

A Divya Singh from Cardiff went to Chile

I went to a talk given by a couple of older students who had been on an exchange programme the previous year, and it occurred to me that if I could persuade my mum, this would be just the sort of break from normal school routine that



I needed. I filled in my application while holding out little hope of being selected. However I was, and was soon immersed in a totally different educational culture, which helped me to appreciate many aspects of my school back home. Another great advantage of my year abroad was that I picked up Spanish much more quickly than in classes back home and, because my teachers were pretty demanding, I even feel confident writing it now. As a result, I'm considering doing Spanish and Latin American studies at university and perhaps after that going into the diplomatic service.

C Nelson Grace from Boston went to New Zealand

I lived on a farm on South Island, where my host family had a vast flock of about 3,000 sheep. Being a city boy, the experience of farming life was totally novel, but I loved it and took every opportunity to go out and help with the work of the farm. I also got involved in lots of sporting



activities with my school, including sailing, rugby and skiing – all firsts for me. I found New Zealanders so enthusiastic about everything that I used to get up with a buzz of excitement and, unlike back home, I actually looked forward to going into school every day. I also think I matured a lot during my year abroad. I'm not so dependent now on my family or my teachers to make me study, and I've learned to get on with all sorts of different people, even if they're not my type. I've also learned a bit about the value of money!

Bruce Brown from Sydney went to England

Although my parents had insisted that I went, I knew what a sacrifice they were making to pay for my year abroad, so I was determined to make the most of the



opportunity. My host family was really welcoming, but what I found hard to get used to were the seemingly endless days of grey drizzle and the fact that it got dark so early in winter. Even so, I took every chance to get out and meet people, make friends and get a real, in-depth experience of English life. At the same time, I was keen to make an impact at school and get good grades, although I found the schoolwork quite challenging and not really the highlight of my stay. Even so, I learned far more than I expected, made a lot of friends and came away with the impression that the British are a lot more interesting than I had been given to expect by people back home.

Carmen Echevarria from Bilbao went to Scotland

After four years in a state secondary school in Bilbao, it was a huge shock to find myself in a private all-girls school in the Highlands of Scotland, where everyone wore uniforms. Studying there was a complete revelation to me: gone were the hours



spent in the evenings memorising huge numbers of useless facts for tests the next day which I would forget as soon as the test was over. Instead, we spent a lot of time discussing issues, solving problems and writing creatively. I missed my friends back home, but really appreciated learning to think in new ways and seeing that education could be so creative. I missed not sharing my classes with boys, but on the other hand, we probably concentrated harder and may have felt more relaxed about the opinions we expressed.

2 Now underline the main idea in each question 1–10.

Which person

was surprised by the different approach
to education?

1

enjoyed cooperating with their host family?

2

believes they are more adult as a result of
the exchange?

3

feels the exchange has helped to equip them
for the future?

4

felt a responsibility to take as much advantage
as possible of exchange?

5

had a different attitude to attending school
while abroad?

6

wanted a change from their normal school
life?

7

had not expected to be able to do an
exchange?

8

had mixed feelings about the type of school?

9

changed their opinion of people as a result
of the exchange?

10