

My impression about the Educhange experience.

My name is Julia and I come from Russia. I stayed in Italy 6 weeks thanks to the Educhange programme. It was a great experience for me and also for the students.

Firstly, I would like to write about this programme. Educhange is a national Italian project that has the aim to improve education worldwide. I had my volunteering period at “Stefani- Bentegodi” Institute, which is located in Caldiero, in the outskirts of Verona. It is attended by 14-19-year-old students. Teachers helped me to deliver lessons about diversity, multiculturalism, my country and global issues. I showed students some presentations about cultural and traditional aspects of Russia and by doing so, I believe, I stimulated them to learn English. To be honest this school and this experience impressed me positively.

Secondly, I would like to write about my host families. The first day I was here was full of surprises: from the weather to the people. I spent my first 3 weeks here in one of the students’ family’s house. Riccardo has a great family. They were very kind to me, friendly and supportive. From the first day on, I felt like I was in my own family. Riccardo’s mother is like a second mother to me. With this family we spent a lot of time together, I never felt alone. When I wasn’t with his parents, I was with Riccardo and his friends and when I wasn’t with him, I spent my time with his brother and his friends. I spent time with Riccardo’s grandparents, too. We often went to the restaurants, talked together about everything and met some family friends. The main problem for me was the language, because only with Riccardo, his mother and his brother could speak English. It was funny when I tried to have a conversation with Riccardo’s father by using Google Translator.

As far as my second host family is concerned, they were also very kind and caring. This was Ilenia’s family, another student from the school. When I met her father, I was surprised because he had really good English and he had been in Russia 3 times. Ilenia is like a sister to me. We spent a lot of time together and I think it was easier to be hosted by a girl because we did the things girls usually do, and she had the same taste for music as me, which was perfect. We went together to the Carnival parade in San Bonifacio, and that was an amazing experience. I spent a weekend with her brother, too: one of his friends opened a barber shop and during the opening party, I met a lot of interesting people.

School gave me different feelings as this school was very unusual for me. The first thing to say is that this school is mainly for boys, there are only a few girls. Those who study here, are future farmworkers and that explains a lot when it comes to the value given to English as a school subject. Honestly, these students are not hard workers: it seems they’re not interested in having a good education, though they are friendly and talkative. There are a lot of differences between the education system in Russia and in Italy. For example, here students have a 10 point scale of assessment, in Russia is based only on 5 points. Teachers in this school are good. Thanks God, I met Daniela, Angelica and Diego, and they helped me a lot. One of the most memorable moment was when we went to the agricultural fair with Daniela’s class. To tell the truth, the fair wasn’t very exciting for me, but we had a good time with students.

And now, it's time to write about my trips around Italy. Oh, Italy! It is an amazing country. I fell in love with it. Its people, its food, its history, its cities...

The first city which I visited was Verona: my favourite city after Rome. To be honest, I can't decide which one is my favourite. I love Rome as much as Verona. The architecture of these cities is wonderful. I also visited Milan, Bergamo, Vicenza, Venice and Florence. I would like to visit Sicily, maybe next time. Italians are the best people in the world. I'm absolutely sure that I'll be back to Italy.

I'm so grateful to my parents and to this world that I had the opportunity to visit this country. This experience costs a lot for us, I mean, for Russian people. It costs about 1,400 euro, but it's worth it. I think that this experience wouldn't have been the same without the people I met. They did a good job. I feel I have to thank every person I met during those 6 weeks. I will never forget it.