

# Case Studies for Integration of Experience and Understanding while Studying in Vienna

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### Abstract

Case studies broaden the student's understanding of life in Austria and highlight key cultural differences. Acting as a springboard for interacting with Austrians, they contribute to a richer understanding of the Austrian culture, support the process of adjustment and help integrate aspects of both the host culture and home culture.

#### **Minorities and Foreigners - The Expansion of the European Union**

Students explore the views of citizens of the present EU member states regarding their role and function within the EU. They examine, how Austria's entry into the EU has altered the legal situation of immigrants and asylum-seekers. Excursions include Integrationshaus, home for refugees and asylum-seekers; European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC); and the UNHCR.

#### **Holocaust**

A voluntary excursion is offered to one of the former concentration camps in Mauthausen/Austria or Auschwitz/Poland. Reflecting on the special role of the U.S. as "liberator" in WWII, students have the opportunity to gain a closer perspective of the historical events. Excellent preparation is crucial for the students and consists of two parts:

1. Information about the historical background, and a reflection on Holocaust memorials in the U.S. and other countries
2. Preparation to help the students cope emotionally

#### **Social Politics**

The students find out about different aspects of social politics in Austria. They examine medical practices, maternity leave and child support, unemployment issues and retirement, and contrast these with social politics and insurance practices in the U.S.

#### **Environmental Policy**

Students discover the major source of electrical energy in Austrian households, the options for additional or alternative energy in the country, the role of state support, and how Austrians view these energies. Students examine different approaches towards the use of resources and reflect on their personal role as a citizen of the world.

#### **Vienna and the Cold War**

Reflecting back on home culture values, students develop a deeper understanding of the systems of Communism and Capitalism. Students examine the history of Vienna as a city located along the Iron Curtain from the end of World War II until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Data is gathered on one of the three-day excursions to former east-bloc-countries such as Prague/Czech Republic or Krakow/Poland.

#### **Austrian Election Politics**

Students examine different views of Austrian and American political systems and election politics informed by billboards, signs, advertisements, or the mass media. Through discussions with locals and personal research, students compare and contrast politics in Austria, the U.S. and other countries in Europe.

#### **Research and Presentation/Conclusion**

The final paper contains interviews with the student's hosts, friends and instructors and their own impressions drawn from the excursions and personal experiences. Facts and figures can be obtained from the internet, newspapers and additional readings. A presentation, in groups of four to six, include a 10-15 minute sketch and a class discussion.

Projects and case studies help the students to weigh advantages and disadvantages of how things function in different cultures. Comparison with the home culture broadens the student's perspective and cognitive and emotional understanding.