

Eric's Transcultural experiences



Eric in Graz

Last week, an exchange student called Eric visited me. I showed him around Graz. I wanted to show him all the sights and great buildings, and we went in the city centre. Then we ran into a friend of mine and we hugged each other, before Eric and me continued our walk through the city. “Why did that girl hug you?” Eric asked.

“Because she is my friend,” I answered.

“Do all Austrian girls hug their friends?” he asked, as if it was hard to believe

“Most of them do,” I said. “Some older girls kiss each other on the cheek.”

Eric froze right in the middle of the street “They KISS each other?” he asked.

“On the cheek, yes,” I responded. Eric started walking again, but he seemed to be thinking very hard. Then we passed a restaurant. “What is that green sauce those people are pouring over their salads?” he wondered.

“It is pumpkin seed oil,” I answered. “It is only produced in Austria.” That was the first time that I had the feeling, that Eric was really content with my answer to his questions. Then he heard someone say ‘Mahlzeit’. “What does that mean?” he asked.

“Enjoy your meal,” I answered, a bit exhausted by all his questions.

“I thought ‘Guten Appetit’ meant enjoy your meal.”

“It does,” I sighed. “‘Mahlzeit’ actually means meal time if you translate it literally.” Again, Eric seemed content with my answer. When it was 12 o’clock, he asked: “Aren’t we going to take a nap?”

“No, actually I wasn’t planning on doing that,” I replied. “Are you tired?”

“A bit,” he admitted. “But it’s okay. But don’t you get awfully tired when you never sleep in the afternoon?”

“Sometimes,” I replied. “But that depends on how much I slept during the night.” Eric was clearly impressed. When we went through the Stadtpark, he wanted to know: “Why do so many people here have dogs?”

“Why not?” I asked him back.

“I don’t know,” he said. “But in my country, far less people have got pets than here.” When we passed some clothes shops, Eric wanted to know, why so many people went shopping together. “I guess because it is more fun,” I said. “And maybe because you want to hear someone else’s opinion. Also, it is really typical of girls to go shopping together in their free time.”

“Really?” he asked. “What else do teenagers do here when they spend time together?”

I thought about it. “Well, they go to the cinema, or to the public swimming pool, or into the park, or they go and eat ice cream. Or they just talk.” Eric listened with great interest. The next thing he wanted to know was if any famous musicians that were still alive came from Austria. “I never really thought about it,” I said, “The only one who comes to my mind is Left Boy.



He is maybe not really famous, but he is well known. And Conchita Wurst, of course”

When Eric left, I had mixed emotions. On the one hand, it had been a bit annoying to have to answer his questions. On the other hand, I knew I would miss him. He had made me see things from another perspective for a change.


Eric in Switzerland and France

I once had had an exchange student, who was called Eric. He sometimes annoyed me with questions that seemed to be kind of pointless, but he was really nice, and we still write each other messages.

Yesterday, he returned from a tour to Switzerland and Paris. Today, I received a long mail about his experiences there. The first thing he mentioned, were the three kisses on the cheek. Eric comes from a country, where people only shake hands when they meet for the first time. So it was really confusing, when his host family immediately kissed him on the cheek three times. He says that he felt really uncomfortable after being welcomed by that, but he did his best to hide it. Another unpleasant thing about Switzerland were the high prices. Everything was really expensive. In the evening, Eric was in a much better mood, because he just had eaten fondue for the first time in his life. He totally loved it and ate until he was full. Which was probably a mistake, because they had Swiss chocolate for dessert. On the next day, Eric received some sandwiches from his host family for the day. However, when he ate them, there was some sort of mustard inside. He noticed that most kids in Switzerland had the same mustard in their sandwiches everyday. When he visited their school, he also noticed that the school bell was really different to what he was used to. It played a little melody. Eric found that very amusing. In Paris, he experienced the same thing in the subways. They were playing a little melody at each stop. When Eric went to buy himself lunch, he discovered pain au chocolat. It was a funny-shaped croissant, filled with chocolate.

I think he quite enjoyed the trip.





The End