

I have been in the US for four months now and I actually thought that at this point of time things would have slowed down a little bit because I would be in my routine. On the contrary, I am still experiencing new things and I am busy all the time.

My Hostfamily is moving house

I knew about my host family's plans of moving since maybe the second month of my stay here but that they are actually going to move during the time I am here was definitely not what everyone thought would happen. However, everything went really fast and I just blinked and suddenly they had bought a new house. The more inconvenient thing was that they were trying to sell their own house. So finally, after some stressful weeks of keeping the house incredibly clean for taking pictures and for being ready to have showings through the house by interested clients, the house was sold. But I had still more than a month left of my exchange.

Because I didn't want to move with my host family in a new area where I would have had to go to a new school and lose all my friends, I stayed in Brookfield because one of my friends offered to host me for the last couple weeks. So I moved into their household right after Christmas and I am now excited to experience another American family with children my age and learn more by living in a family with a different lifestyle.

Thanksgiving

In November, I was able to experience probably the oldest and most important American tradition: Thanksgiving! But what exactly is Thanksgiving? Thanksgiving is a holiday during which the Americans celebrate the arrival of the pilgrims in the US who celebrated the first Thanksgiving in order to thank god for all the land and food and life they had discovered. Nowadays it's a big harvest feast, which the Americans take as a chance to come together as a family and spend time with their relatives. Furthermore, people are supposed to think about what they are thankful for in life so thank-you cards and texts are send out to friends and family and joy is spread out!

But the most important part is probably the traditional food! My host family hosted 20 people for the feast so everybody brought tons of food and the kitchen was always busy with people who were preparing the famous Thanksgiving-Turkey, soup, mashed potatoes, beans, cranberry sauce and a lot of other delicious things. And of course like for every big meal the desert must not be missed, so even with already full stomachs everybody tried the homemade pumpkin and apple pies!

Colorado

In November, my host family took me on a trip to Colorado, which I really enjoyed! We stayed at a little town called Breckenridge located close to the Rocky Mountains. During the day, my host parents and I went skiing. The nearest ski peaks were about 5min away from our resort, so that we had a lot of time to enjoy the beautiful scenery and the great view on top of the mountains. Besides the idyllic part, the adventurous part made the trip fun as well, so that my host dad and I were able to master the imperial pass! It's the highest lift in North America in an elevation of 12.840 feet or 3.914 meters and on the way up you could literally feel how it was getting colder and colder and the vegetation changed. Finally, on the top of the mountain, it was freezing, foggy and just icy and grey, because there were no plants growing. But the trails back were beautiful

and it was fun to ski on the challenging ones back down into the valley, just looking forward for a big hot chocolate and a pot of warming chili!

In the evenings, we went to the town Breckinridge, which was decorated with lights all over the trees and the roofs of the houses for providing a great Christmassy feeling! Contradicting to the cold weather, thick coats, winter boots and gloves we tried a highly recommended and popular rolled ice cream store where they made the ice cream right in front of you. It was fun to watch and of course the result was delicious to eat!

On the way back to Denver where our flight would leave, we visited some of my host family's relatives, but after a few days of relaxing we finally flew back home!



Crosscountry skiing

After the fall-sport-season was over, I was actually planning to rest a little bit and recover from running in cross-country, but one of my friends persuaded me to join her cross-country skiing club! I had never really cross-country skied before, but I enjoy downhill skiing, so I decided it would be fun. We went to get all the necessary gear and already on the following day, I was on skies! Or better I was on roller skies - short skies with rolls at the end but the boots are just attached on the ball of the foot - which are used to get a feeling for the movements and to get some practice before it would start snowing. That's actually harder than it sounds, especially

because there are two different kinds of cross-country skiing: classic and skating. Together with seven other newcomers I learned the differences between the two types, learned how to ski and how my polling timing has to be and I improved myself with every practice.

After a few weeks of making the roads unsafe on roller skies, the entire team went on a camp! We left Friday right after school and went on a four-hour-drive up north to Michigan. We stayed at two really nice big cabins and after a first fun night with teambuilding games, everybody got their stuff ready to wake up early the next day and to be fit for the first time skiing on snow! After skiing the whole Saturday morning and afternoon everybody spend some time with setting goals for the upcoming season and everybody who wasn't exhausted enough from skiing tried their best on the climbing wall. On Sunday we skied again and we even participated in a little practice race! Sooner as we would have liked, we were heading back home and the weekend was over. Just in those three days, everybody got to know each other and single little friend groups came back from the trip as a big team.

From this point on we have been training on snow and that's even more fun. As a good conclusion for the ski season 2018 we had a Christmas party to which all the retired students from the last seasons came, so a lot of the older team members were reunited again and I was able to listen to funny insider stories and learn more about the cross-country skiing scene. Furthermore, everybody had a lot of fun skiing the "Christmas relays", receive and give a "White Elephant Gift" and tried different kinds of delicious pies!



Christmas

For me personally, Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year, associated with making Christmas cookies, reading a book and things like that, but most importantly - spending time with family and friends. Therefore, this year was kind of a weird Christmas because my family was in Germany and I was obviously in the United States, living with a host family who has different traditions and different ways to celebrate. However, I finally got a christmassy feeling and then after some tough last weeks, I made it to the last school day on which everybody was in a good



mood walking through the hallways with tons of candy, cupcakes and cookies on their way to the next Christmas party in class! Besides eating a lot of food, Americans also love giving a “White Elephant” or a “Secret Santa” gift and doing a “Sock Exchange” in which you switch fancy socks with a partner. And then the holidays were there! On the first weekend, my host family had both of their families over for lots of food and lots of presents and on Christmas Eve, December the 24th, I was invited to my friend’s house where we played cards and other fun games. After those days we were prepared for the actual Christmas Day, which is December 25th for most American families. The stockings were hung up over the fireplace and my little host sisters had put out cookies and milk at night to make sure that when Santa and his

reindeers would come, they would have something to strengthen themselves to be fit for a long night of delivering presents ;) So the next morning we opened presents and went to church and as fast as Christmas was there, just as fast it was over again, but fortunately I had a couple of days left of



my winter break. I spend my free time with going ice-skating, walking through the “German Christmas market” downtown Milwaukee, going to basketball games and celebrating New years with my friends.