

Gastonia Sister Cities Gotha, Germany Exchange - Interview Review

How much?

- The cost of a plane ticket...last year it was around \$1,200, but the total is unknown until we actually book the tickets. Prices can vary greatly from year to year. We require them to get extra travel insurance which is around \$50 and added into the trip cost. All trip costs are non-refundable
- Scholarships are available through the German Language and Culture Foundation in Charlotte. Students who are accepted into the program will obtain an application from their German teacher or it will be included in your welcome packet. You will need to complete that and return to the teacher. Scholarships are based on family need, student's grade in German and participation. Students without at least a B average in German may not receive funding. Awards are determined by January.
- Other costs include: \$250 class fee, around \$150 for passport, spending money
- Once they are in Gotha, everything is covered by the host family...breakfast, lunch and dinner. The school pays for all entry fees to castles, events etc.

Travel Dates?

- We will leave after school is out in June and be gone for 10-14 days

Student Selection

- Students must have a minimum of a "B" average in German and be excelling in their other courses.
- Must be currently enrolled or signed up for German 1 prior to the trip's departure.
- Each student will be interviewed, if the interview reveals attitude and behavior that does not reflect the necessary maturity for the class and for the exchange trip, the students will be asked to apply the following year.

Program Participation

- Attendance for the German Cultural Class is mandatory. Unless the instructor excuses absences, three absences will be the reason for dismissal. Classes will be held, typically, on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month from 6-7:30 p.m. from November-May
- If you are unable to attend class for any reason contact the teacher or Sister Cities Coordinator.
- Inappropriate behavior of any kind will be the reason for dismissal based upon the recommendation of the class instructor/German teacher/Sister Cities Director.

Host families? Are they safe?

- Yes, they are all handpicked by the principal and we have had a partnership with the same school for over 20+ years. This trip is like a well-oiled machine. If your child feels like they aren't being taken care of we ask they notify the chaperone to remedy the issue. It oftentimes is just a communication issue.

What do they do each day?

- Go to museums, castles, concentration camp, learn about German history, live the life of a German! That's the best part about our program...other programs you can travel somewhere and stay in a hotel but our program provides a unique homestay that really allows the students to live life like a German teenager.

Exchange information:

- This is an equal exchange program, so the student who hosts your child will come and stay with you. This is a crucial piece of the Sister Cities exchange puzzle. We need families who are willing to reciprocate and host a student and families who are not willing to host may not be accepted into the program. We will “entertain” them during the day and you provide them room and board and I’m sure the group will have nightly plans to keep them entertained as well.
- While abroad, students should try their best to adapt to the customs, schedules, and lifestyles of their host family.
- When your host student visits Gastonia, you will do your best to receive your guest with warmth and friendliness, and do your best to make him/her feel welcome at your home.

What to review at home as a family after this interview?

- Can we afford this trip? Upfront costs include a passport which must be applied for after being accepted but not later than January 1st. Class fee is also an upfront cost of \$250. The student will need spending money while on the trip. Scholarships won’t be announced until after January.
- The student will need a piece of luggage, spending money, clothing
- Can we afford to host a student at our house for 2 weeks? Do we have the space available in our house? Do we have the time to get them to the Garland Center each morning and pick up every afternoon? We will have to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the host student. What will we do on the weekend with them?

If chosen, what’s next?

- You will need to apply for your passport, ASAP. This can be completed at the main post office branch on Main Street, Gastonia or at the Gaston County Register of Deeds (in the courthouse) M-F 8:30 – 4 p.m. call 704-866-7685 to make an appointment. I will send a link for the application. Once it arrives we will need a copy.
- Provide Sister Cities with a copy of your primary insurance card.
- Complete a liability/medical waiver
- Complete a health form
- Complete a student profile to be matched with German host