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Person to Person in Austria

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Andrea Pakula

Austria—October 24, 2013

Field Notes: Person to Person in Austria

While Austria and the US are similar in many ways, there are some things that we do every day that are fundamentally different. For instance, the size of refrigerators in Austria are much smaller than those in the US, where we pride ourselves on just how much stuff our fridge can hold. Here, the fridges are small because people go shopping nearly every day and pick up food items as they need them, rather than doing a weekly shopping trip and planning for what will be needed for the next 6-7 days. This system can sometimes be a bit troublesome, especially if you're missing a food item on a Sunday, because almost every establishment, except for coffee houses, are closed on Sundays.

In general, the Austrians are more reserved than Americans. While Americans are excited to talk to just about anyone about anything, Austrians keep to themselves and rarely start conversations with strangers. Austrians are also more upfront about things than Americans are, and rarely pussyfoot around a subject with "sorry's" and "excuse me's". Some people find that this is rude, but it's just a more "to the point" attitude. However, many Austrians like the fact that Americans are so friendly and open, and will usually open up once someone else starts a conversation.

During my interview, I was surprised to learn that military service is mandatory in Austria for men. I knew that this was the case with other European countries, but I usually associated this with the Scandinavian countries, not central

Europe. But military service is mandatory, and Austria celebrates their military on their national holiday, October 26. On this day, the military does parades, concerts, and generally shows off for their country. People all come out to see their troops, and then sing many songs, some patriotic and some not, and celebrate being Austrian. It's seems almost like 4th of July for Americans, except that we don't have beer tents from which "It's Raining Men" can be heard.

Interview: Christine Kuntscher (host mother)