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ELDAR, ANNA, AND SVETA'S UKRAINE



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I recently learned that the Ukraine is in the southeastern part of Central Europe and is one of the most developed republics of the former Soviet Union. It is now part of the CIS, which means Commonwealth of Independent States.

After my initial research on the Ukraine, all my questions were still not answered. What are schools like? What is a typical day? What is the food like? The only way to get these answers was to ask teenagers from the Ukraine. Eldar Kanatayeva, Anna Mekeda, and Sveta Kiptenko were kind enough to provide me with these answers.

All three exchange students are from different parts of the Ukraine; Eldar comes from a southern town smaller than Orange called Lohovka. Anna's hometown is a western

town called Chervonograd, approximately the same size as Orange. Sveta is from the northern region of the Ukraine. She lives in a large city called Sumy.

If you think school in the U.S. is tough, then don't go to the Ukraine. It might be deceiving since school doesn't usually start until 9 o'clock. The differences in the Ukraine's school are drastic. Their high school would be equivalent to our college schedule. "You can choose your subjects and I have six to seven classes a day. I have seventeen different classes a week," said Sveta. They also have much more freedom than we do, having 15 minutes between each class and being able to eat lunch whenever they want.

After school activities are similar but they don't have the same abundance of them as we do in the U.S. "We can play basketball but sports aren't popular. We have a chess club and a journalism club," said Anna. Compared to Mahar, the after school activities are harder to find, but not completely lacking. "There are also musicals and stage performances," added Sveta.

They might have more rigorous schools but when it comes to doing research for school assignments, that could be much more difficult. Most teenagers in the Ukraine don't

have computers at home, and if they do, it is unlikely they have an internet connection. When asked how they get to go online, they all replied that they go to internet cafés that offer internet services.

Family life is also very different. To the three exchange students, family life in the U.S. appears to be far more impersonal than in the Ukraine. "In my family back home we are really close. We know all of our aunts and uncles and even our distant relatives. But here I haven't even met my host family's grandparents," said Sveta.

Free-time activities also are different for teenagers in Ukraine. They often go for walks with their friends instead of seeing the latest movie. "My friends and I go for walks. We walk in the forest and down to the river," said Anna.

The laws that American teenagers care about are different in Ukraine too. The drinking age is 18 but Eldar says most teenagers ignore this law. You also have to be 18 to receive your driver's license. The car that many Ukrainians drive is called the Zaporogets. "It's a Ukrainian car that has the engine in the back, it's very noisy and smelly," said Eldar. All three exchange students laughed

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