warmth that I experienced from the staff at CET Jordan was on my first day of class. After arriving in the unfamiliar country of Jordan just twelve hours prior to class, I was jet-lagged, groggy, and extremely nervous to begin my academic journey with Arabic. I remember walking up the steps to the CET Center with my classmates, trying to figure out how I was going to communicate and function as a human being, ALL in a language that I had started studying just months before.

I walked through the CET Center door and was immediately met with multiple teachers who welcomed me to their country and to the program. I think my teacher, Ustada Isra, could tell I was nervous because she gave me a big smile and (in Arabic) stated "*kool shay tamam*", meaning "Everything is perfect!". From that moment forward, I knew that CET was going to be my home for the next two months. More importantly, I could tell that I would be surrounded by a group of professionals who wanted me to succeed and to meet my goals. I knew that they would do absolutely anything to enjoy Jordan, both academically and culturally.

To touch more on my identity and where I come from, it's important to characterize my hometown just a little bit more. I live in a town in the central part of North Carolina. Roughly 3,000 people call my town "home," and we boast one singular stoplight. It's safe to say that the bustling city of Amman, Jordan, is FAR from what I had ever experienced growing up in the American South.

At first, I felt out of place in Jordan, simply because of how strange the built environment was to me. The traffic in Amman can be crazy, the weather can be super hot (much hotter than the

weather in my hometown), and many people don't speak English. In all honesty, I was extremely intimidated by all of these things when I first arrived and, for the first week, I longed to return home, to be back in an environment that was automatically comfortable for me. However, I challenged myself to embrace the 9 weeks that I had in Amman, to learn to appreciate the craziness of the traffic, the heat of the sun, and the full Arabic immersion that I experienced.

My biggest advice to any incoming CET Jordan would be to come in ready to embrace the unexpected. This is super easy to say, but so much harder to commit to doing for the entirety of the program. Try your hardest to find appreciation for the things that you would never experience in America and know that you may never get the chance to spend a length of time in the beautiful, unique city of Amman ever again.

Regardless of how unfamiliar you may feel your background/upbringing is from your experiences in Amman, you've got this! Throw yourself into the craziness of Amman, and I promise, you will never regret it!