

CULTURE SHOCK STORIES

Task 1: You are going to read 6 stories taken from Etiquette Hell Forum on the topic: Culture shock stories.

For questions 1-14, choose your answers from the people (A-F). Some of the choices may be required *more than once*.

Note: When more than one answer is required, these may be given *in any order*.

According to the article, which person/ people:

irritated his/ her relative

1

made a false assumption

2

experienced awkwardness in his/her living place

3

4

predicted herself/himself to be struck with awe

5

was forced to do what he/she thought as impolite

6

contracted an illness

7

was taken aback by some people's disregard of security

8

complained about strict regulations

9

experienced substandard living conditions

10

led an urban life

11

was struck by intense fear

12

got treats thanks to his/ her look

13

got confused with dishes' names

14

WHAT'S YOUR CULTURE SHOCK STORY?

Six posters shared their experience of sudden exposure to a different culture on Etiquette Hell Forum.

A

When I was living in London there was an interesting experience. My Aunt has a place in the country and a house in London. I had always visited her at her country place, and stayed at a hotel in London. However, that time I came to live with her in London. When I landed at Heathrow, I grabbed a taxi and gave the driver the address; I got to the house and thought to myself "hmm...wonder what apartment she lives in".

That was until I rang the door bell and the butler answered and I asked him which apartment my aunt lived in. His response "You must be the American. Madam is in the library waiting for you, she has tea and sandwiches waiting, I'll take your bags up to your room. The library is the second room down the hall." Turns out what I assumed was an apartment building was her actual house, I always assumed that most people lived in flats in London since housing was so expensive.

And then there was the whole "chips are not potato chips, they are French fries" incident that left my aunt ROFL^[1] at a pub when I ordered a sandwich and chips thinking I was getting potato chips and not French fries.

[1] ROFL: (Internet slang) Rolling on the floor, laughing

B

I was visiting my father's small Southeastern Minnesota town from Los Angeles. It happened to be the town's 150th anniversary and there was a parade through the main part of town. Older relatives were in the parade for their 150th anniversary; their home was in town a block away from the parade.

So my cousin told me we could walk to their house and use the bathroom. I fought, saying "we can't just go into their house and use the facilities, they're not home. That's just rude", my cousin thought I was

insane and went into the house. I was desperate so I followed her feeling really guilty.

That was until I saw the dessert bars on the kitchen table with a note "Just help yourself! Happy 150th Anniversary Zumbrot!"

My cousin was also annoyed with me because I kept locking the car. "Why in the world are you locking a car??"

C

I spent six months as an exchange student in the Netherlands and the smallness was probably the biggest surprise, even though I knew to expect it.

I lived in a dorm type apartment with maybe ten other students, male and female. In Finland it's almost always gender-separated and having to share the bathroom with a strange man who wasn't in the habit of locking doors (I've only recently found out that in some countries the custom is to knock on the door and not lock it) was a bit difficult for me. I had lived with roommates in Finland but it was always just two or three people in an apartment, not eleven and we only had two toilets and two bathrooms with two showers each (in the bathroom that was on my side of the apartment one shower stall didn't lock and the other didn't work properly) and three sinks. There's nothing wrong with that kind of housing but I'm very shy and even brushing my teeth when someone can walk in (the bathroom didn't really have a door) made me uncomfortable. The others didn't seem to mind and walked around half-naked. I tended to get up before the others and went to bed when they were cooking dinner at 9 pm. I think that they found me very strange.

D

When I was young, my family moved to

Turkey. The first shock was walking into the airport bathroom and finding nothing but a porcelain hole in the ground. I cried the entire way to the hotel. It didn't take long to figure out we were out of our element. For me it was the adventure of a lifetime. For my mom (who had four children under the age of six), it must have been more like a nightmare. (We four kids all came down with chicken pox the first couple months of moving there)

The city we lived in was dirty, overcrowded, and had rats the size of cats (I remember trying to 'pet the kitty', only to have mom **yank me away**). We couldn't drink the tap water, there were earthquakes and power outages on a regular basis (we'd be in the elevator at the most inconvenient times), and oh! The roaches! But as I said, for a kid it was awesome. The Turks would **fawn over** my siblings and I as we were blond haired and blue eyed. We got pinched on the cheeks, and be given sweets when we walked by pastry shops.

I remember the day I found what I thought was a dinosaur bone in the playground at school- later I found out it was just a sheep's leg bone leftover from the sacrifices that had been made a few weeks previous (we would line up along the playground wall to watch it happen). We got to ride horse and buggies, see bears dancing in the streets for money, and the beaches were magnificent (despite getting stung by jellyfish). And holy cow, the baklava was good!

E

I think for me the greatest experience of culture shock was my semester in Germany as a student. I couldn't **get over** how the hall of residence worked. You arrived and checked in and were introduced to the floor monitor who always had the last room on the right of the floor (that was a rule).

He (in this case) gave me the key to the fridge and told me which shelf I was allowed to use. This was then marked on the diagram of the fridge that he kept and replicated on the diagram that was on the fridge door. One of my friends was on a floor where you

had to book your cooking time (when you wanted to use the cooker) on a weekly schedule.

The floor monitor sold the tokens for the washing machine which you reserved by booking it in the reservation book. You were only allowed to do one wash per week. The same thing applied to the tumble drier.

I had come from a fairly **laidback** single sex English hall of residence where people cooked when they wanted and used the launderette as they pleased and the only rules related to music volume. I found the rigidity of the hall rules difficult to adjust to, not least because everyone else in the hall took them so seriously.

I also found the fact that there were 16 students on my corridor and 2 bathrooms. I was one of only 2 women. I had a hard time adjusting to sharing bathrooms with that many men. Most of them did not lock the door, and had a fairly relaxed attitude to nudity in the communal areas.

F

I am a city girl. I live in a large city, and for most of my adult life I lived in an apartment with people on all sides. Now... that being said, I went to visit my best friend in Idaho. At the time she lived in a mobile on 5 acres out in the middle of nowhere.

I was shocked... SHOCKED that they didn't lock the doors and left their car keys in the car, unlocked. We took a trip to Yellowstone one day, and when we got back I had a panic attack because the front door was wide open. They said "Well, ya, it's hot! We don't want it to be too warm in the house!" We were gone ALL DAY with the front door open!

They have now moved about 30 miles to another little town and have sold the mobile and the land. They have a lovely cute house and they told me when the sale was final, there weren't even any keys for the doors. They've lived there for a few years now and STILL no keys for the locks. I got up one morning to discover they left the front door open because, well, it was HOT!

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