

Sara R.

Eric in Austria and Switzerland



User


[Company name]

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Eric in Graz

The week before Easter an exchange student called Eric visited us in Graz. He had studied our language for 9 years, but had never been in a German speaking country before. The thing that surprised him most was our way of greeting. In his home people would give each other 3 kisses, while in our country people merely shake hands or hug. He was also surprised by how religious our country is. When we went on a trip to the countryside, he was so amused by the fact that there was a church in every little village that he started to take photos of each church we passed, to be able to count them. On this trip we went to visit my relatives, who live in a little village in an eastern part of Styria. He was completely overwhelmed by their dialect. "Like hearing a new language", he told us in the car on the way back home. One thing that didn't surprise him however, was how much beer is consumed in Austria. That surprised me more than him, as I had never given the matter much thought. Unbelievable as it may seem, it is true that beer is the most consumed item in Austria. He was also very interested in the things he had already heard about. As for instance: "The Sound Of Music". A film most Austrians have never even heard of, but which is quite famous in the rest of the world. Music was another big topic for Eric. In the country of Mozart he had been sure everybody would be open to at least classical music. Apparently he was wrong. While showing him my piano and playing a few songs, our neighbour hammered against the wall. We received a letter of complaint 10 minutes later. Eric was amazed by how big our parties are. While he was visiting my mum had her birthday party and she invited all our relatives, we met at a "Buschenschank", something Eric had never heard of and was quite interested in. He found the typical Styrian food delicious and he was very keen on trying everything. He was very pleased to have had a chance to listen to my uncle playing Styrian folk music on the





harmonica. He even had the chance to witness a typical styrian folk dance in “Lederhosen” and “Dirndl”. Eric comes from a little village and he was deeply impressed by our city. The thing that caught his attention straight away was how the city never seemed to sleep. It was always awake, always moving. Never completely silent. Where Eric comes, from punctuality is a huge issue, it makes a bad impression if you are five minutes late. Here in Graz, however, people don’t take that so seriously. Work also has a much higher status in Eric’s home. And though your pay is better, the hours are a lot longer. Here are some pictures of the things Eric found most interesting in Graz.


Eric in Switzerland

A few weeks ago, Eric visited a family in Morges, Switzerland. During his visit he became aware of many little cultural differences.

To start off food, was a big topic. Eric knew that cheese is very important in Switzerland, so he was not surprised that “fondue” and “raclette” are common meals. The Swiss, as he came to notice are far more accustomed to eating “heavy” food than he is. Having eaten half of his fondue he was so full, he had the feeling that if he ate another bite, his stomach would be in serious danger of exploding. Eric enjoyed a healthy breakfast, with juice and coffee. Unfortunately Eric’s favourite hot chocolate is not one of the preferred drinks. Eric was also able to taste a special kind of bread made with saffron. Not everybody likes it in Switzerland and Eric admitted that it does have a rather peculiar taste. Eric also tried combining the bread with butter and a special chestnut crème. He found it delicious and quickly grew quite fond of it, but according to his host family only a small number of people appreciate its taste. For snack Eric could choose between a sandwich and a salad. All of the sandwiches came with a special mustard cream, quite enjoyable even though Eric is not a huge mustard fan.

Eric could also find huge differences when comparing the school in Morges to the schools in his home town. Though Morges is tiny, over 2000 students attend the local lycée. The facilities are enormous! The library is gigantic; they have their own restaurant and the





hallways are big enough, that upon entering the building Eric easily got lost within the first five minutes! Eric noticed that other differences can be found if you take a closer look at the time table. Though most of the subjects look similar to those taught in Eric's home country, there are minor differences. Religion for example is banned. Eric wanted to know more, so he asked some of the students. According to the Swiss, faith is very personal and should not be taught in school, because you would influence and discriminate against others.

Eric also became aware of the fact that in Switzerland work and punctuality play a much higher role than in his home country. The people work hard, to buy a house and a good car. Eric's host family told him that the jobs in Switzerland are very well paid. Almost everyone has a house and car, if possible, a fast and big car. Eric had never seen so many Jaguars, Mercedes and Porsches as he did in Switzerland. Cars are a highly valued status symbol.

All in all Eric loved his stay and he really hopes he gets another chance to visit Switzerland!