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Life in Vienna & Reflections

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Vienna, Austria

11/25/2022

Life in Vienna & Reflections

As my time comes to a close here in Vienna, I feel so intensely grateful to have been allowed to study here. On this trip, I thought about what it means to be American and what aspects of my country reflect my character and personality. I was curious to find out, so I decided to interview my host mom, who has hosted many international students before and has been extremely welcoming since I arrived. I started by asking her to explain a bit about everyday life. She normally takes the dog for a walk in the morning, takes public transport into the city to go to work and come back home, and makes dinner at the end of the day. The aspect of public transport, especially the subway, was very exciting. I love taking the subway to work, but I realize how normal it is for other people since they were young. However, in the United States, unless you live in large cities, the public transportation system does not compare. I find the public transportation here amazing and reliable.

I also asked my host mom what types of food she would normally eat throughout the day. Breakfast normally consists of Semmel (which is a roll in English) with butter and maybe marmalade, and a coffee. Another thing I have noticed here and fallen in love with is the coffee culture. In the U.S., I find this fast coffee culture such as Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts to have taken over small coffee shops, but here small cafes thrive and are a major part of the city. The cafes stay open as late as 2 am and even at this time, you still see people deep in conversation, others reading a book, or even studying. The slower pace of everything and taking time for

yourself or with others while enjoying a coffee is something so small yet impactful I found. For lunch, she would normally grab something out or bring leftovers from dinner. Then for dinner, we all meet and help cook food, and sit all together. In contrast to living on campus, cooking for myself and sitting down to enjoy a meal is something I found myself not doing too often.

However, I also asked my host mom questions like what patterns, if any, does she find while hosting American students? In other words, what are some things uniquely American? She then goes on to say that she finds Americans to be very friendly and approachable. We are not afraid to make conversation with the people around us. She also expressed her admiration for the idea of teamwork that Americans possess. This helped change my perception of how people abroad view Americans. Before I came to Europe, I was very aware of the fact that the public image of the United States (specifically politically) is not the best. But for her to have viewed my country and people in such a positive light showed me that people are still willing to see past stereotypes and situations that average Americans have no control over. It was a great conversation and I appreciate both my way of life here and back at home in Oregon.