

At the end of their AFS exchange in Argentina, 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:

In Argentina, besides the basic language barrier I found very difficult the idea of "indirectness." In Argentina sometimes when host parents have problems with you they won't tell you for fear of offending you so they keep quiet and talk about it amongst the rest of the family. It was also very difficult to adjust to the theme of relationships in Argentina.

Emily, Year, 2010

The hardest element of culture to adapt to was the lifestyle in my host country. The lifestyle there is very slow and inactive in comparison to the lifestyle in the US.

Erica, Semester, 2009

I was placed in a very small town where your actions were well known and very important. Reputation also was of large importance, so it was necessary to keep in mind what you were doing and how people saw you.

Tess, Semester, 2009

A difficulty I had was getting used to the fact that everyone greets each other with a kiss on the cheek. Also, the fact that even though it was the dead of winter, there was no central heating.

Todd, Summer, 2009

I was placed in a small private school in my host country, and therefore found that it was difficult to make friends. I largely depended on the help of my host sister in this regard. The drastic differences in the community involvement was very startling to me; I went from being a very active member of my church and community to being bored and upset that I had a hard time finding and fitting into a social community.

Taylor, Year, 2009

The most difficult element would have to be the daily schedule. In Argentina, I ate a small breakfast usually coffee or tea with bread or cookies early in the morning. Then after a normal lunch, I would take a siesta or nap. Around 5pm or 6pm, I would eat a merienda or snack

and dinner would be between 9:30pm or 10pm. One time I actually ate at midnight! That was a little hard to get used to because eating times are usually earlier in the U.S.

Nitza, Summer, 2009

Don't expect anything, because it is nothing like you could ever imagine and 10 times better than anything you could ever hope for. You will make friends for life if you just open up and be yourself.

Katherine, Year, 2009

Try to be open-minded, remember you are a part of the family so you need to treat them like your family. Tell them if something bothers you or you have a problem but also share those happy moments only families have.

Sophie, Year, 2009

My best advice would be to be active and outgoing. Making the best out of every situation is an important quality that will help you to see the silver-lining through all difficult parts of the experience!

Taylor, Year, 2009

Read as much about the host country as you can, and talk to people from that country; learn as much of the host language as soon as possible; keep a good sense of humor and smile and laugh a lot; take good care of yourself

Lorielle, Year, 2009

If you are happy with you family make sure to give them love and appreciate them. Don't hang out with the other exchange students all the time, because you will never learn the language to the best of your ability. Try to speak, it is so important...

Also make sure you do things that favor to your interests, because that is where you will meet people who are like you. Most importantly dive into the



Country Quotes: Argentina

culture, enjoy it to your full potential, because when someone tells you that you are acting like a true local you feel a sense of satisfaction and happiness.

Lillian, Year, 2009

Be outgoing and friendly, always. People in Argentina are passionate, expressive, and curious. Be ready for lots of questions, but if you open up even in the slightest way you will make great friends and hopefully help them understand Americans and the US culture.

Kristin, Summer, 2009

Remember, you can change your ways without changing who you are. Speak the native language as much as you can, even when you're with other exchange students who speak English. Cherish the amazing opportunity that you've been given.

Erin, Semester, 2010

Be very open to trying new things but don't get too caught up in all the partying. Kids in Argentina have a much different idea of "fun" and it's almost impossible not to get caught up in everything. But DO let yourself get caught up in the dancing, the singing, the futbol, and the large family parties. True Argentine friends will always stand by you, so select a group of peers that really care about you and you will have more fun than you can imagine.

Emily, Year, 2010

Befriend as many people as possible, be it kids your age, teachers, and anyone in the community. People love to ask questions about you and the US and you can leave a good impression about yourself and your country on every person you meet. One of the best moments as an exchange student is walking down the street and having people know you, and realizing that you're starting to fit in as part of the community.

Stuart, Semester, 2008

Bring NICE dress clothes to wear out!

Mark, Summer, 2008

Enjoy every second possible. If you're not sure about something, try it anyways. It may not seem like it's a big deal, but every detail of your experience counts, and before you know it you'll be on your way home. So try to memorize something every day - whether it's the smell of your favorite pastry shop, the way your school looks, or a new popular song. Every moment counts.

Cara, Semester, 2008

Family is critical, be ready to tell your host family everything, and even if you don't want to tell them everything, do! Remember they opened up their entire

lives to you; the least you can do is tell them a little bit about you during your short time there!

Anna, Summer, 2008

I didn't find it that difficult to adjust to because my family was very understanding and pretty relaxed. My sisters and I were very close because we liked to do a lot of similar things, and I fit in pretty well. My only suggestion is to make sure you remember things about your life in the States because they were surely ask, and it's fun to compare and contrast the differences between your culture and theirs.

Sooln, Summer, 2008

I hope you like red meat! Get involved in activities. It's a good way to meet people. Remember you are representing your country, so behave! The USA already has a bad reputation, so try to make people think differently about our country. Also, if you are going to Argentina, don't say you are "americano or americana". They get really offended. Say "Soy estadounidense" or "norteamericano/a." Have patience, the kids will make fun of you, but after a while you get used to it and can laugh with them.

Elena, Year, 2007

If you are going to Argentina, be ready to walk a lot. They have very good public transportation to get you to the general area you want to go, but after getting to the center of town you will be walking everywhere you go. Don't be afraid to get a little lost in your host town or city. The taxis in larger cities are very nice and are willing to work with you to get you to the bus stop. Just don't go alone. Always go with somebody who knows which places are good and which are bad.

Boone, Year, 2007

If you aren't going with any Spanish, everyone will likely try to speak to you in the little broken English that they know. Don't feel like they're making fun of you! They may be acting silly, but are really making a genuine attempt to get to know you. If you do go with previous Spanish experience, don't make the same mistake I did and go thinking you know it all, even if you're fluent! Teenagers in every country speak twice as fast as an educated language professor, and will have tons of slang words that you'll have to figure out before you entirely understand a conversation amongst your peers. Don't be afraid to ask questions! They love teaching about their language and culture.

Mary-Caitlyn, Year, 2007

In Argentina it was very common for anyone to say what's on their mind, and in the US we tend to be very

PC, so don't be surprised when an offensive comment is made and no one reacts to it.

Marisa, Year, 2007

Bring lots of pictures, because people will be interested in who you are and where you came from. Things will be very different in Argentina from the United States, but just keep an open mind, and never criticize anything openly to your host family. Also, DO NOT take traveler's checks to Argentina! There are many ATM's and it should be very easy to access them for pesos. You may run out of money faster than you think, so you should definitely have a way of accessing money.

Melissa, Summer, 2008

The culture there is very fun-loving and upfront so it's not for those with timid spirits in my opinion. Argentineans love to play music, go out to the clubs and dance all night, eat lots of food- meat is eaten at almost every meal...Everyone greets you with a kiss on the cheek and hugs are given more often than not! Everyone is excited about the exchange students because they are new and have interesting things to share with their culture, so making new friends is no problem...speak the new language as much as possible and you will see yourself improving at an amazing rate. But the year goes by FAST and keep that in mind so you can take advantage of your time while you still can! One of the biggest culture shocks to me was the Argentinean school system. Having to get up every morning to put on a uniform and attend Catholic school and have religion class was extremely different than the public schools I had gone to my entire life here in the US. The Catholic Church runs pretty much everything in Argentina and that kind of mentality was difficult to adjust to.

Natalia, Year, 2007

People in the U.S are a little more reserved and controlled than in Argentina. People there kiss, and touch, and stand close to each other all the time. No one owns anything, everyone shares everything. It was hard to get used to at first, but then you get home and things feel strange all over again.

Kimberly, Semester, 2007

The emphasis on family was the cultural difference that struck me as the most distinct from the US culture. I enjoyed spending time with my host parents and siblings on a daily basis while drinking *mate* and at mealtimes and with my host grandparents, uncles/aunts, and cousins on a weekly basis. Socially, Argentines are open to meeting new people, but somewhat reserved as they begin to develop

friendships. It takes time to develop their confidence, but once a strong friendship is established, a life-long bond exists that, despite distance or time, will never be broken.

Danielle, Year, 2007

The individualistic nature of the United States is quite different from the more communal and sharing culture of Argentina. For example, in Argentina, instead of using different cups for different people, it is quite common to share a 2-liter bottle of soda, drinking directly from it. In addition, the further away from Buenos Aires, the less Americanized, and more traditionally "Argentinean" the culture becomes.

Scott, Summer, 2008

The most difficult thing for me was that everyone was always interrupting each other. Very rarely would someone actually wait for someone else to finish talking before they would start. Even though my social life usually went extremely late into the night and into the morning, I did not find it hard to adjust and in school, everything was very helpful.

Johanna, Summer, 2008

The people in Argentina are all very welcoming and friendly. Many of them are very excited to hear about your life in the United States. Before you arrive, look up information about the current government situation, their music and films.

Shelby, Summer, 2008

The schedule and meals in Argentina were very different. Breakfast was almost nonexistent. We ate a big lunch, often slept siesta for a couple hours, then ate a snack around 5pm. Depending on the family, dinner was served as late as midnight. We went to sleep around 1am during the week, and 7am or so on weekends, after getting back from clubs with friends. Watch your back, but don't be scared. Theft is a common problem in Argentina, so be careful with money, cameras, etc. If you're a girl, men will whistle and cat-call, but just ignore them. The people in general are very friendly, and don't be afraid to use your Spanish! People will be glad to help you out, and just laugh along when you make mistakes.

Maren, Semester, 2008