

A person's hands are visible at the bottom, holding up two dark, pointed, fan-like objects. The background shows a view from an airplane window, with the wing and a clear blue sky filled with white clouds. The text "Eric in Graz" is overlaid in the center.

Eric in Graz

Eric in Spain

## ***Eric in Graz***

A few weeks ago, I had a foreign exchange student to stay at my home. His name was Eric and he came from a faraway country called Schaschlikland. He was very polite and friendly, but he was definitely not the student I expected.

I got my first impression of Eric when we picked him up from the airport. He seemed very shy and barely spoke while sitting in the backseat together. At first, I thought he had language difficulties but became more outgoing when we got home and I decided to give him a tour of our house. Of course, I showed him his room first. Eric seemed to like his room and after he had moved his suitcase into the room, I showed him our dog. Our dog liked Eric a lot, but I'm not sure if Eric liked our dog much. He was brushing dog hair off his clothes until we sat down for dinner. Obviously, I offered him the best Austrian food for that special occasion. He remarked that he had never tasted anything like the Kernöl or Schnitzel, but added that it was delicious, nevertheless.

Because Eric was not my first exchange student and I had been part of a few exchanges myself, I had expected a few specific questions that all my exchange partners had asked so far, such as the wifi password, history of my country, the quality of the tap water and other questions like that. However, Eric's questions were not the ones I had expected. He asked things like how the faucets and piano worked and why we kept a dog. I was so surprised and taken aback by most of his questions that I had no idea how to answer.

I showed him our bathroom, wrote down the wifi password, in case he wanted to contact his friends and family at home, and even opened my dusty book called "National Treasures of Austria" for the first time since I got it, in case he was interested in our culture. Obviously, I was planning to take him to the Schlossberg and at least to one of the major mountains in Styria.

But seeing that he enjoyed sightseeing in the city so much, I ended up taking him to more places such as the Zeughaus, Doppelwendeltreppe and even to the Turk statue, hanging out of the window in Sporgasse. Eric even came to one of my piano concerts and told me that he enjoyed piano music very much.

He was definitely unlike any exchange student I had had before. While all my exchange partners stayed up late talking to their friends on the phone for hours, Eric was completely quiet and went to bed early every day. And because he was here alone without his class, he didn't constantly ask me to let him spend time with his friends, which I found very pleasant.

Unfortunately, everything has to come to an end. Because Eric was such a pleasant exchange student, the week was over way too soon. Saying goodbye to him was hard, even though I am

going to visit him in a couple of months. But after he left, I found a note in our refrigerator that said the following:

“Thank you so much for everything. I really enjoyed the wonderful stay at your house and you and your family were so nice to me. The culture was so interesting and it was great seeing all the amazing sights in Austria. Even though I may not be like most other exchange students, I hope I didn’t make things difficult for your family.

Best regards,

Eric.”

# Eric in Spain

A few weeks ago, Eric went to see Barcelona with his class as a foreign exchange student. He was very excited to go because he had never been to Spain before. First Eric had to get on a bus to the airport and then he could finally take the plane to Barcelona. He couldn't wait to arrive in Spain, but he took a lot of pictures on the airplane.

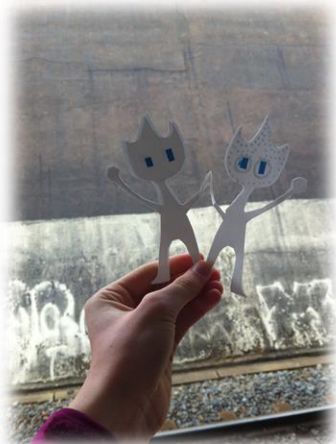


When he finally arrived in the airport in Barcelona, his host family greeted him enthusiastically and as they drove to his host family's house, Eric was exhausted, but that didn't stop him from admiring the pretty landscape, which was very different from that in his own country. When Eric was at home he went to bed immediately and the next morning, he could sleep way longer than usual because school started half an hour later! Not only did school start later, but Eric also noticed the atmosphere in the classes was very different.

The students called their teachers by their first names and the lessons were very chaotic. The teachers did nothing to quiet down the students or even stop them from coming late. Eric thought it was very strange that there were no breaks between classes, but that there was a long lunch break. Another difference in this school was that there was a lunch hall where students would eat their food. The cafeteria served hot meals such as potato soup and vegetable patties, which the students found very disgusting, but Eric liked the food and finished some of the other people's meals for them.



Another difference for Eric was that he always travelled in the underground subway whereas in his hometown, he usually travelled by bus and tram. At times the subways were extremely crowded and hard to get in, but sometimes it was completely empty! He also had to watch his pockets and backpack more than at home because there were more pickpockets.



Eric also noticed the eating habits of his Spanish family was very different than his own. They tended to eat a lot later, not only in the morning but in the evening as well, often eating dinner at ten in the evening! In Spain people ate a lot of meat which was a little difficult for Eric because he is vegetarian. But luckily, there was a lot of salad available as well. Despite the differences, some of which Eric had a hard time to adjust to, he really enjoyed his stay in Spain.