

Inspiring Travels

From an American Jewish woman artist with an origami specialty

By Lisa B. Corfman



Lisa in the Old City shuk alleyway with accessible, yet steep ramps.

I longed to visit the holy land for over a decade – I took the opportunity to do so in the summer of 2019. As a Jewish artist from the Boston area with a specialty in origami, I was thrilled to travel to Israel, Italy, and Spain. From planning, learning, connecting with others and professional development, the opportunity changed my life.

In the spring of 2019, I was accepted into a 10-day program where I learned with ten other women and we experienced Israel and Jewish life together. I would stay an extra week in Israel and then go to Europe. With my interest in origami and museums, I wanted to see the origami museum in Zaragoza, Spain. I



Entering the Old City with an origami twist.

could not resist bringing my art samples with me. Yes, Venice, Barcelona and Madrid were beckoning in Europe, but really, they were stops along the way to my dream destination in Zaragoza.

Arriving in the Holy Land of Israel on אלולעל Airlines, I connected with the other ten



Lisa atop the Aish building with a Temple Mount view.

beautiful souls. There, we stayed in Jerusalem. We studied under local rabbis and other educators. In Jerusalem we prayed at the Western Wall (the kotel) where the first and second



Tzfat artisan named Angyallag with a book of original Hebrew and artwork, the content on his published his Haggadah



Goods in the store 'I Love Jerusalem' of clay rabbis.



Pizza shop entrance with a red-hot crane.

temples stood, visited various marketplaces (shuks), stopped at the downtown area of Ben Yehuda Street, and toured the famous Holocaust museum named Yad Vashem. We would go southward and float in the mineral-filled Dead Sea. We went westward from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv (a center of commerce) to the Israeli Innovation Center, the beach, and an art fair and cooking demonstration through Nefish B'Nefish, a non-profit supporting Aliyah, there. We also travelled northward to visit Tzfat (an artist colony town) exploring the galleries and meeting Israeli artists and crafty entrepreneurs and toured the Women of the Water Mikvah. There we observed the Sabbath joyfully singing, feasting, and studying.

On my own, my first pursuit was to plant five trees in Israel at the Biblical garden Neot Kedumim in memory of my late cousins, placing an origami remembrance crane by each. In the Jerusalem store named *I Love Jerusalem*, I obtained a beautiful "Holy Land" artwork in exchange for a pair of my handmade origami crane earrings. I stayed at

the Abraham Hostel at Davidka Square. Coincidentally and to my unexpected delight, the hostel had an exhibition of small, framed origami dresses. At the hostel, I met and bonded with two women. They were from India and Russia. Together we explored the old city and visited museums. These included the Israel Museum, the Hebrew Music Museum, the Friends of Zion Museum, and a second chance to see Yad Vashem – all were a cultural experience.

One of my days in Israel was devoted to experiencing the holy land's origami culture. The first stop was to visit Paul Jackson and Miri Golan at their house in Herzliyya. They are the founders of the Origami Israel Center. We chatted, I saw Paul's personal glass display case filled with origami, and Miri even picked out samples of my origami items, which I had traveled with, for the Origami Israel Center. Then I traveled to Binyamina where I met up with Ilan Garibi, founder of Origami Israel. He

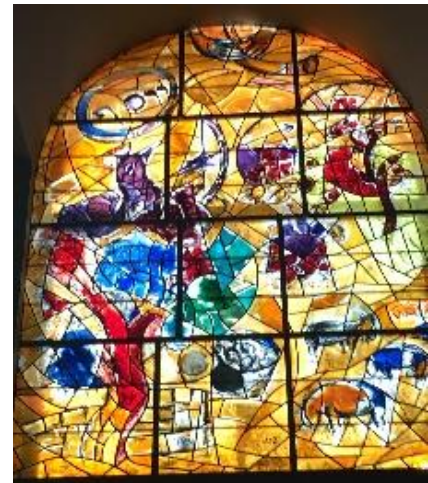


Metal folded bracelet by the Israeli Ilan Garibi.

treated me to his house studio tour. The tour included his origami display of models by various famous creators with narrative and model stories. I saw his paper collection, folded metal work, tessellated origami lamp shades, and other functional origami. We drove to an Origami Israel meeting together, along the way debating what makes a museum an actual museum and whether someone who is the inventor of an origami model is a creator or designer. The answer is that the innovator is the *creator* of an origami design. It was fun to connect with our origami passion.

At the meeting I learned to fold origami models with the Israeli children; then the children left, and more experienced paper folders joined the session. Everyone had the opportunity to make announcements and updates (in Hebrew!), so nervously I shared a few visuals and sang my American origami song. It was a fun five hours at the meeting. Graciously, Ravit, a mother from the origami meeting, offered to host me overnight as it had gotten late, and I feared that I might not be able to get back to the hostel while transportation was still open. Thank you Ravit!

In the morning I went directly to Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem, a section of Jerusalem, for a tour. The staff was extremely nice. While the state of Israel is for all and is also the homeland for the Jewish people, the hospital bridges divisions between Jews and Arabs. Within the hospital is a famous chapel with twelve painted, stained glass windows panes by Marc Chagall, each with incredible detail of the twelve tribes of Israel illustrating Jacob's blessed sons – breathtaking! For a last taste of Israel, I made hummus for the first time at the Abraham Hostel and left for Ben-Gurion International Airport at 2:30am, very early in the morning!



A Chagall window panel illustration of Joseph at Hadassah Hospital's chapel. There were twelve windows for each tribe of Jacob.



Classical Venice gondola on a canal.

I flew to Italy for a five-day stay. In Venice, I took in the natural beauty, the gondola romance, I heard the elegant music in Saint Mark's Square, I explored the Jewish Ghetto, then I went on a sunset cruise, and visited two museums. Within the Jewish Ghetto, at the Jewish Museum they sold origami paper but no origami products – what a shame! I can imagine my Jewish Venice pictures with my origami brought into the



Romantic Venice gondolas at Saint Mark's Square with a simple crane addition.

compositions as greeting cards for the gift shop. I felt fortunate to experience Venice; hopefully the city will remain alive long into the future and not be a gorgeous city under water.



Counter with drinks and folds at Zaragoza's Café de Levante where the Grupo Zaragozano de Papiroflexia holds their weekly of meeting. The club, around since 1938, is the oldest origami club in the world!



Educational Museum of Origami in Zaragoza (EMOZ) attractions. Left to right: A realistic spider folded from a single sheet, with the Crease Pattern (CP) underneath. A large modular origami piece using the golden venture technique of the EMOZ artwork above the stairway. Giant rhinoceros in the EMOZ library. Nine attached cranes folded from a single sheet of paper with some partial cuts. A crumple folded origami artwork.

Off to Spain! Zaragoza is the home of the oldest origami club (since 1938) in the world that meets weekly, and Zaragoza also houses the only origami museum in Europe. I visited both. I met up with local origami guru Israel López Polanco in Zaragoza, Spain. I had fun the first night attending the origami Grupo Zaragozano de Papiroflexia meeting. The next day I visited the Educational Museum of Origami in Zaragoza (EMOZ), one of three visits there that trip. The third would be after a day trip to Barcelona. I met Jorge Pardo, the director, who selected some of my origami earrings and greeting cards for the museum's gift shop. I toured the museum with a new friend I met at the origami club meeting. Another person and I received a guided tour by Mr. Polanco later that day. Such insight!



Centro de Historica de Zaragoza building entrance where the Educational Museum of Origami (EMOZ) is housed, shown with Lisa's crane addition.

It is ten rooms of stunning exhibits including an origami library that acts as a classroom. The museum really captures origami's amazement.



Small highlight of the Sagrada Familia outer walls.

The two of us then took a day trip to Barcelona. We saw the outer wall of the Sagrada Familia – an enormous cathedral, elaborately designed by Antoni Gaudi. That project will soon be finished after more than 100 years of construction. We visited the crypt at the base of the cathedral to see the space and visit Gaudi's grave, also stopping at the gift shop. Before my trip, paper folder Giselle Garcia recommended I try the Spanish dessert Dulce de Leche, a caramelized milk, so I enjoyed something similar in Barcelona.

The next day I said my last farewell to EMOZ and took a train to Madrid, Spain. I saw the exterior of the Madrid castle, the manicured gardens, and the Egyptian Temple Debod. I walked down Grad Via (a famous street like NYC's Fifth Avenue), walked through a pedestrian walkway lined with vending artists, and ate at Mirador del Arco de Cuchilleros in an old part of Madrid. Finally, I headed to Madrid Airport to return home.



Egyptian Temple Debod in Madrid.

Back to the United States of America! I collected myself by sorting through my belongings, notes, and preparing a few things for the upcoming week unwinding with family on Cape Cod. After a good night's sleep, I became a morning bird with the time difference. With friends and family, we relaxed on the beach and played Boggle; I distributed souvenirs and then I began telling and writing my story about my trip. Now, the experience will always stay in me.

The whole experience allowed me to go within myself, ask questions, learn, experience, connect with others and really grow deep within my small place in this world. It was amazing – art bridges people worldwide!



Cape Cod sunset fold



Footwear at a Cape Cod beach.