

At the end of their AFS exchange in Hungary, we asked some recent AFSers from the USA to answer two questions:

- ❑ What elements of your host culture, compared to US culture, did you find most difficult to adjust to in the areas of family, school and/or social life?
- ❑ Please note any advice you would like to share with AFSers destined for your host country.

Here are some of their responses:

You have to have something on your feet at all times. Slippers must be worn, not just socks. Hungary is very traditional, the main meal is lunch and dinner is usually a sandwich. On the weekend, the family will eat together for lunch.

Sally, Year, 2009

The formality, and the lack of creative outputs.

Zachary, Year, 2009

School was difficult to adjust to. Between the language barrier and the tight-knit friendship that my classmates had, I had a hard time finding my place in the class.

Robert, Year, 2009

Pack slippers. Bring things from your town to share with your family and friends. Have a camera and pack your winter coat, don't send it. Bring a white top and black bottom for school events. And a nice outfit for holidays, people dress up to have dinner during the season. Balaton is a common vacation spot so also pack a bathing suit. You shouldn't pack all your clothes, because you will buy some when you get there.

Sally, Year, 2009

Enjoy yourself, and if you aren't, call someone! Go somewhere & do something every weekend!...Buy good food! It's cheap in Hungary. Learn the language, this will help you in so many ways. Force your formal classmates to be friends with you, and if you find you don't like them, find new friends. Hang out with different types of people than you would at home...Approach people and talk to them about things. Say 'yes' when somebody asks if you want to do something. Always remember to renew your student ID card if it isn't a permanent one (don't pay fines!). Do something you don't do in the US - Hungarian folkdance, fencing, something new. If you find you don't like something after beginning it, find something else to do. Don't waste your time - enjoy yourself - speak the language.

Zachary, Year, 2009

Always go to school. Even if it is boring, it is the most important way to get acclimated with friends and the language.

Mitchell, Year, 2009

Be excited for "cooking bacon" at grill parties! Hint: there is no meat on the bacon--it's pure fat!! It was so good I would go back to Hungary just for that. Their bread is also huge and amazing. Try palinka, because it is a big part of Hungarian culture. Enjoy the beautiful scenery! The mountains are amazing.

Shaina, Summer, 2008

Don't be afraid to speak their language; it's hard, but they really appreciate the effort you put forth in learning their language. Also, learn some Hungarian history, everyone will be impressed with you.

Susan, Summer, 2008

Hungarian people are really nice people. It is a very safe country to be in, and there is always something to do. In Hungary people don't really use locks around the house doors, like in the bathroom. I found that kind of hard to adjust.

Fitore, Summer, 2008

In Hungary, it seemed that plans changed at the last minute. This was not a bad thing, so don't feel left in the dark because of it.

Shaina, Summer, 2008

The family lifestyle in Hungary is very tight. It is highly family oriented. Also, kids often take school quite seriously, and do spend a fair amount of time studying. There is pretty much JUST public transportation, which is entirely new for me, and the food was very heavy.

David, Year, 2007

