

At the end of their AFS exchange in Hong Kong, 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:

Try to always be in a good mood...smile to them and don't be shy. Students will not usually go up to talk to you but they are interested in you. Most teachers and your host family will expect you to teach them English, so I advise you to go ahead and make plans on sharing your English knowledge.

Nicole, Year, 2004

It's amazing here, partly because it's beautiful. Just riding the bus to school you see mountains and the ocean and beautiful skylines. I go to school in a 10 story building. I can see into Happy Valley (a famous race track) from the library.

Public Transportation is a dream. It's amazing I can go anywhere in Hong Kong by myself without looking up directions. I just walk to the nearest subway or bus stop or tramway and start going.

Food is good. I love the food here especially during school. School food isn't that good in the US and it isn't that good here, BUT because it's Hong Kong, they let you out at lunch and there are tons of places to eat within walking distance.

Lastly the thing I love most about Hong Kong is the other exchange students. AFS Hong Kong may not be the greatest country destination (it's great but maybe not the greatest) but because of the public transit, and because of the size (1,092 sq km) you see the other exchange students all the time. I haven't gone a week without seeing them since I got here. I know a lot more about Hong Kong but I also understand Iceland, Norway, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, and Switzerland so much better. This probably isn't the best message to send about AFS: "the city's ok but you'll meet cool foreigners!" But it's really true. I like the other kids at school. But the other exchange students are like my family.

I'm sure a lot of people don't want to go to Hong Kong partly because they think it's all in Chinese and they won't be able to understand anything. But school will be taught in English at least. English will be the main medium of communication.

There's just a lot of western culture here. It was ruled

by Britain until 1997.

I expected Hong Kong to be something like NYC because that's the only other place in the world with this kind of density of people. But it's nothing like New York at all.

Patrick, Year, 2008

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