



# Eric's Transcultural Experiences

Sarah [REDACTED]

A writing project form my exchange trip

# ERIC IN SPAIN

Eric is a foreign language student; he loves to travel around the world and has already written a bucket list of all the countries he wants to visit. His next stop was Spain. Therefore, we finally got to be a host family, I was very excited. I wondered what differences he would notice here, because as far as I know his home country is a little different from ours. But I didn't expect that he would notice the following differences.



We picked Eric up from the airport and welcomed him with one kiss on each cheek, just like we are used to greet each other here in Spain. He seemed to be completely surprised by this way of saying hello. After asking him for the reason of his surprise he told us that in his country people greet each other with a handshake. Generally he had the feeling that Spaniards are much more open than people in his home country.



At home he noticed some more things. When we entered our apartment he wanted to take off his shoes just like he is used to do in his home country. When we then told him that in Spain everybody leaves their shoes on in their home, Eric was astonished. Our guest also told us that he had noticed that eating times are different and that in Austria you only have warm food for lunch and not for dinner. He was also surprised that we had dessert after every meal. Something else I observed was that Eric always said “Thank you”, “yes, please” or “no, thanks”. So I approached him and told him that in Spain you never say “thanks” or “please”, only if you don’t know someone or the person is superior. It took some time but he got used to all of it during his stay.



I also took Eric to school and he told me that our school campus was much bigger than theirs and that their school wasn't walled. I learned that in Austria they have a different number of school periods every day and that they have a break after each period. This is different compared to my school where we have class until 2:30 pm and only one big break.

All in all Eric enjoyed his stay in Spain, especially at our house, very much and would love to come back again some time.

# ERIC IN GRAZ

A few weeks ago a foreign language student stayed at our house for a little while. His name was very hard to pronounce, so he told us we should just call him "Eric". I don't know which country Eric comes from, but it is certainly one with a culture that is completely different from ours. I am assuming this because he was obviously not used to all the things we'd call daily life.

I was very excited about the foreign exchange student because I had always wanted to give someone a tour through my home city. There were so many things I wanted to tell him about Graz, but his questions were difficult to answer. Eric didn't ask questions you'd expect from a typical tourist, he seemed to be more interested in the things that we are not even consciously aware of.

I tried to organize trips that would be more interesting for him rather than going to the usual sightseeing spots like the Schloßberg for example. I wanted to find places that he would enjoy.



First, I went out into our garden with Eric; we have a great view over the whole city. I was sure that he would enjoy the view. When he asked me questions, I thought about each one for a few minutes to give Eric an answer that would satisfy him. Some of the questions he asked were "Why are the houses built so close to each other?", "Why do the houses over there not have any gardens?" or "Why do the buildings have different colors?".



When he noticed the flowers he got very curious and asked what these beautiful things were. “Can you eat the fruits of this tree?”, was one of his questions. I tried to explain it to Eric and he was impressed. I think he likes plants and flowers a lot, every time he saw some he asked me about them. Eric wrote all of the information into his notebook (he takes it with him everywhere he goes), he also drew some flowers in it.



The moment we passed by a lantern he stopped and climbed on it. Then he said: “This is a very pretty house! Who lives in here?”. It was hard for him to understand that nobody really lived in there, but he was fascinated when I turned the lantern on and it emitted light. I walked with him through the woods next to our house too. Eric took a close look at everything. Therefore, we spent a lot of time in the woods. When we passed by a leaf that had already fallen off the tree and was now hanging between some branches, he thought this leaf was a sleeping place and he asked curiously: “Whose sleeping place is this?”.



Eric and I also walked by some garbage people had left there; I think he didn't know what we consider as garbage. He walked to the piece of paper that was lying on the ground; it was already quite dirty. Eric said: "You have that here too? Why did someone leave it here? It isn't that dirty yet, I'd still use it." I asked him what this is used for in his home country and he told me that they use it to dry their fruits on. Then I explained him what we use it for - he was surprised that we use it for something different than they do.



When we were slowly walking back home, Eric discovered something they did not have in their country, namely metal and fence posts. "What are these used for? Do you place them randomly throughout the area?", he asked. I told him that we use these to mark someone's private property and as a barrier. It seems to me that Eric really enjoyed the things I showed him, I think he also got to know a lot of new things.

The next morning when I looked for him, he was gone. I didn't expect that he would leave so quickly again. When I went into the room which he slept in, to see if there was something to be cleaned up I found a little note. I glanced around the room again and I noticed that there was not only the note but he also left something else. They seemed to be plants, I had never seen them before – maybe they are typical plants in his country. Nevertheless, these plants were beautiful; they are still standing at the very same place where he has left them.