

A Letter from a past resident to prospective Jewish observant

Hi there,

I'm from the US and studied abroad at the University of Sydney and lived at Mandelbaum for one semester. I was the only observant Jew living there that semester (there were other Jewish residents but they were not observant). Growing up in Jewish day schools and going to a predominately Jewish University in America (Brandeis) it was definitely a new experience for me to step out of the Jewish bubble in that way but I found it to be extremely rewarding.

Mandelbaum is about 50% Australian and 50% international. It was the first time in my life that I had lived in such a diverse and global culture and I found it to be an amazing experience to live with people from all over and learn so much from people who were different from me. Being one of the only Jews in a Jewish residential college was actually a really cool experience because I really enjoyed explaining things about kashrut, Shabbat, Jewish holidays etc. to the other residents. They were interested and really respectful. On *Yom Haatzmaut* I even put on a presentation for the other residents about Israel and I think they all really enjoyed that too.

In terms of the everyday Jewish life at Mandelbaum: The food that is prepared is kosher and you get all your meals from Mandelbaum so you don't have to worry about food. Also, there is a small kosher section in the supermarket "Coles" in the Broadway Shopping Centre which is nearby, but this is mainly candy and snacks. In Australia, there are a few kosher symbols on products but not everything has it that is kosher. There's an app for smartphones that you can get that tells you what is kosher. All the rooms at Mandelbaum have *mezuzot* and there is a library/*Beit Midrash* in Mandelbaum too.

When I stayed at Mandelbaum for Shabbos I would usually go to the Newtown Shul. The Newtown shul is a pretty small old shul about a 7 minute walk from Mandelbaum. Rabbi Cohen and his wife Shani and their 4 kids were always happy to have me for meals and I would sleep at Mandelbaum. Most *Shabboses* I would go to Bondi which is a suburb of Sydney (about 45 minutes away by public transportation- train + bus). Bondi is where most of the Jewish community lives and there are a number of shuls there. I would find families to stay with through contacting the shuls directly, meeting people at kiddushes etc.

Also, on campus is AUJS (The Australian Union for Jewish Students) which is a club of Australian Jews. They are a student run club and hold events both on and off campus. There is also Chabad on Campus who run Pizza and Parasha lunches.

I hope this was helpful. I really loved my experience at Mandelbaum and am happy to tell you whatever else you'd like to know about it and am happy to answer any questions you may have. Contact admin@mandelbaum.usyd.edu.au and they'll forward your email to me! Enjoy Australia! It was incredible!

Sarah Sue Landau