

Hello, I am Haley Patton and I am your local exchange student and we are about to have an interview about my time here in Austria.

So, where are you from? And why are you here and not there?

That's a really good question. I am from [Lubbock, Texas](#) and I am here because I wanted to learn a new culture and language. I heard about the programme 'Rotary Youth Exchange' and so I applied to join and I got accepted and they decided to send me to Austria.

Before coming here, what impression did you have of Austria, of Europe?

Well, I'd never been to Europe before, so before coming to Austria I had no clue what to expect. So, basically I looked up information on the Internet and I looked up pictures and when I saw where I was going I was really, really excited because it was so beautiful here

And because Steyr is sooooo special...

Oh yes, before I didn't know which city I was going to, I just knew that I was going to the country Austria and so I thought I'd better do a little bit of research so I knew kind of where I was going. The rivers and trees and mountains, yes, it's very beautiful in Austria.

You like it here, but what do you miss? Or what's not so good in this perfect and gorgeous country?

I think what I miss most is my family and driving. So I guess that's one thing that's not so great: taking the bus all the time. I really miss my Honda 2004, but other than that, I love the food and the people are really awesome and of course the landscape. There is not too much I miss from home, although I have to say I miss the Mexican food, TexMex. I had a dream that I found a

TexMex restaurant in Austria last night.

And what is better here?

The food and all of the hiking is really cool. I never did any hiking in Texas. There are places in the US where it's possible to go hiking, but where I live is completely flat and nothing but dust and dirt, not even a hill. So hiking is something that is definitely better here. Outside sports, I think, are better here.

Was it like you expected it? Compared to what you saw on the Internet?

I also talked to my neighbours that are from Germany and they told me a lot about what to expect and a lot of what they said is true.

For example?

For example the food was a bomb, it is so good. And also before you get to know people in Europe they are more reserved and in America it's a lot different because it's: I meet you for the first time all of sudden and the next time I see you it's like 'Hey! It's been forever since I saw you the last time!' Here it takes a little bit more to get to know people, which isn't a bad thing, but that was just something that was different.

You are living with host families.

Yes.

And you changed them.

Yes, it sounds crazy.

How long have you been to the last host family?

My first host family was in Sierning and I was with them for six months, so August until the beginning of February. And I am now with my second host family for two and a half months. And then my last host family ..

So you will change another time?

Yes, I will change one more time.

Why do you change them?

The Rotary club sets it up so, you change families to get a different perspective of how people live, because everybody is different and you can't completely explore the culture I think just staying with one family, because everybody has different opinions and everybody has different traditions.

But also your third host family is here, in this area?

Yes, my second and third host families are in Haag. It is also really pretty there. There are fewer mountains, but still a nice place.

I live in Lower Austria as well.

Oh really, then I better say it's a nice place. But it's good because I can understand both dialects; there is not too much difference.

There is no real difference.

Yes, but everybody pronounces things different. Like in Sierning they said 'Gute Nacht' and in Haag it's 'Gute Nocht'. It sounds different to me.

So the language isn't such a big problem?

Not now! In the beginning, yes, it was a big problem, because I didn't speak German before I came here. I just knew titbits, like a few words.

Like tourist small talk language skills?

Not even that! How to say hello, how to say goodbye and how are you and I knew like a few names for fruits and vegetables, but yeah I didn't really know any German to move to a foreign country and live here. But after living here for seven and half months or so, now I can speak German. It's not perfect and I definitely sound like a foreigner, but I can understand it and I can speak it.

Give us an example!

Oh, what do you want me to say? Ahh...

I don't know

Ich weiss nicht!

Perfect!

You will return this summer?

Yes, I am going back in the beginning of July.

And you have plans what to do after your return?

I'd like to think I have a few plans. What I plan to do so far is waiting until January to actually start university. I still have to apply and stuff, but I really don't want to worry about that while I am here because I want to focus on being here and not things that will bring me home. So far I plan on getting a job when I get back as soon as possible. Working, working, working and taking SAT and ACT test, because I did not do that last year. I was completely focused on coming here. And then starting university in January, hopefully, Oh! And learn to drive again! A year with no driving and then going back and having to drive again is crazy.

What are you going to study at university?

At the moment I'm thinking I want to study Photography and Graphic Design, because it sounds cool. It sounds like something I would enjoy, but yeah, there are a lot of things out there. I have a few more months to think about it.

Do you plan to study in Texas?

Yes, I plan on staying at home, because it's cheaper. University in the USA is really, really expensive. So I've talked to my parents and they are more than happy to let me stay at home while I study. I plan to apply to Texas Tech, which is the main college in my city. 'Guns up Texas Tech!'

What do you think about school here, in Austria?

I think you guys have to learn a lot compared to what I had to do in high school. Every once in a while we had like a project or something that was kind of stressful to do and of course we had tests and everything, but I think you definitely have to learn more and it's tougher, but I think you get more of school than I did in high school. I think the school programme here is really good.

Oh, please tell that our politicians! They don't believe it.

From what I can tell it's really good. Of course, I can't really understand too much in the classes and most of the time I'm in the library, because the language is really difficult. I think you definitely have to learn a lot, you have to study a lot. I can't really remember any time in high school when I really had to study. It's kind of sad. Yes, I think the school is good, I've got a good impression of the school. Of course I've only seen one school in Austria, but I plan on also visiting my host brother's school and see how things run there. It's the HTL in Steyr. He has homework, quite a bit, all the time.

They also have more lessons. I think forty or something each week. It's challenging.

Yes, it definitely seems like a challenging school. I look at the work my host brother brings home and I'm like 'Wow! Good luck! Enjoy that!' Because I don't understand any of it. Yeah, school here: Two thumbs up! I guess you don't like it too much because you have so much work, but I like it.

What else? How will your time here change or already has changed your view of America?

Of America? Well, I think it's really a shame that so many people in America I've talked to have no idea about other countries. Here in Austria you hear on the news and you hear in school and probably also at home about other countries and not just Austria.

Because it's so small?

Yes, but I still think it's important for America to not just be about America. To learn about other countries and know what's going on around the world. Maybe it's just my city, but we hear about Lubbock and we hear about Texas. And then we hear about America whenever something really big happens. I've learnt so much more about the rest of the world being here than I did in the entire 18 years that I was in [Lubbock](#), Texas. I think that people in America should inform themselves more about the rest of the world, or travel! I think traveling is one of the best ways to learn about everything.

We know that. Americans always think about Australia when they hear about Austria.

Yeah, and people also keep getting Germany and Austria mixed up. They keep asking me: 'So how is Germany?' and I'm like 'I'm not in Germany, I'm in Austria. There's a difference.'

Well, growing up here you get used to the fact that for the biggest part of the world's population Austria just doesn't exist. Austria is either Australia or Germany or nothing.

Yes, there are about 8 million people here in Austria. That means there're more people in New York City. That blew my mind. But Austria is still a country. Europe is small. Compared to Texas: So much of Europe fits inside of Texas. People are so shocked when I tell them that it takes twelve to thirteen hours to drive from [Lubbock](#) to Houston and then six hours to the capital, Austin, and you're still in the same state. And here it takes you three hours and you're in Germany. Everything is bigger in Texas! You go miles and miles and miles and see absolutely nothing. Maybe a house here and there or maybe a ranch or something, but it seems like you can go on forever in Texas and see nothing. And then you pass through a tiny little town and then you keep going and you just drive straight and straight and straight. It's crazy. And here, I've never driven to so many curves in my life. It's different.

Haley Patton - Gastschülerin aus Texas 2012/13

Geschrieben von: Peter Aschauer, 5A
Montag, den 01. Juli 2013

Haley Patton spent the year 2013/14 at our school. The interviewers were Sophia Hödl (8A) and Matthias Hochsteiner (8B).

