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2011-12 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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## Rollercoaster Rides

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*Vienna, Prater (Prater Ferris Wheel built in 1897)*

Guten Morgan,

This entry's theme is something some study abroad programs face, learning another language. We are all continuing to do well with our German classes here in Austria, but I would like to take a moment to explain how learning another language can sometimes seem. Learning a language is like a constant roller coaster ride and I know we have all had our own personal roller coaster rides. One where you feel that you are doing amazing and the next you are coming down hard and screaming all the way!

To start learning a language and more about another culture, you start off your roller coaster ride with a steep climb. You are just trying to absorb everything. But what can be challenging is when you get to the peak and start heading downwards. Commonly when you get to a peak when you start to realize what you really do know in your foreign language and what you don't. In other words we realize that where we are is not where we want to be with our language skill. We would all love to have German come naturally and effortlessly like our own native language does. It's hard, we're not stupid, we're just working with a different language and in a different culture. Accepting both of these can be challenging.

Of course, once we do accept the challenging times we can move on, and start that climb again on the roller coaster. But things don't always have to be extremely hard, either. When the times get tough, what we can't forget is our own strengths. We all have things we are good at or enjoy, things that make us feel better or at least don't make us feel like fish out of water. Learning another language and going abroad changes you, that I can't deny, but that doesn't mean you have to completely change who you are or the things you enjoy doing. Because sometimes when you're on a crazy roller coaster of language and culture, it is the things that you are best at that help you along the way.

\*Note with the photo. It may not be a roller coaster, but the Prater Ferris wheel is famous in Vienna and a large part of Vienna's own amusement park.

-Bis Später,

Stephanie Raso, class of 2013