

## **How to make the most of your stay in the USA** *Guidelines for the best trip ever*

For two weeks you have a highly responsible job of representing both Austria and our school. In addition to that you have a wonderful opportunity to do some cultural studies during the next two weeks. Try to get the most out of it!

**Get interested in and be open towards your new environment.** Try to take in as much as you can by talking to lots of people, reading newspapers, watching TV and keeping a scrap book (notebook, pen, glue stick, scissors. Take notes of your observations, collect new words, phrases, make them your treasure to take home.

**1. Look, listen and ask:** enjoy being a guest and meet your host in a respectful way. Find out about the American way of life, by asking questions respectfully but don't confront your hosts with "clever" or offensive statements about the US.

- No jokes about Mr Bush (even now!)
- don't criticize American politics/religion or
- make fun of their patriotism.

You might hurt your host's feelings - so, be careful!

**2. Avoid clichés** about what Americans are like (overweight, eating junk food, bad food, superficial, etc.) but try to come up with your own judgement.

**3. Friendliness:** Americans are very friendly and eager to help. Respond in a friendly and polite way. You can have lovely conversations with the shop assistant in a supermarket. Take your chance and talk!

**4.** Don't be offended if people don't **shake hands** with you, it's not very common, but you can still do it. It's part of our culture. When you leave you will probably understand the meaning of a good hug.

**5. Food:** There's a cliché that Americans always eat fast food. This is not true! On the contrary, you can enjoy a large variety of delicious dishes from different parts of the world. Before declining anything at least taste it and give it a try (out of politeness). You don't have to go back for seconds.

**6. Going back for second helpings:** There are all-you-can-eat-places where you can go back for seconds. If you order coffee in a restaurant you can usually have as many free refills as you want.

**7. Mind American table manners!** You cut all the meat on your plate before you start eating. Put the knife down, pick up the fork with your right hand, your left hand rests in your lap. Then start eating with the fork only.

**8. The fridge.** Your host family will probably offer you to help yourself to drinks and food from the fridge. They mean it! You can go ahead and get yourself a drink or something else but don't empty the fridge. Asking is always nice.

**9. In school** watch your peers and do as they do. If they sing the anthem to pledge allegiance, listen, don't pass any comments on it. Participate in class, don't disrupt lessons by talking to your Austrian friends.

**10. Staring:** People might glance at you because you are new in school but they would never stare at you. It is considered very rude and offensive!

**11. Be ready to answer questions and talk about Austria.** As representatives of your country **bring some postcards, pictures, brochures of Graz, and your family** to show your host-family and friends.

**12. PDA (Public demonstration of affection) is taboo.** If you happen to bring your boyfriend or girlfriend, don't show the world that you are madly in love. Americans have different moral standards. In America ***dating*** somebody means going to the movies with someone you have a crush on, maybe holding hands in the darkness of the movie theater, a brief bood-bye kiss in front of his or her house, and THAT'S IT. No spending the night at his or her house, let alone having sex before marriage.

If you are seen holding hands, hugging and kissing each other or sitting on each others' laps – like you do here with all your friends and in a very harmless way – this will be mistaken for PDA ... please don't do it while in Kansas City.

**13. Partying:** If you are invited to party have fun but remember that **you are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol or try drugs.** The drinking age is 21 and smoking is very unpopular, and forbidden in all public places. Bragging about serious drinking experiences is very bad for your reputation and will result in stopping the exchange for future GIBS students.

So please be responsible!