



IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award 2006 Finalist



Au Pair

Name of au pair: Mr Alexandru V Darziu.....

Nationality of au pair: Romanian

Age of au pair: 25.....

Start date of au pair placement: 17th of March 2004.....

Finish date of au pair placement (if applicable)*: 6th of March 2006.....

* Contact details if you are no longer with your host family after 01 March 2006

I confirm that I will be able to attend the IAPA 12th Annual Conference, 23—25 March 2006, in Barcelona, Spain. If I am still placed with my host family during these dates I confirm that I have received the necessary permission from my host family to attend the Conference. (please tick).

Host Family

Name of host family: Tim & Heidi Davis

Address: United Kingdom

IAPA Member

Name of IAPA Member Agency (please circle: Sending/Receiving):A2Z.....

Country: United Kingdom



IAPA Au Pair of the Year Award 2006 Finalist

This is how ... time flies when you are having the time of your life!

An artist at heart, graduating from a fine arts high school with an A Certificate in graphics and a subsequent teaching post at a secondary school I wanted to widen my horizons. I wanted to experience a new culture, improve my English skills and I enjoyed working with children. During my studies I had been in awe of the English architectural gothic style and Pre-Raphaelite movement and a trip to the UK would be my dream. Being an au pair was one way I could realise my dream. I had no idea how perfect a solution it would turn out to be.

However the myriad rules and regulations which I needed to adhere to, to become an au pair were complex. My first attempt at getting a visa failed. I learnt my lesson and knew using an agency proved vital. My Romanian agency worked with A2Z agency in the UK and, with a thorough introduction to the family and with the visa application process explained I secured the necessary visa and fabulous family, and landed in the UK just a week later.

I left behind the busy city life in Bucharest and arrived late evening at the family's home. A remote cottage in rolling countryside with not a street light in sight! Where had I come? I was turning the page to the next chapter in my life.

The three children were at first apprehensive and the youngest at 4 years old was wary of me. I was their first au pair and it took some weeks to gain their confidence but through playing with them their concerns subsided and my presence was accepted as we settled into a happy routine. I mastered some new recipes and had sent over some special herbs from my mother, which are now used by the family to season their dishes. I learnt about caring for chickens, ducks, rabbits, guinea pigs and though I never rode the horses I have become adept at catching and knowing which ends of the horse to avoid!

My time with the family is coming to an end and my 2 years are nearly through. In writing this essay I asked the children what they liked and disliked about me and this is what they said:-

Will - aged 10

- Thumbs up: He tells us things that we don't know about; he is a good listener; he cleans the house and he makes good jokes; he bounces well on the trampoline.

- Thumbs down: He makes us sit on the steps if we are naughty.

Ollie - aged 8

- Thumbs up: He is groovy, strong, sarcastic but very funny; he plays chess and fights well.

- Thumbs down: He doesn't let me play too much on the computer or the play station.

Izzie - aged 6

- Thumbs up: He always smells nice and is clean and tidy; he pretends to be Barbie; he takes me to the play ground and swings me high.

- Thumbs down: He makes me finish my tea and do my homework.

As I was listening to their answers accompanied by their distinct giggles, it was the warmth of their smiles and the look in their eyes that made it all clear to me... there is nothing more fulfilling than the expression of a happy child in which you know you have played your part and that feels so good.

This is one side of the experience, on the other is the time I spent experiencing the UK. Family and friends of the family welcomed me into their homes and I visited other parts of the UK cultivating my artistic passion, being inspired by my surroundings, entering art competitions, launching an art exhibition and following a 'giclée' printing course. I have also designed and built my own web site



while in the UK. All this will undoubtedly prove to be a fruitful experience which can be put to good use as I am returning home with a possible business venture in mind.



Being an au pair has enabled me to learn new skills, opened my eyes to a different family life which I have enjoyed and felt a part of, it has given me a realistic insight into raising children, helped me understand and observe close relationships outside my own family, exposed me to a different culture and given me a fluency in the English language.

I love art, music, films and the computer and not one of these interests was shared with my family when I arrived with them. But the family laughs with me now about how they now know how to work their computer, that they have seen more films than ever before and their appreciation and knowledge of art and music has been awakened. So we have truly shared a cultural exchange.

So, I will shortly turn the page into the next chapter of my life and I take with me an experience which will touch the rest of the story of my life...