

At the end of their AFS exchange in Finland, 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:

Go to Finland; you won't be disappointed! Go there with no expectations, that is the best way because you don't know what it's going to be like for you, and by pre-thinking on how it is going to be might ruin your experiences by crushing your expectations.

Amanda, Summer, 2009

Even if the Finns seem a little cold or quiet, that's just their nature. They do care about you and are there if you need them. You need to make the first move into getting accepted though. They won't go to you, but if you go to them they will talk to you. Yes Finns can talk. The first question they will ask is some variation of "Why the heck are you in Finland why not somewhere like Spain or Italy?" Just keep talking to them and you'll become part of the group and they'll love you.

Lisa, Year, 2009

Finland is a beautiful nation that is unspoiled. The people are so friendly, and are willing to share their culture. This nation has so much to offer from delicious food to breathtaking landscape.

Steven, Summer, 2008

My family was very close. The extended family was also a big part of my host families' lives.

Calista, Summer, 2008

The people were genuinely friendly, the food was great, and the life was easy to adjust to.

Erica, Summer, 2008

Be open-minded, try everything, enjoy life, nature, and your family.

Crystal, Summer, 2008

Give the people time. I found Finns to be almost as shy as the stereo type, but once you get to know them they are really just some of the best people you'll ever meet.

Janaki, Year, 2008

Don't be deterred by silence. Finns are used to non-awkward moments of silence, and they even think that it shows how healthy the friendship is to be able to be comfortable and quiet.

Selene, Year, 2007

