

3 Leon's testimonials

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Leon, 16, Germany

Six months ago I was on the plane flying to Sydney. I was going to spend half a year at an Australian high school and live with a family I didn't know, 16,000 km from home. From morning till night I would have to speak English. Back then I was nervous. But now I know there was nothing to worry about.

There was just one problem at first. Before I heard Australians talking, I thought I understood English. But Aussies use words I had never learned and their accent was strange, so in the first few weeks my favourite phrase was *Sorry, can you say that again, please? Slowly*. They did – and it helped. Now I sound like an Aussie myself. My host family are great and they immediately made me feel at home. My host dad, Brian, tells a lot of jokes, though it was hard to get some of them at first. He cooks a lot, especially on the barbie. I love the way families here eat outside together in hot weather, and I have to say Brian makes absolutely ripper snags (Aussie for “great sausages”).

My host mum, Elvira, and host brother, Nick, taught me how to surf at Manly Beach, which is five minutes from their house. I fell off the board a lot at first and swallowed tons of salt water. But I'm better now ... and I love it.

At school I felt a bit lonely in the beginning. It was a private school – boys only – and sport was so important. Playing rugby is the easiest way to

get accepted into a group, but it wasn't my game. But Australian kids are talkative and friendly and I soon made some great friends.

At school I was able to do subjects we don't have in Germany, like photography and drama. In the end, I even liked the uniform – when everyone wears the same, you don't have to think about what to wear every morning.

I only got homesick once, at Christmas. It was fun to celebrate it in summer but I really missed my family and the presents on Christmas Eve.

This has been the best six months of my life and I can't believe it's almost over. I'm much more self-confident now and have learned how to do everything on my own. Sydney is fantastic and I love the easy-going Aussie way of life.



Me and a mob of kangaroos hang out near the beach

4 Six months in Sydney

a) Make notes on

- what Leon likes about his stay in Sydney
- difficulties or problems he has experienced

b) Write down questions you would ask Leon.

- Leon, when did you first see ...
- Have you eaten ... since you arrived?
- ...

- c) Partner A: Ask your questions from b). Partner B: You're Leon. Use your imagination to answer A's questions. Swap roles.

- Actually, I saw a ... on my very first day.
- Yes, I've often eaten ... – it's really tasty!
- ...