

My „family- to family exchange” in Ormond Beach, Florida

General Information about my exchange

I decided to make a short term exchange with “Rotary”. This is an international organisation. Every year over 10' 000 young people all over the world get the possibility to make a short or a long time (one year) exchange with Rotary. In a short term family to family exchange a person from another country stays with your family for three weeks and then you get to spend three weeks in the same person's family.



My goals

My main objectives were to get to know the culture, to improve and actually use my English, to meet a lot of people and make new friends, and last but not least, to have fun.

I didn't want to feel like a guest, but more like a family member instead. This means spending a lot of time with my host family, doing things together, helping with the housework, and a lot of other things.

The time with my host sister in Switzerland

It was the 10th of June when Rachel Stange from Florida arrived in Zurich. She spent three weeks with my family. During the week, I had school so my mother and my father tried to work less and show her famous places in Switzerland. She loved the mountains, the lakes, the pleasant weather and the food. When I came home from school we used to talk for hours (just in English, she didn't know any German), went bathing in the lake, drove with the bikes to nice places, spent time together with other friends, went to Lucerne and Montreux and did a lot of other things. We became close friends and I was really happy to travel with her to Ormond Beach to spend three weeks in her family.

My time in Ormond Beach, Florida

On July 1st, Rachel and I flew travelled from Zurich to Miami. It was nearly an eleven -hour-flight. My host mom came to pick us up and we drove directly from Miami to Ormond Beach. It's a cute beach town with about 38'000 inhabitants, just 10 minutes away from the world famous “Daytona Beach”. My host family has a really nice and big house there. I had my own bed- and bathroom.

I had two host sisters, but one just came home at weekends because she's attending a college in Orlando. I saw my host brother just once, he works in Tampa and doesn't live at home anymore. My host parents treated my very nice and made me feel like a family

member. I really liked the American food, even if fast food was pretty much the only thing we ate.

My host mother didn't cook often. At lunchtime we met my host father at a restaurant and ate together or we just ate a sandwich at the beach. At dinner we always ate together and we were sitting at the table for a longer time.

I love the great weather in Florida. It was so hot! Even at night it was never less than 27 degrees. We went to the beach a lot because that's what Rachel and her friends would do in their free time. I also really enjoyed kayaking in the ocean and had some fun surfing lessons. We also went sailing, visited Universal Studios in Orlando, saw a practice at the Daytona-Speedway, enjoyed the fireworks on the Fourth of July (US Independence Day), visited some historic buildings, went "zip- lining over the alligators" in St. Augustine, watched a couple of movies and I met a lot of new people. I had to make a 40 minutes presentation in English at the Palm Coast Rotary Club about my life in Switzerland.



The Stange Family, their dogs and me

What I learned there

I learned to live in a family, whom I didn't know before. I was able to "make myself fit in" a foreign country. I'm sure that this was a great experience. During those three weeks I nearly never spoke German. At the beginning it was hard to speak English all the time.

I was afraid to make too many mistakes. But after some time I realized that they also understand what I mean even if I didn't know and understood every single word. I learned that it doesn't really matter if I make mistakes. The important thing is to just practice and speak a lot even though your English isn't perfect. That's the only way to improve it! I don't regret not going to a language school because I think that I learned a lot more by living with a host family. There was no one else who spoke (Swiss) German so I had no choice but to just talk to my American friends and family.

My time after the exchange

On July 22nd my family came to Ormond Beach and we travelled through Florida for three more weeks. When my family was in Daytona Beach I spent three more days at my host family's house. I still talk to the Stange Family a lot. We write together almost every day and I've skyped with Rachel a couple of times. I'm sure that this is a friendship that will last for a lifetime and we already have plans to see each other again one day. I hope this will happen soon. I will never forget this wonderful time in Florida!