

My International Experience in Cairo

My experience living in Cairo for 6 weeks was incredibly insightful and enjoyable. Having lived in the UK all my life, a country in the heart of the Middle East posed a polar opposite experience to what I'm used to. To begin with, it was clear to see a stark difference in societal norms and beliefs. The city of Cairo itself seemed to be one that never slept. Unlike London, Cairo would be bustling at all hours of the night, particularly due to the hot weather at this time of year. I even acclimatised to this as I would finish work for the day before the sun would set, however, I would wait inside my accommodation for night to be upon us before embarking out again. And I would always notice the streets to be more crowded when the sun was down. Within the hospital there were a couple of moments where the difference in societies was made evident to me. First off, the lack of education amongst the patient population was clear to see when a patient opted to keep her uterus, despite being past the age of menopause and increasing her risk of further complications. Another thing of note was the heavy part religion played in society. Aside from hearing the Islamic call to prayer throughout the day and night, when I was in the hysteroscopy and colposcopy clinic, a frequent question women would ask doctors would be for how long they will be bleeding from their vagina. The doctors told me that this was a frequent concern amongst women in hospital as Islamically they cannot pray while menstruating or in general bleeding from this area. Overall, I very much enjoyed my international experience in Cairo. I learned to exercise as much curiosity as possible while also remaining respectful and cautious. I believed that embedding myself into the culture and society would be of benefit to my patients and to the healthcare staff who I was working with. I ensured I enjoyed the entertainment and food the city had to offer outside of working hours, while also learning some Arabic phrases to help me get around more easily. I also grew very fond of the Egyptian people during my experience. Whether that was from the doctors and nurses I was meeting every day or the taxi drivers who'd insist I'd sit next to them so we could have a conversation every morning on the way to work. My international experience in Cairo was thankfully one of enjoyment and appreciation for another way of life in a very different culture and I am very grateful to have had this opportunity.