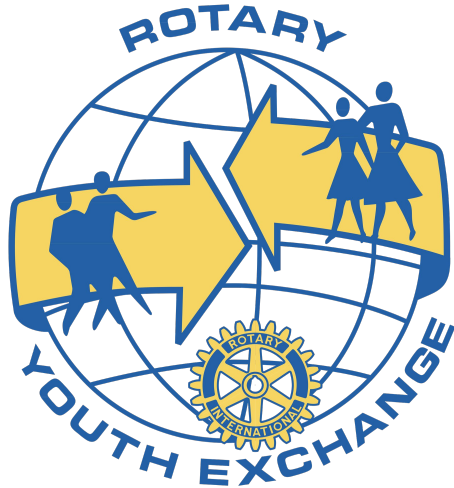


Exchange Student Survival Guide

Rotex 6250

What to expect...

The months leading up to your exchange can be some the most exciting yet nerve-racking. Many people will give you advice and tell you what your exchange is going to be like. The most important thing to remember is to stay flexible and remember that every exchange is unique! Here are some of Rotex's experiences, and some advice we have for you!



Daniel

Denmark 17-18

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

Making friends

How did you deal with this problem?

I continued to push myself into different things with both exchange students and classmates.

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

I didn't know how tired I would get during my first month. It is exhausting sitting through an entire school day unconsciously trying to learn an entire new language.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

I wouldn't change anything as each experience, good and bad, have helped me become who I am.

Advice:

- Exchange students are an awesome support system to have during your time abroad, but it is so valuable to build relationships with local students.
- Your Rotary Clubs are there to help give you a fantastic year, but don't go into it with a transactional mindset. Take the time to know different Rotarians, and sometimes they will go out of their way for you.
- You cannot compare your exchange with anyone else's. Everyone is going through different things, struggles, challenges, and it is easy to only see the good stuff on social media. Focus on yourself.
- I was in a bad host family when I started. We just didn't mesh well together. I took a lot of blame for things that I shouldn't have, and looking back I know that I should've acknowledged this earlier and moved myself.

Rosalie Powell

Argentina 18-19

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

One of the most challenging part of my exchange was overcoming the expectations and preconceived ideas I had about my experience. This was especially difficult because I was seeing other people's exchange years on social media. I thought that things were supposed to happen a certain way and when they didn't I felt like it was my fault.

How did you deal with this problem?

I dealt with this problem by staying away from social media and talking with my friends that were also on exchange. When you hear that everyone has issues and things that aren't perfect it goes a long way.

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

I wish I knew that everyone is different and everyone experience is different. Just because someone told you they became fluent in three months, doesn't mean you are able to progress at the same pace. Be kind to yourself.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

There is very few things I would change because every mistake I made was a learning experience. However, I wish I had been braver at the beginning of my exchange in terms of speaking Spanish. The beginning is when people are most interested in getting to know you, so it is the best time to try to talk and make friends.



Think about any issues you are having from an outside perspective. For example if you are having trouble making friends think about how long it took you to make your close friends in the US. Things take time and work. However, also don't be afraid to reach out. If a situation seems bad it probably is, and there is often a way to change it.

Miki Glines

Peru 18-19

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

I wasn't happy with my first host family, they didn't let me go out much and we weren't close.

How did you deal with this problem?

I decided to wait it out until I was scheduled to switch to my second host family, who I became really close with. Meanwhile I tried to appreciate all they did for me and learn from them as much as I could.

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

You really can't expect anything— every city, school, family, Rotary club works differently. The sooner you let go of expectations the more you can grow.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

No. Every experience, good or bad, was mine.

When it comes to host families, there's a good chance you won't be a perfect fit for every single one of them. You can usually get past your differences if you try, but in the end trust your gut. Host families make a huge impact on your exchange. Asking to change families is hard but learning to self-advocate is one of the most important things you'll learn on exchange. Talk to a Rotarian you trust.



Bella Lund

Germany 17-18

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

Making friends

How did you deal with this problem?

I put myself out there and reached out to people in my class and planned things with them!

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

Not everyday is going to be an amazing crazy adventure, some of my favorite memories are just with my host family around the house!.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

I had a unique situation where I had to switch schools during my exchange, I wish I hadn't done this!

Don't be afraid to try new things and MAKE MISTAKES, you'll learn more if you do!!



Caitlin

Brazil 2017-2018

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

There were many times I had misunderstandings with my host families, both on my end and theirs. I found out from a friend that was living in my first house that the family thought I did not like them for a while because "I always said no when they asked me to do things with them on the weekends," but in reality I had no idea when these incidences had happened and I really enjoyed spending time with them!

How did you deal with this problem?

I went back to my first family's house often for lunch because we got along very well and I asked them about it, explaining I had no idea that they were asking me these things and I was always too shy to ask them to repeat.

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

People in your school might not make a huge effort to get to know you, you need to be the one to try.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

I wouldn't change anything now, but I do wish I tried harder to develop relationships with my classmates

Make sure to develop a relationship with your host family right away and always be open with them. Do not be embarrassed to ask them to repeat themselves multiple times and tell them when you do not understand! Communication is one of the most valuable things you will learn in your exchange year.

Anja

Thailand 18-19

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

Problems with my host family which made me feel uncomfortable.

How did you deal with this problem?

I tried to talk with my mom to see what to do.

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

If you feel uncomfortable with something that is going on with your host family talk to them about it.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

Yes but also no because everything that happened was perfect but I wish I would have taken a few more chances on things.

If you feel uncomfortable with something that is going on with your host family talk to them about it.



Ellie Redemann

Italy 18-19

What was one of the most challenging parts of your exchange?

I had a hard time learning Italian because I spoke in English a lot. Not knowing the language made it harder to make friends, and participate in school.

How did you deal with this problem?

I eventually decided to stop speaking any English to anyone, which was challenging and embarrassing at first, but it was worth it.

What do you wish you knew going into exchange?

I wish I knew that everyone's exchange is different, and you shouldn't compare your exchange to anyone else's.

Would you change anything about your experience abroad?

The only thing I would do differently is learn more of my host country language before leaving, because even just knowing a little will make life much easier.

My advice would be to really put yourself out there, and be open to new experiences. You are only in your host country for a year, so don't be afraid to embarrass yourself by trying something new. Also, you will probably be the one who has to put effort in at first when it comes to befriending locals. However awkward it may seem, don't be afraid to make the first move. Lastly, try your best not to compare your exchange to others. Many people only talk/post about the good parts of your exchange, and you are not alone in your struggles. Don't be afraid to reach out to other exchange students in your host country or other district 6250 outbounds because they are going through the same things you are and can be a lot of help.



QUESTIONS!