

Eric & Erica



Erica in Graz

A few weeks ago an exchange student lived with us for 6 days. She has studied English for over 6 years and was very excited to see Austria and meet new people. My family and I thought about what places and dishes we wanted to show our new guest. We were very curious about how she would like the Austrian lifestyle. However, Erica also noticed little things we had never thought about before.

She was really fascinated by our way of greeting other people. When she first met my mom she wanted to give her two kisses like she was used to doing, but my mother shook her hand. The next thing which was very new for her was that she had to take off her shoes in the hall, because she would normally walk around in the house with her sneakers on.



Erica was also fascinated by a lot of things at home. Firstly she was wondering why we had a different room for our toilet instead of having it together with our shower in the bathroom. Besides that, she found it very strange that we threw everything in the toilet instead of having a separate garbage can. She also noticed that our bedding was totally different than

the Spanish one. She wasn't used to sleeping in beds with very thick blankets and huge pillows.



Our Austrian food was also new to her but she tried everything my parents had prepared for her. When we first offered Erica to try our salad she gave me a strange look. She nodded, tried her first bite of the salad with the strange looking black oil and she loved it. At lunch Erica ate a whole bread with Bratlfett, even though I think she didn't really like it too much. One day she asked me what we did with the



water because it doesn't really taste like water. I told her that it's the best and cleanest water in Austria, she nodded and smiled.

But there was one thing she was very fascinated by: our time management. She found it very strange that we ate lunch right after school because she is normally waiting until 3pm to have lunch. In the evening I reserved a table in a restaurant for 7pm. Erica and her friends didn't believe us when they asked us at what time we would go to the restaurant. At home she was eating dinner at 10pm the earliest. When I started preparing myself for bed at half past ten she gave me a strange look. Erica told me that during the week she was used to going to bed at 12pm to 1am. She was also wondering why me and my family were always stressed out about being on time because in Spain it is ok to be late.



Also in school Erica got to know a few new things. She was not used to speaking to the teachers with their last name and to standing up before class. Other than that she was wondering why one lesson was only 45 minutes instead of one hour long.

All in all Erica and me had a really great time together and she opened my eyes to the little differences in our cultures. I think she really enjoyed her stay with us and she said she wants to come back soon. We have become great friends and I miss her a lot.



Erica in Spain

A few days ago, Erica visited her host family in Spain. She really wanted to get to know a bit more about the Spanish culture, meet new people and make great friends. She was very curious about how Spanish people would live and what they would eat and she also noticed a few new things about the culture that Spanish people would probably never really think about.

For example, Erica was very fascinated about the two kisses, called besos, that Spanish people give each other when they meet. Every time she was introduced to new people they gave her two kisses on her cheeks. In general, Erica had the feeling that Spanish people are more open to strangers and that they have more body contact with other people than people in Austria do. She also noticed that the Spaniards speak very loudly and they show a lot of emotions too. While talking, they do a lot of gestures and try to keep eye contact with the people that they are talking to.

In school there were many similarities, but for example, she wasn't used to addressing teachers by their first names. Moreover, she had the feeling that the Spanish teachers were even less strict than the Austrian ones. She also noticed that they did a lot of group work and everybody was included in the work they had to do.



At her host family's home, she observed a few things that were new to her. For example, the toilet was in the bathroom together with the shower. Furthermore, Erica was allowed to leave her shoes on while she was in the house. At first, she found it very strange, but after a few days she got used to leaving her sneakers on. Erica also got to know her exchange student's grandparents and, like most of the Spanish people, they were also very open and friendly. She had the feeling that her host sister had great respect for her parents and also for her grandparents.

Erica figured out that the Spanish food is also quite different from Austrian food. For example, for breakfast, they were eating toast with olive oil and Erica was offered a bowl of cereals swimming in warm milk. Also that her host family was drinking cold chocolate was something that Erica had never seen before. Erica also observed that Spanish people hold their knives in the right hand and their forks in the left while cutting their meals, and then they change the fork to the right hand for eating.



Something that Erica was also very fascinated by, was the time management of Spanish people. First of all, in Spain everything happens three hours later than she is used to. Secondly, she and her host family were always late. This, however, wasn't a big problem, although they knew that they would come late to an appointment, they were never really in a hurry.

Further, it seemed to Erica that religion is more important for Spanish people than it is for Austrians. Erica realized this, because a lot of the exchange students wore a cross around their necks and went to church once a week. Besides that, nearly all of them are baptized and confirmed.

Erica had a great time in Spain and made a lot of wonderful new friends. She will definitely return and meet them again.



The End

