

## DISCOVER ARGENTINA!! -Worldwide Turismo Cultural-

By Maria de la Paz Mohando

Situated towards the tip of South America, Argentina covers almost 3.8 million square kilometers (2.36 million square miles), with approximately half of this being made up of plains, a quarter of plateau and quarter comprised of mountains. Argentina's neighbors are Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Chile.

Known for its incredible nature, Argentina is a traveler's paradise. Stretching from Jujuy in the north to Tierra del

and Spanish. With this massive European immigration, the mestizo, a cross of European and indigenous populations, steadily decreased, currently accounting for only 4.5% of the total population. Indigenous populations of the mapuches, collas, tobas and maticos represent 0.5% of the inhabitants.

The official language of the Republic of Argentina is Spanish, and the official religion is Roman Catholic, though there is religious freedom throughout the country.

Being home to almost half of the country's population, Buenos Aires is huge, beautiful, diverse, cosmopolitan and full of history. With a reputation for being a city with a uniquely European feel, it offers different opportunities during day and night, from watching fútbol (soccer), to dancing the genuine tango or just interacting with the dynamic porteños (Buenos Aires locals). If these options don't entice you, you can go shopping for famous designer items (at very affordable

prices), enjoy the world's best steaks, along with some of the world's best wine. Later, you might want to take in an opera or theatrical performance or just enjoy the colorful nightlife!

Leaving the bright lights and big city behind, life in the smaller cities (in the north or south of Argentina), means enjoying the peace and quiet of a simpler life. Very family-oriented, there are often cultural or local events (like music festivals, carnivals, etc) where people enjoy outdoor activities such as fishing, cycling, skiing, horseback riding, polo, waterskiing, rafting, swimming, sailing, golf, hunting, soccer and even car racing!

While out in the countryside, you may happen upon a gaucho, the traditional Argentinean farmer. Gauchos wear particular clothes and have their own unique traditions. Those traditions have spread and nowadays you can see them in cities as well.

One well-known tradition of the gaucho is the drinking of mate. Mate is a special kind of green tea and is served in a large cup made from a hollow-out gourd. The tea is packed to one side of the cup and hot water is then poured into the other, allowing the tea to steep slowly. As the cup is passed around, friends drink from the bombilla or metal straw. It is known as an ancient drink of health and friendship in both Argentina and Brazil.

Another food-oriented gaucho tradition is the asado. Quite a social event, an asado involves a special technique for cooking cuts of meat, usually consisting of beef alongside various other types of meat, which are cooked on a grill

(parrilla) or open fire. Delicious and not to be missed!

In general, you will find Argentineans to be very warm and family-oriented,



Gaucha Argentino

Fuego in the far south, Argentina holds a marvelous variety of landscapes. Between the Parana and Uruguay Rivers, the Argentinean Mesopotamia (northeast area) is made up of low hills, lagoons and estuaries. In some areas, immersed in the subtropical forest, there are breaks with phenomena such as the spectacular Iguazu Falls.

In the center of Argentina, the Pampa region is the most extensive area, well known for its massive farms and cattle ranches.

In the South, from the Andes to the sea, you can take in the views of the clear and stony patagonic plateau, as it is slashed by the strong winds. With its high cliffs, it depicts incredible wavy shapes such as the Valdes Peninsula which is a magnificent and unique area with a spectacular array of marine animals.

Argentina boasts a population of over 36 million with the vast majority being white (95%), mainly descendants of Italian



Buenos Aires



Iguazu Falls

with close friends. In addition, since the government provides a public and free system through high school, many young people have the chance to be well educated. So, why not welcome an Argentinean au pair into your family? What better way to continue learning about our beautiful country and culture?



Map of Argentina

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### About Us...

EurAuPair Intercultural Child Care Programs is a non-profit, public benefit organization designated by the U.S. Department of State to conduct the Au Pair cultural exchange program under the Fulbright Hays Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 and is intended "to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges".

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# My Experience in the United States of America

by EurAupair Au Pair Maimouna Gassama

Au pair, Maimouna Gassama, wrote in to The Gazette shortly before returning to France to share her experience of life as an au pair in the USA with the Menendez family of Sterling, VA. Merci, Maimouna! Maimouna writes:

“My name is Maimouna Gassama. I am 22 years old and live in northern France in Normandy. My region is famous for the Germans invading during World War II.

I come from a large family. In fact, I have nine brothers and sisters. My parents are originally from Senegal, in West Africa. Senegal is a very beautiful country that I had the chance to discover at the age of 14. So, you could say that I come from a double culture and this is very important and rewarding for me.

Since I was young, I have always wanted to travel. The countries I dreamt of the most were the United States of America and Egypt. As Europeans, we often hear of America on

the television, radio. We adopt the same style of clothing as the Americans people or listen to the same music. We can say that America is an example for us in our daily lives.

I believe this is the reason why I always wanted to discover this country. After finishing my Bachelor's degree, I decided to try to become an au pair. The idea of being in the land of my dreams, while helping with children and learning English...I liked a lot!

I arrived in the USA on November 17, 2008. When the plane landed and I discovered one of the famous towns - New York, it was just wonderful! I was like in one of those movies I saw earlier on TV. The first week in New York was very good and very helpful. The next step was to arrive in the family home!

It was really exciting and in the same time, I was afraid. But, everything was all right. I discovered a new culture, a new way of life. I learned a lot about the different American system regarding the schools,

food, business, family life, etc...A new way to celebrate Christmas and New Year, I also discovered some new holidays like Thanksgiving or Black Friday. I immediately loved it all.

At the beginning, it was difficult for me to accept all those different things, but everything was better later. There is a big difference between American culture and the European one and an even bigger difference between American and African culture.

For my part, I prefer the American culture because people are very open and friendly. Also, I find the mentality is much better than in Europe. With the au pair program, I had the chance to follow some English classes. This was a very good opportunity for me. Improving my English is very important for my future career and it also allowed me to meet many people from around the world.

My experience in USA was one of the most important experience for me. Being

far away from my country and my family helped me to improve on some personal points. Now, I have much more patience and I think it made me more independent.

I am at the end of my year and have only good memories about this fabulous EurAupair year. I am already planning to come back to the USA. America is a wonderful destination! Thank you, EurAupair, for such a wonderful opportunity!”



EurAupair Au Pair Maimouna Gassama

## Thanksgiving Celebrations From Chicago to Germany!

This past November marked the 11th Annual Chicagoland Thanksgiving Feast! This long-standing tradition gathered EurAupair au pairs from 10 different countries, along with their Community Counselors to celebrate the occasion! The Feast was held at the American Legion Post #974 in Franklin Park, Illinois with Community Counselors providing the turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing and cranberry sauce. Not showing up empty



handed, the au pairs each brought a dish from their home country to share with all. The food was enough to fill three end-to-end banquet tables, but the fun could not be contained!

Shortly after arriving, the au pairs had a chance to get in on some fun and test their trivia knowledge of their host country, the USA. Au pairs had to know such things as the two-letter state abbreviations (no multiple choice here), as well as a mix of general USA trivia and more specific Thanksgiving-related trivia. Do you know if turkeys can fly?

After everyone was absolutely stuffed, the winners of the games and trivia quiz got to choose a grab bag gift. Thanks to all the wonderful Community Counselors who provided the gifts! And, many thanks to Mitch Frumkin, the husband of EurAupair Area Coordinator Vivi Frumkin, who served as the official

photographer for the event.

As the pièce de resistance, au pair Rose Fontaine, of France, mesmerized au pairs and Community Counselors alike with her singing of La Vie En Rose, the famous signature song of French singer Édith Piaf. The au pairs also were able to participate in a general question & answer session about EurAupair and the au pair program, which included finding out how much the au pairs know about their own Community Counselor!

The EurAupair Chicagoland au pairs are proud to be such an active group together. May the tradition of the Feast continue for another 11 years or more!

Dawn Rothermel  
EurAupair Community Counselor



Front row left to right: Elodie Berne (France), Angelique Noury (France), Anais Deville (France), Pimjinut Knunfert (Thailand) Back row left to right: Karina Schaper (Germany), Charlene Egenschwiller (France)

### American Traditions Last Beyond the Program Year!

EurAupair Alumni Henrike (Henni) Baum, hosted by the Pflieger family of Clarkston, MI may have returned to Germany last year, but that didn't mean she left all her American traditions behind! As you can see from the heart-warming message below, Henni decided to bring a little bit of an American Thanksgiving to Germany, complete with all the trimmings! From the photos, it seems that even Henni's cat, aptly named Michigan, seemed to think it was quite a spread! Thanks to the Pflieger family and to Henni for sharing! Henni writes:

“Hello everyone!!!  
HAPPY (belated) THANKSGIVING!!!”



I hope everyone had a good day with the family and some good food :)

Today I wanted to show my parents some kind of a real American tradition and cooked a Thanksgiving dinner for them. I made Turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry relish, green beans, asparagus and a real American apple pie (thanks to allrecipes.com hahah) ....) I think it turned out very well... everybody liked it! I soo miss the American traditions and the wonderful family-holidays!!

How is everybody doing?  
Did it snow in Michigan already?  
How are families, kids (or for Matt: the other au pairs?)

School is still interesting and fun. All the English classes are great and I am going to have my first big exam in the beginning of February....

I get more and more settled in Düsseldorf. For everybody who doesn't know it yet... I have a new room-mate. :) A cat. :) It's a boy and I named him Michigan. Hahahah he is still young (6 months old) and keeps me pretty busy! :)

I hope you all have a great weekend, have some time to relax and maybe set up the Christmas-dekorations :)  
Can't wait to hear from you all!!!”

Love,  
Henni



From left to right: Henni Baum (Germany), Mrs. Matt Kreke (Community Counselor's wife), Yukiko Okada (Japan).



# EurAupair Photos



*Our November arrival au pairs in New York City*



*Theresa Maier (Germany) and Monika Riepl (Germany) attended the musical "The Hobbit" at the Imperial Theatre in October 2009.*



*January 2010, Community Counselor Gema Bahns, brought a group of au pairs to Cincinnati for ice skating.*

*Pictured from left to right: Isabelle Hennig (Germany), Mira Nipuli (Finland), Maria-Sophie Paethke (Germany), Helena Nickels (Germany), Yukari Akamine (Japan), Natalia Surdu (Moldova), and Diana Horenkamp (Germany)*



*Counselor Maureen Coughlin took Marina Sirbu (Moldova) to the University of Missouri-Columbia (Mizzou) football game. Bands, cheerleaders, and great scoring by the Mizzou football team brought a victory for all!*

*From left to right: Marina Sirbu, Nancy Coughlin (Area Coordinator) and Maureen Coughlin*



*Our lively, smiley workshop instructor Abbey*



*January 2010, Monthly meeting Eagle/Vail, CO.*

*From left to right: Nathalie Graef (Germany), Ines Mueller (Germany), Julia Spannagel (Germany), Catrin Roll (Germany), Marilia Imbelloni (Brazil), Thais Sant'Anna Madeira (Brazil), Gabriella Ribeiro (Brazil) and Laura Campana (Brazil)*

# EurAupair Au Pair Laura Pahk IAPA Au Pair of the Year 2010 Finalist

by Laura Park (Finland) and the Winters family (Lake Villa, IL)

How much does it mean to me to be an au pair in the Winters family? It means the world. I have the most wonderful children an au pair could ever ask for. When I first arrived in this family, I was amazed at how respectful these children were, and it allowed me to start my au pair year with confidence. Confidence, that I, who have had some previous experience caring for children--but nothing at all like parenting--could blend into this family so quickly and easily that I feel we were meant to be together. It has been a match made in heaven.

I was amazed that I never really felt homesick. Other au pairs in my group talked about missing their families. Oh, sure, I did miss my family and friends in Finland. But, I immediately gained a mother, father, 2 brothers, a little sister, as well as a wonderful extended family. Chuck and Jennie are not just my host parents--they are also my best friends. We laugh, talk and joke with each other, and I feel loved and supported—just like I do in Finland.

When Jennie first told me that she and Chuck had nominated me for this great honor—I was speechless. She showed me her letter and I was so full of emotion that I couldn't stop hugging her. I never would have imagined how wonderful it feels to be a part of another family—a family who is not related by blood, but by our hearts. Jennie and Chuck always include me in every family event—from trips to Peoria to visit Jennie's sister's family, to our Thanksgiving trip to Michigan with Chuck's extended family, to our own family vacation in Florida. I'm a part of every major event in their lives and they are a part of mine.

I knew we had a special relationship when Jennie and Chuck threw me a birthday party last summer. It was so memorable for me that they went to so much trouble to make sure all of the people I cared about were there—especially my Bubbie! Jennie's mother, who is my grandmother, made me my favorite cookies. I can't be on a diet in America with my Bubbie spoiling me every chance she can get!

To me, it is such a critical part of our bond that Jennie and Chuck ask for my opinion with regard to major decisions. They truly care about what I think and I feel like a valued member of the family. I don't work here—I live here. When Chuck mentioned that he thought we were ready for a puppy, we discussed this as a family. I was shocked that my vote counted just as much as theirs, and I went with Jennie and the children to pick out our Honey. Another example

Laura Pahk is an exceptional Au Pair—the best we have ever had by far. Since the day Laura arrived, she has demonstrated her maturity, responsibility, exceptional childcare skills and, most importantly, her sense of understanding of the au pair role.

Laura blended with our family from the very start—before she even arrived in the USA. We all spoke to her several times on the telephone, and could tell that she had an engaging personality, strong communication skills and an understanding of children.



Laura Pahk, IAPA Au Pair of the Year Finalist

of this inclusion occurred when planning Gabbi's fourth birthday party. Jennie and I designed the activities and theme together. We have had such fun creating her dream birthday, that I almost feel like it's mine!

When I visited my home country this December, I was so happy and I had such a great time catching up with family and friends. Yet, I felt that something important



Laura with the kids

was missing, and that something was the Winters. I feel incomplete without them.

I must tell you about my fabulous children. Gabbi is 3—almost 4—and she is so amazing. Every time we go to the park or to play dates I have to tell people that this petite little wonder is only 3. She expresses herself like someone in their teens. She is friendly and fun-loving. Gabbi and I love to do puzzles, color, walk our puppy and imagine. She has such a creative mind. I have learned so much about how to help Gabbi continue to grow. No matter what, she always makes my day. Her laughter and kisses are just a small piece of why I knew I would have to extend for another 12 months!

Trevor is my cuddle buddy. He is the most loving person I have ever known. He gave me warm hugs and kisses from the moment I walked through the door to this very morning. Trevor, who is 7, played football this fall, and I didn't want to miss a single game. Whether he won or lost, he had the best attitude of any teammate—protecting and cheering on his friends whenever possible. I know Trevor would do

Upon her arrival, she immediately bonded with our 3 children, with us, as well as with extended family members. It was clear that Laura came here to be an au pair.

She values time with us as a family, which is a quality we had missed in previous au pairs. She has travelled with us on a family vacation to Disney World as well as to visit extended family for events and holidays. Each time, she has demonstrated how much she relishes being a member of our family with her natural acceptance of traditions and celebrations. On Thanksgiving, she was so excited to travel with us to the upper peninsula of Michigan to spend the weekend with Chuck's family. This was the first time, Laura was meeting some of our cousins, and everyone instantly fell in love with Laura's fabulous personality. Our eldest niece looks up to Laura as a role model, and Laura has been a kind friend and supportive mentor to her when called upon for guidance.

In addition, Laura has handled any situation that arises with great maturity. She is welcoming to any new au pairs that join our group and has befriended au pairs from other groups—always rising above any petty controversies that can evolve with the other girls. Other au pairs often contact Laura for advice when they have difficulties with their own host family situations, and Laura provides support and mature guidance in handling such situations.

The bond Laura has formed with our children makes her a natural caregiver.

the same for me. Amazingly, this little lover, was nicknamed “the beast” by his coaches!

I thought Blake was going to be my challenge. Blake is Trevor's twin, but he's much more picky about accepting people. However, Blake and I have become so close that I'm the one he likes to read to, and I'm the one he wants to listen when he plays his violin. I seriously thought that he was the

one who would not connect with me, but we have our special time together—whether it's bowling on the Wii or drawing pictures together. I cried when Blake told me that I'm the only au pair he ever wants to have.

Jennie is an educator. She has inspired me, not only to improve my English, but to further my education. I want to go to school to become an Early Childhood Education teacher. I have learned all sorts of games and strategies for helping Blake, Trevor and Gabbi to improve their reading and math skills, and I wish to do the same for other children. Although, I can't imagine ever bonding with other children like I have here.

Chuck is funny and charismatic. Although he is crazy about all sports, we enjoy watching ice hockey together. I am looking forward to going to baseball games with him this summer. I may even go to his baseball games and cheer him on, if he's lucky! I never expected to have a host dad who is like my brother. We have so much fun together. It's great to feel comfortable inviting my friends over. They are surprised at the relationship I share with both Chuck

There are rarely discipline issues because all 3 children respect Laura as a true member of our family. As soon as the boys return from school, she makes sure they do their homework and creates assignments for our 3-year-old so that she doesn't feel left out. She never makes a promise that she doesn't intend to keep and they know her to be fair and honest. For example, our youngest asked Laura months ago if she would be here for Christmas. Laura's family encouraged her to visit home for the holidays before extending for her 2nd au pair year, but Laura kept her promise to Gabbi to be here on Christmas day, because it was so important to her. The children love Laura and know that she loves them just as strongly.

Laura is conscientious about all aspects of the au pair role. She takes her college classes seriously, completing her assignments on time and with care. We enjoyed observing her studiously preparing for her powerpoint presentation and oral report and felt proud when she practiced giving it to us.

As her host-parents, we truly value Laura as a person and as a family member. We cannot imagine life without Laura, as she has made this experience better than we ever dreamed it could be. We doubt there is another family as happy with their au pair relationship as we are, and; therefore, could not imagine anyone more suited to be the Au Pair of the Year.

The Winters Family

and Jennie.

Jennie is one of the most amazing women I have ever met. I can talk to her about anything and everything. She always listens and gives me good advice whenever I need it. Definitely, one of my favorite things about living here are the family meals we share. Not only is Jennie an amazing mom and host-mom, but she is a fabulous cook. After working all day, she comes home and makes the best food – and it's healthy! I always think she has got to be so tired, but she never shows it – she's like the Energizer bunny because she always keeps going. Even after dinner, we have the greatest family time – playing dominoes or all sorts of other games. We can spend a day together shopping, or planning things for the children, and it doesn't even feel like time has gone by. After the kids are finally in bed, some nights Jennie and I get to watch our favorite shows together – like best friends. It brings tears to my eyes to think about that time when my second au pair year will come to an end, because of my deep love for her.

My experience in America has been a wonderful one, and definitely something I will remember for the rest of my life. I'm so proud of myself that I had the courage to travel across the world on my own on this adventure, but I'm sure I'm going to be even more proud when I tell my own children about my experiences and the wonderful family that I will still be in contact with even then. I want to thank my host family and my agency for giving me the opportunity to share my story with you. I hope my story inspires other girls to take the “leap of faith” becoming an au pair. It is truly the adventure of a lifetime.

Sincerely,  
Laura Pahk

## Gazette Info...

The EurAupair Gazette is published four times a year. It is provided free of charge to EurAupair Host Families, EurAupair Au Pairs, EurAupair Community Counselors and staff, and friends of the EurAupair program around the world. Any copyright material published with the written permission of the publisher and is so indicated. Any other material may be used for publication without permission of EurAupair.

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Pick out the best pictures you have taken and tell us...

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- When
- What
- Where

and maybe even how or why!  
We'll take it from there!

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