

audraesker

Graz, Austria

AUDRA'S MAJOR(S): German and anthropology

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: summer 2002

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: I really wanted to experience life in another country, and not just for a week, but for a longer period of time. I wanted to learn and speak German in another country, and Austria is just a beautiful country.

FAVORITE CLASS: German grammar



From the Clock Tower overlooking Graz, Audra Esker shows where she lived and studied for six weeks. Esker said that through her study abroad experience, she learned a lot about herself. "I learned how I'm capable of doing things that I didn't know how to do before."

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: I lived with a host family. It was a half-hour bus trip from their house to school. I had my own room. They had a daughter who was 16; they were the best family. I still keep in touch with them. They were really open. They let me do my own thing, but they also offered ideas of what to do. They wanted to learn just as much as I did.

BEST MEMORY: I celebrated my 20th birthday there, which was hard at first since I had only been there for two weeks. But when I woke up on my birthday, there was a vase of flowers on my desk, and my house mom took me out to a movie and a bar that night.

BIGGEST SURPRISE: The dialect and the efficiency of train travel. And that everyone speaks English; I was very surprised by the amount of English. Once they heard my accent, they wanted to speak English with me, and I wanted to practice German.

EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURE SHOCK OR REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK: Reverse culture shock. Even though the program was only six weeks, I stayed for three more months. When I returned home, everybody here had been doing the same thing, but I had changed and it was hard to deal with that.

FACT ABOUT YOUR HOST COUNTRY THAT YOU THINK PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN: Graz is the cultural city of Europe, and there are no kangaroos in Austria.

"If you're studying a language, there's NO reason why you shouldn't go abroad. *Knowing that you're able to be independent and survive emotionally and mentally is amazing.*"

ADVICE TO FUTURE STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPANTS: Travel afterwards, don't just go home. Apply what you've learned. See other places while you're over there because you probably won't get the chance later. And it's cheap, too. I didn't have much money, but it's terribly affordable.