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Austrian Way of Life

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Vienna, Austria

October 11, 2018

Austrian Way of Life

The person I decided to interview for this assignment was one of the conversational partners that the Institute sets up for us. His name is Samuel, or Sam, Ebner; he is a conversational partner and a student here in Vienna. He studies law at the University of Vienna. However, before his studies, he went through some civil service work that is required of all Austrian males and was for a time living in Canada. Sam has also traveled some throughout the states. Aside from being a student and a conversational partner, Sam is also a passionate soccer player, a boy scout, and an EMT.

Some of the stuff that Sam said, that I saw to be the main differences in lifestyle and norms, were that a lot of the people in Austria, but more specifically in Vienna, do not own cars. Most people rely on the public transportation system as a way of getting around, and if people have cars it's very few, and driving seems to be in a sense discouraged. The prices to get tickets for the public transportation are reasonably priced and the transportation system here is quick and efficient. In comparison to the States it is easy to see the difference in this aspect because in the States everyone drives their car and no one really relies on public transportation. While being in a city like Vienna, having a car is not really necessary, while those who live in the outer districts do have a car. Another thing that is a difference is that the way of dressing is much more important here than it is in the States. While in the States it is acceptable to go out in a T-shirt and leggings or to dress in athleisure attire, no one in Vienna does that. While some people do wear leggings or sweatpants, it is not a big thing to do. So while it's not necessarily that the

Viennese people dress better, they just don't dress as casual as one does in the States. Another difference in lifestyles is this idea of cafés and a coffee house culture. This implies sitting at a coffee shop for hours on end with friends or colleagues to hang out or just discuss things; it is also a place to sit down and have coffee among other things. This culture dates back throughout history. While a coffee house here in Vienna is huge and is a destination point, it is not so in the States; it is seen more as a meeting point on the way to go somewhere, as well as the concept of taking coffee to go is huge in the States.

I think as far as similarities that I could see between myself and Sam was this aspect that he likes learning about things outside of Austria, or his own location, and likes meeting people and understanding things. One thing that I did notice as a difference is the way Sam dresses to go to school is a lot different than that what I would wear, in the sense that it is a lot more formal or even just not as casual as what I would normally wear in the States. Usually in the States, I, for the most part, wear athleisure, and that changes varying the season, and I know that this is a very common thing to do in the States. Meanwhile, Sam sees that the way he dresses to go to classes is a representation of how much respect and care he has for his classes and professor; therefore, the most casual I believe he would dress would be a button up with dark jeans and nice dress shoes. Another thing that I saw as being not necessarily different from myself but just in general was the fact that there is a big emphasis on the cultural aspect of things. A lot of the people in the States aren't very cultured in the sense that many don't go to museums or look at art or music or know things such as classical dances. Whereas, Sam knows how to Waltz and it was something he learned early on in life, I think, and from what I know it's taught to kids that are at the high school level. When I told him that I didn't know how to Waltz, he was kind of in disbelief and proceeded to try to teach me how to do so.