

Read the article. Complete the gaps with one word.

- 1 Gina decided to go to _____ as an exchange student.
- 2 She chose not to live in a _____ for her exchange year.
- 3 Most high schools in the USA have big _____.
- 4 Gina was surprised that the _____ was nice.
- 5 She enjoyed having _____ in the summer.
- 6 She was a _____ at her high school once.

An exchange student

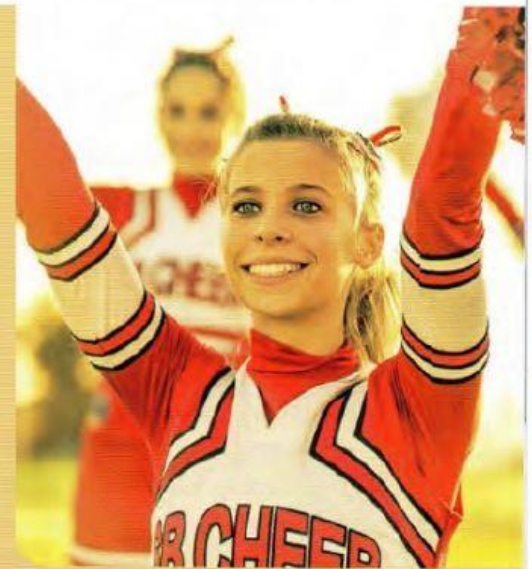
We all love travelling to other countries, but how much do we really learn about the places we visit? We admire the view from our hotel room, we consult our guidebook and visit the popular tourist spots, then we return home with happy memories and 200 photos! But what's it like to live and study in another country?

Gina Rossi decided to spend a year in the USA as an exchange student. She knew the language would be difficult at first and she knew she would miss her friends back home, but she wanted to experience the real America.

Gina stayed with a family in Mead, Colorado. 'I didn't want to go to a city,' she says. Mead is a fairly small town, so it was ideal for her. What was the first thing that she noticed in America?

'Everything was bigger,' she says. 'The houses, the schools, the shops.' Gina found school life difficult at first. The classes in most high schools are very big and you have to be quite independent. And of course, everything was in English. But the teachers were excellent and the students were all really friendly. 'They soon made me feel at home,' she says. Did anything surprise her? 'I was expecting the food to be terrible,' she says. 'But the family I stayed with enjoyed cooking, so in fact, it was really nice. In the summer, when the weather was hot, we had a lot of barbecues – I liked those.'

Gina now says that living in a place, rather than visiting as a tourist, is the only way to experience the culture of another country. And her advice



for others? 'If you decide to go on an exchange, you should join in with everything, to make the most of the experience.' Gina even joined in as a cheerleader for a high school football game – but only once!