

Meeting other international students – your personal cross-cultural experience

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Meeting other international students is one of the many reasons I love studying abroad. I am currently studying in Freiburg and this university has hundreds of international students from all over the world. It is almost impossible to not meet a foreign student while studying here.

There are so many great things that come out of meeting and making friends with other international students. Being surrounded by people who are from totally different cultures can definitely make one more open-minded. Meeting these students has definitely changed me as a person. I have become more aware of other cultures and their way of life. I am more open to trying new foods that I have never seen before in my life. I have also learned so much about other cultures and their way of life through meeting other international students.

There are differences in people's behavior and humor from culture to culture that one should be very aware of. One thing that came as a shock to me was that my international friends would stand really close to me when talking. As an American it definitely made me feel a bit uncomfortable but over time I have gotten used to it. Humor can be very difficult to interpret from culture to culture. A friend of mine from Estonia is very sarcastic and she has told me that many people do not understand her sarcasm and think she is being mean. Something that one may find funny, may be offensive or not funny at all to someone of another culture.

Sometimes you may be lucky enough to become friends with an international student who is great at cooking. It is an awesome experience to be able to try foods from other countries while studying in Germany. My roommate comes from Israel and is an amazing cook. He made my roommates and me a typical meal from Israel and it was amazing. If you are also great at cooking I think it is great to share the food of the culture that you come from. Planning potlucks with other international students is the best way to go about it. This year during Thanksgiving some of my friends and I planned a potluck style kind of Thanksgiving. We invited a girl from Estonia and from Germany to have the meal with us. They brought dishes that were typically served at holiday meals. Not only was there a mix of different traditional American dishes, but a mix of different cultures too. It was probably one of the best Thanksgivings I have ever had.

A lot of the time the university throws international themed parties where one can learn about another country and eat the food that is typically served there. These parties are a great way to meet other international students and become more aware of other cultures.

Another other great way of meeting other international students is to go on the excursions set up by the university. These excursions are always a lot of fun and on top of meeting other international students, you get to travel to a new city that you have never been to before. Another way I have met other international students was from my own personal travels. Youth Hostels can be an awesome way to meet other international students who also love to travel.

Meeting other international students while traveling makes your trip more interesting and definitely more fun.

A great thing about becoming close friends with other international students is that you can visit them in their homeland. I believe that visiting a country when one has a tour guide that can show the parts of the city that tourists do not normally see, is the best way to view the culture in another country. It makes your trip more enjoyable (and cheaper too.) One can visit bars or restaurants that would not be known to someone unless they live there. I find those restaurants to be the best, and they are usually a lot cheaper than the ones that are mentioned in guidebooks or along the main roads.

Spending time with other international students is also a great way