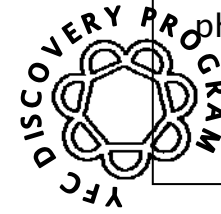




YFA TRAVEL DOCUMENT

Seeing the world with the YFC Discovery Programme

NAME: Craig Barks
CLUB: Waterhouses YFC
DESTINATION: Austria
TYPE OF TRIP: Homestay
DURATION: 3 weeks
DATES OF TRAVEL: Summer 2006



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DESCRIPTION OF TRIP:

My travels took me to Austria for 3 weeks over the summer staying on two farms. It was on the plane out there that I thought how was I going to get on unable to speak hardly a word of German? Once I landed at Vienna airport, I was met by the daughter and her husband, who both spoke good English, so communication was not a problem.

The first farm where I stayed was in the arable area of the country just outside Vienna. The farming enterprise consisted of 20 hectares of arable land, 5 ha vineyards and some fruit trees, quite a small setup. The farmhouse and buildings were located in the centre of the village with separate small fields all around the area. This arrangement was quite common farm setup, quite different to the UK.

During my stay I spent a couple of days in Vienna, visited Czech Republic and went to a few local shows. I also had the chance of going deer stalking, hunting for Roe. Although the father spoke no English, I helped on the farm with the fruit and wine. We managed to get along quite well with a lot of pointing and waving.

The second part of my travels took me to the other end of Austria, a small village in Tirol, 1100 metres above sea level in the Alps mountain range. I travelled by train to Innsbruck, and then took several buses up into the mountains. This was an excellent way of sightseeing and quite a popular tourist area.

The majority of the farms kept a dairy herd; however the average herd size was 6 cows, kept in a lean-to next to the house. The farm I stayed at was very different to surrounding farms; they kept free range hens, 150 pigs and were the only pig producers in the region. They had a butchery, farm shop and even a biogas plant recycling local waste.

During my time in the mountains I managed to go paragliding, a great lifetime experience. The family also took me to an agricultural show in Germany, but this turned out to be a farmer's afternoon drinking session stomping to a brass band.

From my trip I realised that although there farming system is quite different, they still face the same problems, such as the CAP reform. However the country seems quite advanced in the bio-fuels and biogas sectors. The government fully supports this technology with farmers being paid a premium price for production.

The Austrians were great hosts and a good laugh and it was good to sample the food. It is thanks to the Discovery program that I have been able to visit the 'real' Austria, a true lifetime experience!

Craig Barks

