



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

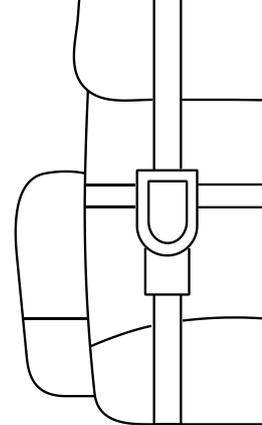


Welcome to Portugal!

Intercultura-AFS Portugal
www.intercultura-afs.pt

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1. PREPARATION

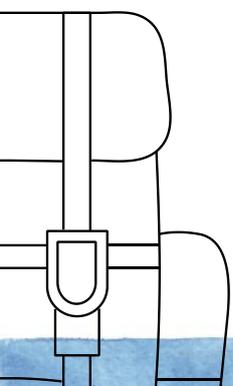
You're about to travel to Portugal for an intercultural learning experience and the better you are prepared, the more you can make out of it. Language preparation and knowledge about Portugal and your own home culture are very important. We strongly advise you to make use of the Portuguese Language Manual & Audio Files we arranged for you, the Portuguese language can be tricky so start learning now!

When you arrive in Portugal, you will go to an orientation camp - Arrival Camp. When at the camp, put yourself entirely into it. Every bit of language or general knowledge you pick up there will mean less work later and a more enjoyable stay for you.

During your intercultural experience in Portugal you will learn a lot about your safety, yet there are some basic advises you should follow and that we will try to summarize in this booklet. Safety depends a lot on the placement you have: you could stay at a rural host community where the doors are unlocked all day and night, or you can be placed in an urban area where there are safety measures you have to take all the time. Please read all the information sent to you carefully and think about the questions or doubts you might have. Besides the orientation activities developed by the volunteers to answer your questions, when you arrive you will have easy access to a safe net composed by your host family, AFS volunteers and your teachers and colleagues at school to whom you can address your worries and clear your doubts.

Always speak about your difficulties and ask them for guidance. Ask your family and friends to speak Portuguese to you right from the beginning. If you make a 100% effort to speak, think and hear only Portuguese, your progress will be rapid and you'll gain confidence and the respect of others. If you understand and you speak Portuguese you'll more easily integrate in your group of friends at school and family.

Try to do some research before you arrive. Make use of internet not only about Portugal but also to learn the language. Bring yourself up to date on the political and social questions in your own country, and on world affairs, by reading newspapers and news magazines - people will probably challenge you about such matters. Always remember that you're an ambassador of your country and AFS.





2. ATTITUDES

Of great importance are a few basic attitudes to which we want to draw your attention. Think about them, analyze them and use them.

Openness: You are in Portugal to learn.

LISTEN. Take in all impressions and information you can. Do not hesitate to ask for advice from your family, from your friends or AFS, and do not be afraid of being corrected. There is so much to learn and it is no loss of prestige to ask questions. Often, families will accept any uneasy situation rather than criticize. Encourage them to correct you. If you feel uneasy about anything, talk to your family about it. They won't realize it unless you bring it into the open. Openness of everyone involved is how everyone can learn.

Appreciation: Your family accepts you out of friendship; they receive no material advantage from it. All AFS host families worldwide are **VOLUNTEERS**; this means the family doesn't receive any money to host you. Show them that you are grateful - not by giving expensive gifts, but by frequent 'thank-you's", by a smile, by lending a helping hand, by showing enthusiasm and interest in what they have to offer. Appreciation is necessary in building lasting bonds.

Accepting differences: Different societies have different values and customs without one being better than the other. Put yourself "in the other person's shoes". You need to see things from other's viewpoint and not your own if you want to be able to understand what the other person is really saying. Once again, speak is the key of success.

Consideration: Consideration is important in everyday things such as not keeping others in your family waiting while you are daydreaming in the bathroom and saving your host mother extra work by keeping your own room clean. If she seems especially tired, do something special for her and if all family members help with the house chores, you must do the same. If someone has something to say, take time and listen, while you look them in the eyes. Consideration is shown in little gestures.

Humor: A laugh... a smile - they are international means of communication. This includes laughing at you. Being able to laugh at your own shortcomings and mistakes is a characteristic of a balanced person. A good laugh will give you the strength to correct a mistake, and it is a lot more enjoyable than getting upset with yourself. If you smile at someone, probably you'll received a smile back.

When you think about these attitudes you will realize that they not only apply to Portugal and AFS, but that they are important everywhere. These attitudes will always help you to reach other people.





3. YOUR PORTUGUESE FAMILY

Don't expect that, at least in the beginning, the relationship between you and your host family to be like the relationship you have with your family at your country. You and your own family have grown together through years of common experience and mutual rules. It takes time to build a good relationship with people, so don't expect to jump into something like you're used to. Maybe it's more realistic, in the first days, to consider your self a close friend of the family rather than a full family member.

If you have smaller host brothers or sisters, remember that it is not always so easy for them to accept the fact that they suddenly have a "big" brother or sister. They have probably been used to receiving a good deal of the family's attention. Because of the language and being you, you will suddenly be the centre attention for a short time. Take consideration of them and try not being a big brother or sister immediately. Speak a lot with them and try to do some activities that they enjoy.

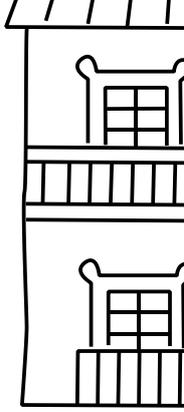
It takes time, and maybe you will realize that the relationship will never be what you expected. As a member, you will share in the pleasures of the home and responsibility of it. Keep your room clean and tidy. In a traditional Portuguese family, the mother will do or organize most of the housework, cooking and cleaning. If you try to help in such tasks, they might not react that well. In most modern families, though, everyone is expected to do their share of housework, cooking and cleaning. When you make decisions, you will have to take the family into consideration. Always ask what you can do to help!

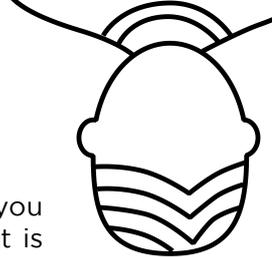
It will be up to you to respect the family rules. Find out which they are and try to discuss any that are unclear. Never leave a question mark unclear and it is normal that you don't memorize all of them, so don't be afraid to ask more than once. During your first days in the family you can make an Orientation Questionnaire about the family dynamics, which will be given to you at the Arrival Camp and will be very useful in this subject.

Most important, the family is your primary source of help. They will know what is "wrong or right" in your community and school and can explain many things. Listen to them and be sure to give them a chance to help.

Physical contact is a common sign of affection, both between members of the family and close friends. Some AFS students found attitudes such as kissing and hugging somehow strange and embarrassing. Try to get used to them. If you reject physical contact, most people won't realize that you have different habits in your home country and will take it as a cold behavior, so you must explain it and try to adjust to our culture. Most Portuguese greet each other and say goodbye with one or two kisses on the cheek; it is rude not to do it. You only handshake between men or if greeting someone like a teacher.

Many students expect their host brother or sister to be a close companion, and yet this often does not happen. Be prepared to make your own friends and pursue your own interests, without depending on your host brother or sister. After all, many natural sisters and brothers live together without necessarily sharing all their personal thoughts and activities. Of course, you will both have to make efforts and compromises to live together comfortably, but neither of you should feel forced to be something you are not or to do something you don't want to.





If difficulties do arise, which you feel unable to handle within your family or if you cannot approach your host family about something personal that troubles you, it is important to talk with your local AFS volunteer. If there are real misunderstandings, time alone cannot solve them. Keeping them to yourself will only prolong the concern and doing this is really unfair to you and your host family.

To decide to change family is a difficult task. “Maybe it will be better later”, one thinks, and furthermore, there is no guarantee that things will be better in the next family. On the other hand, your happiness and well being, as much as the happiness and well being of your host family are important and the experience should not be an endurance test alone. When the time and effort do not bring about a relationship that is satisfying for a student or his family, this does not mean anyone has failed, it just means they have different needs or expectations and these cannot be comfortably resolved in the short period of this experience. If after a counseling process there aren’t good results, a family change can be decided with everyone’s agreement.



4. YOUR NEW COMMUNITY

You might have a lot of spare time at your disposal, which won’t be filled with organized activities. It is up to you to make good use of this free time and to spend it in a constructive way.

Don’t close yourself in your own little room/world writing in your diary, reading letters from home and spending precious hours online. Set a time aside for writing and reading your messages, when your help is not needed and when it won’t be interfering with your taking part in your family life or your social life in Portugal.

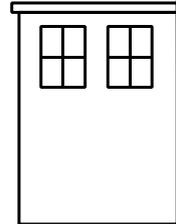
Find out what your family does. Join each member in his/her activities or work in order to really get to know them. Get involved. Go for a walk and get to know the community you are living in and its people. Read a Portuguese book, magazine or newspaper. Take up a new activity such as playing an instrument or doing crafts or doing volunteer work locally. You will soon find out there are many ways of spending one’s free time without organized extra curricular activities.

Be quick, as well to take other opportunities to learn. Walk around and talk to people, start your own routines. visit your host parents place of work, attend a church, learn about the country’s government and political events, try to understand the economic, social and other factors that have influenced the development of your town. You will be surprised how interesting even the tiniest town can be.

As for your status in the community, it is possible that apart from your family and their friends, few people will know about you or be acquainted with AFS. Actually people will be glad to get to know you, but the first steps towards establishing contacts must often be made by you.

Your social life will probably differ from what you are used to. As a broad generalization, it will centre on the family or a small group of friends. Do not expect to be on the go all the time. Of course social life will vary greatly according to your family but be sure to ask permission if you want to go out and tell them when, where, with whom and how long.





5. HOMESICKNESS AND UNHAPPINESS

If you get homesick or if you are feeling down, don't retreat somewhere close to home (nowadays this usually means spending hours online on your laptop). Get up and do something or talk with someone in your family. Homesickness comes from missing people or things that are familiar. Make yourself familiar with your new surroundings!

If you feel unhappy or uncomfortable for some reason, talk to your host family. They are there to help you and they want you to be happy. Many minor difficulties can be solved with openness and tact. If you do not think your family can help you, please let your AFS volunteer know immediately. There is no use in wasting valuable time by pondering your fate and being unhappy.



6. YOUR PORTUGUESE SCHOOL

No school anywhere in the world wants a student who "lies down on the job". This experience will not be a vacation from school. Although some students have finished Secondary School in their home countries, school is a major part of every student's AFS experience. The AFS program could not exist without the support of schools and teachers.

You may find that the school will be the toughest ever - not only because of the struggle to learn the language, because you may feel isolated and useless sometimes, but also because the school system and environment are totally different from the ones you are used to. Quite a challenge! But you will soon learn your way around and what you should do.

Don't be disappointed if you do not receive an overwhelming welcome on your first day in school. It is quite possible that hardly anyone will know about you and know what AFS in general stands for, there aren't many hosting exchange programs in Portugal and most foreign teenagers that come to study are immigrant's children. Finding your place in the class community and making friends will depend largely on your willingness to plough ahead despite the obstacles. If someone hasn't been asked to help you in your class, take the initiative to ask the person beside you to help you get homework assignments and so on.

As soon as you get the textbook's list, keep a copy and send it to the AFS office in Lisbon. We have most of the books in the office and can send it to you, the ones we don't have we will ask you or your host family to buy and we will reimburse. If it's not possible, we will buy you your school books. AFS will also reimburse transportation expenses (for school only) and school lunch at the school cantina.





7. WEATHER AND CLOTHING

Winter is cold and wet (from the middle of November till the end of February) and most family houses and schools don't have any central heating. Bring a couple of good warm sweaters, mittens or gloves, a heavy scarf, warm pants, warm shoes and a winter coat. You will need some warm clothes to wear inside too. It rains a lot, so bring a waterproof coat. Summer is really hot (from May till September), temperature's around 30-35 centigrade. Bring some lightweight clothes and obviously swimwear!

Please note that most Portuguese schools do not have uniforms! You wear your own clothes to school, even for sports.

- Daily wear: Both girls and boys – pants of various types, jeans, shorts, T-shirts, sweaters, sport clothes, tennis shoes, boots in winter, etc. Girls might wear skirts and dresses.
- Semi-formal and formal occasions: Saturday nights and teenage parties – not so different from what you will wear at school, except for sports clothes. Ask a friend. Clothing habits in a big town might be different from a small village.
- Family gatherings, Christmas, weddings or formal meetings – girls wear pants-outfits, skirt and blouse or a nice dress. Boys wear nice pants, sports type light coat and shirt or matching pants and coat in nice material, shirt and tie, nice shoes. Here you will have to ask your family as it can vary a lot.

You have to bring some pijamas or night wear – it is not ok to go to bed with the day clothes or go out with the clothes you slept in. Doing this can be considered as dirty.

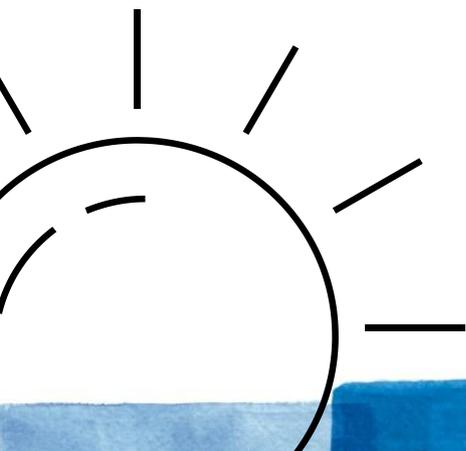
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8. FOOD

We are very proud of Portuguese gastronomy. We appreciate eating and drinking well. Almost all parties include a meal, especially family gatherings; you will probably think we eat too much compared to what you are used to! Eating our food is a part of your experience. It happens that it is an important part of Portuguese life, so try to participate and make an effort to taste a bit of everything (if there is something you really dislike you may, of course, say so).

Don't take more on your plate than you can eat. Portuguese don't like to throw away food! If there is something you like, say so or ask for seconds – this will delight the person who cooked (normally mothers and grandmothers). Bringing recipes from your own country and cooking them for your Portuguese family could be an interesting (or even funny) idea.



Meals:

- Breakfast – early in the morning, before going to school or work (7 – 8 a.m.). Normally bread or toasts with butter/cheese/ham/jam, milk (with coffee or chocolate milk or cereals).
- Lunch – about 12 or 1 p.m. Hot meal – soup, main dish and fruit or dessert. Normally eaten at school, although some families have lunch at home if nearby.
- Snack– about 5 or 6 p.m. The same as breakfast.
- Dinner – about 8 - 9 p.m. Hot meal, the same as lunch. Some families have a lighter dinner which can include soup, fruit, sandwich, etc.

When at the table be aware that you should not serve yourself first, unless a parent or grandparents does it for you. Wait and see how your family does it, usually older people are served first and younger last, but it can also happen that children are served first. Do not start eating until everyone is served or someone else starts eating first. Table manners are usually a big deal for Portuguese families, so get used to eat with a fork and knife (at the same time) and always use a napkin, never clean your mouth with your hand or your sleeve.



9. VOLUNTEERS

In your Portuguese community there is an AFS support volunteer who will be working under the supervision of Intercultura-AFS Portugal. The support volunteer has the special job of keeping in contact with you and your host family, checking on both and helping you if problems should arise. We hope you'll be able to discuss freely with your support volunteer as he/she knows your community and therefore can be of great help in the first months. Share your experience freely with him/her and listen to his/her suggestions.

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10. YOU AND INTERCULTURA-AFS PORTUGAL

Intercultura-AFS Portugal is the largest organization for exchange programs in Portugal. It deals with a large number of intercultural programs and activities, which involve teenage students, adults, schools, other organizations, etc.

Around the country there are two kinds of local volunteer structures: Chapter (that includes a region) and Clubs (that are school based).

The office in Lisbon has a small team of staff members. The Support Coordinator in the office is in contact with your local AFS support volunteer or the responsible for your chapter/club. If you can't reach your support volunteer for some reason, you can email or call the office in Lisbon.





11. HEALTH PROBLEMS

While in Portugal you have direct access to our National Health System, in case of need you can have a medical consultation at the local hospital, you will have to pay a higher fee than Portuguese citizens, but we will reimburse you for these expenses:

- Less serious: consult your host family, see the family doctor and notify AFS;
- Serious or accident: use telephone to notify AFS, afterhours please use the Emergency Phone Number;
- Expenses: AFS will pay for all medical expenses covered by the AFS Insurance. Either you or your host family should pay and send the receipts to the AFS office for reimbursement.

Please note that there are medical expenses not covered by the AFS Insurance (for instance: dentist and ophthalmologist consultations).

12. RULES FOR AFS STUDENTS IN PORTUGAL

AFS around the world has 3 main rules that once broken will imply your immediate return to your home country:

- NO DRIVING
- NO HITCHIKING
- NO DRUGS

We would like to take the opportunity to remind you that cigarettes and alcohol are strictly forbidden as well, you will have to be 18 to be of legal age to buy or take cigarettes and alcohol.

It is also essential that you don't miss classes for no reason; failing classes due to unjustified absences can also determine the program termination.

It is also important that you know you must return home when the experience is over, if you intend to stay after the end of the program your natural parents will have to come pick you up in Portugal and personally sign a program release.

Although this seems like lot of "Don't's", there are many more "of course, do's"! It was simply easier to write down the relatively few things you will not be able to do! These rules are for your protection, as well as the protection of your host family, your family at home and AFS.

13. RULES ON TRAVEL AND VISITS

The rules are set to ensure the safety and protection of the participant, the host family, AFS and the natural family. Intercultura-AFS Portugal is responsible for hosting many participants yearly. We must set up our rules with 'the group' in mind; the intention is keeping your AFS experience a safe and happy one, for everyone included. Very rarely, we can make an individual exception, but only for extreme circumstances.

Please read the following notes and rules carefully, trying to keep in mind that we want only the best out of your stay, and we are therefore trying to avoid any potential problems.

We would like to point out that the AFS program is not a "language travel program"; it is a family and school intercultural program. As such, the participant, the host family and the school are seen as the most essential components.



Travelling is not the aim of the program and thus given a very low priority. Excluding those trips with the host family or the school, the participants must restrict travelling to weekends, holidays and vacations.

Missing school to travel or receive visits is not permitted. The reason for this is that school places are extremely difficult to obtain. The schools feel therefore no obligation to grant AFS a school place if the participant does not take school seriously. We hope you will share that responsibility and follow our rules regarding school attendance.

AFS students can travel:

- Inside Portugal, when accompanied by **host family members of legal age (18+)**
- Inside Portugal, when accompanied by **teachers (school study visits)**
- Inside Portugal, when accompanied by **AFS-approved organizations (with adult supervision)**
- Inside Portugal, to visit another AFS friend and stay with an **AFS-approved host family.**
- Inside Portugal for **AFS activities.**

All other kinds of travelling is considered **Independent Travelling**, inclusively:

- Inside Portugal, alone or in the company of someone not of legal age (+18)
- All travels outside Portugal.

We strongly recommend that you don't do any Independent Travels:

Trimester students during the **1st month**

Semester students during the **first 2 months**

Year students during the **first 3 months**

All travels outside Portugal (even if with the host family or school) require a Travel Waiver signed by your natural parents, but also an original Authorization for Minors Travelling Outside Portugal, signed by your biological parents with their signatures notarized. Plus you are responsible to check with the Consulate of the country you will be visiting if you need a visa. Your Portuguese Visa should be valid and have Multiple Entries.

If you intend to travel outside the country you will have to have someone ready to host you and help you (no interrails around Europe will be allowed) you will also be responsible for finding out and take care of any passport and visa regulations.

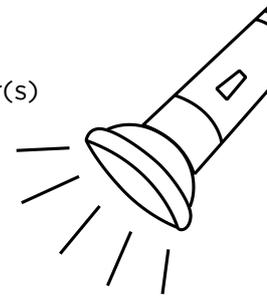
14. VISITS

We strongly advise against visits from the participant's family or friends during the AFS experience. For both family/friends and participants, an AFS experience might seem like the "perfect opportunity" to visit Portugal. However, we at AFS have seen the damage such visits potentially have on the experience and learning process.

The visit itself might be joyful for all, but often, it can be burdensome on you and the host family; emotionally as well as time and effort wise). It is extremely difficult for the participant who, having worked so hard at adapting to a new culture and a new language, must once again say goodbye to those who are so important (and have become more important due to the distance). Besides, it is the host family who is left to deal with the vulnerable emotions of the participant. These factors can often play an essential role in the participant's development for the remainder of the experience. Our advice is: COME BACK TOGETHER AND VISIT! If however, a visit is insisted upon, the following rules apply:

- Permission must be granted by AFS Portugal office. In certain cases of difficult adjustment, may be denied.
- The host family must give permission.
- The visit must not take place before January.

- The participant may not take trips away from the host place with the visitor(s) without asking AFS permission previously.
- Only one such visit will normally be approved for a maximum of 1 week.



If travel or visit rules are violated the participant will be sent home immediately.



15. IN OR AROUND THE HOME

In general, your host family does not know what type of worries you may have regarding your personal safety and therefore needs to be informed by you. You should not feel shy to ask questions like these for example: “Is it safe to walk around outside after dark?”, “Is it safe to wear jewelry to school?”. Other questions could and ought to be asked referring to all your doubts about usual procedures.

But it is also important that you know the safety rules of the household, like for instance if the doors are usually locked during the day or only after dark, if it is ok for you to answer the door to any stranger and let him/her in if he/she asks so, how to answer the phone when you don't know who is talking, this can be especially difficult since in the beginning you will not speak the language, at least enough to deal with a phone call situation. You should discuss these issues with your host family and ask them, for example, what information you should give strangers about your family when they are not at home, what information you should not give, how should you answer the phone when someone calls (many robberies begin by a phone call to see if there is anyone at the house and who it is).

Your host family will probably advise you not to give any information to strangers, but to avoid misunderstandings you could ask them a very simple list of people and their names to whom is OK to give information on the phone, i.e.: relatives and very close friends. With time you will get more comfortable about this and the list will not be necessary for long. Anyway make sure that when you are left alone in the house you always know where to contact your host parents and that you have a list of the main emergency telephone numbers you could use in case of necessity (Police, Fire Department, Hospital, Health Emergency Number «112», etc).

To make it easy for you, Intercultura-AFS Portugal will also provide you an AFS Info Sheet which has the following information:

- Name and contact number of your host family;
- AFS Support volunteer contact numbers;
- AFS office contact numbers;
- AFS emergency phone (only for extreme danger and medical situations).

In Portugal the voltage is 220V which can give a very nasty shock. The majority of the Portuguese families use gas for cooking and you should be very careful when using such appliances (don't leave them on when you are not home or when you go to sleep, etc....).

Once you arrive to your Portuguese home, always ask you host family about these issues:

- Do they lock the doors and windows?
- Where can you find a first aid box?
- In case of fire, do they have a fire extinguisher?
- Who should you call if there's an emergency (police, emergence services, fire department, etc...)?
- Are there any appliances you should be careful about?

During your experience you will probably want to contact your parents and friends in your country, please note that long distance phone calls and calls to mobile numbers are extremely expensive in Portugal. The best you can do is to buy a phone card and use it when you want to call your country.



16. OUTSIDE THE HOME

We strongly encourage you to ask your host parents about anything that may worry or frighten you – even if it sounds silly. Do ask them what they recommend to help you feel more personally secure, they will enjoy helping you the best they can. It is very important that whenever you leave the house, day or night, you ask your host parents and tell them: where you are going, with whom, for how long and by which means of transportation.

You should arrange to have a Portuguese mobile number once you arrive, but if not you should always leave a phone number to make it easy for them to reach you if necessary. Your host family knows the most about their community and is best prepared to give you the advice about places it would be better for you to avoid and how to get around.

Outside your home, if you see or sense problems on your way, just change your route and prepare to run. Do not act or look like an easy target - look confident! Avoid dark or isolated streets; don't use headphones when walking in isolated areas at any time. Be alert! Always use good common sense, like: don't talk to strangers!

Public transportation in Portugal, for instance, can be rather dangerous; a lot of burglaries take place close or inside trains, buses and in the subway. Some public transportation after dark can be very dangerous and violent though there are policemen inside, you should therefore try to travel always with someone older or within a group and sit always where there are plenty of people. Buses and the subway are well known by pickpocket'ers therefore you should always pay attention to your values and never stay close to the doors.

Always be aware of your belongings: don't leave your bag open and make sure there's no way a burglar can open it and take your wallet before you notice it.

If you're alone and need to take public transportation, wait in a coffee shop or in a well lit area for the transport to arrive. Once inside, sit close to the driver or where there are more people.

In case you get lost make sure you have your host family's phone numbers, a friend's phone number, the phone number of a relative of your host family as well as your support volunteer's phone number. Also, you should always carry with you Intercultura-AFS's Emergency Number. Anyway, it is safe for you to ask help in a café, at a bar, at a bus-stop, at the railway station (no need for you to search out a police officer) people will gladly help you if you tell them you are lost.

Make sure you always wear a copy (not the original one) of your passport whenever you leave the house as the police may stop you and ask for your identification, be cooperative and do whatever they tell you to. If you don't understand what they tell you, you should say "Não entendo - Inglês, por favor" (I don't understand - English, please). If the situation gets more complicated ask for someone's translation help and ask to phone your host family or show the police officer the Intercultura-AFS card you should always have with you.

Being a foreigner can be a handicap sometimes, many thieves will try to get advantage from your lack of knowledge, they will try to distract you. Be careful if someone asks





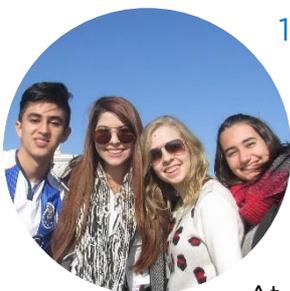
you to stop for no reason, if someone asks you for a coin, if someone asks for a cigarette; you better keep on walking and act as if nothing had happened. Don't stop walking and don't answer back.

Thieves are not particularly violent but many carry small hand-knives and resisting them can be fatal.

Never carry too much money with you on the street; a bill of 5 € is more than enough for your daily life! If you get robbed ask someone from your host family to accompany you to the police Head Quarters to fill a complain report.

In every place and town there are dangerous areas you better avoid or go to there seldom and always with someone accompanying you. So ask your host family about them and take their advice seriously.

In Portugal, like in many other countries, the traffic keeps to the right. Be careful when you try to cross a road, make sure the cars are really stopping, because drivers do not always respect the red light or the crosswalk.



17. PORTUGUESE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (SECONDARY EDUCATION)

In Portugal, the term secondary education corresponds to what in Europe is currently called upper secondary education.

Secondary education is a level that lasts for 3 years, and corresponds to the 10th, 11th and 12th of schooling.

At secondary school there is a considerable range of options. In addition to regular education, which provides courses geared to the pursuit of studies (General Courses) and to the job market (Technological Courses), there are also vocational courses, specialised artistic education courses, as well as adult secondary education. AFS students are usually placed in General Courses, although there is the possibility (in some specific cases) to place them in other kinds of courses.

General Courses are divided in five study areas:

- Study Area 1 – Science and Technologies
- Study Area 2 – Social Sciences and Economics
- Study Area 3 – Social and Human Sciences
- Study Area 4 – Language and Literature
- Study Area 5 – Visual Arts

Not all Portuguese schools offer all the General Courses. Students have the possibility to choose one of these five options, as long as schools offer that option and have vacancy for them.

The syllabus for the General Courses involves two educational components, in addition to class projects: general component and specific component. General component is similar in all general courses and comprises a set of subjects:

- Portuguese
- English or French
- Philosophy
- Physical Education
- Information and Communication Technologies

The specific component depends on the study area. These are some of the subjects students can attend to in each study area:

- Study Area 1 – Science and Technologies: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Psychology, etc.
- Study Area 2 – Social Sciences and Economics: Mathematics, Economics, Geography, History, Sociology, Law, etc.
- Study Area 3 – Social and Human Sciences: History, Statistics, Geography, Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, etc.
- Study Area 4 – Language and Literature: French, German, Portuguese Literature, Latin, Art History, Greek, Psychology, Political Sciences, etc
- Study Area 5 – Visual Arts: Draft, Geometry, Mathematics, Art History, Physics and Chemistry, Arts Workshop, etc.

Students are assessed for their overall performance at the end of each term. Marks are given for each subject on a scale of 0 to 20. Grading system description:

- Outstanding - 19-20;
- Excellent - 16-18;
- Good - 13-15;
- Average - 10-12;
- Poor - 8-9;
- Very Poor - 5-7;
- Failing - 0-4.

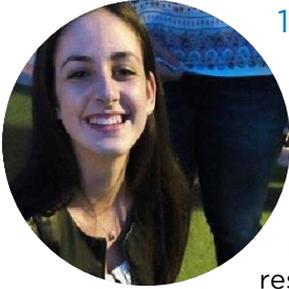
At the end of the year, students may receive a Certificate of Attendance and a Transcript of Grades.

Some schools can be potentially dangerous especially schools in big urban areas (not inside the school, but in its surrounding areas; bus- stops, way to school, etc). You should talk about your concerns regarding the safety at school with your host family first and also with your tutor teacher (teacher in charge of your school counseling) or class director (teacher in charge of your class), they are the ones that can best advise about anything important for you to have in mind (you should ask them about any special rules the school may have).

Illegal drugs are sometimes a problem in some secondary schools so keep your eyes and ears open and avoid getting into uncomfortable situations! Remember that there is a main AFS Rule: no drugs! If you find yourself in a situation where drugs are being used, immediately leave that scenario.

Fancy clothing, jewelry or a too formal look are not recommended to go to school, that will draw too much attention and will not benefit you in any way. Be casual and tidy. Never carry too much money with you... we will say it again: 5€ is enough!





18. GOING OUT FOR FUN

If you are invited to go to a party or other event such as a rock concert or soccer game, Intercultura-AFS recommends you to learn something about the event, the people you are going with, where it will be held, what sort of people are expected to attend it and share that information with your host parents. If your host parents fear that any of those events could be dangerous they may forbid you to attend it and you should respect their advice, even if others they know are going too.

Portuguese parents usually like to know their children's friends so you should look for an appropriate time to introduce your friends to your host family.

Going out at night for a bar or disco is sometimes not allowed by host parents, especially during your first months when your Portuguese is simply not good enough to handle with dangerous situations. Try to cope with that idea and negotiate your freedom with your host parents.

If you are allowed to go out, never leave your drink out of sight. Once you get a drink, keep the glass in your hand so that you can be absolutely sure no one is able to put some kind of substance in it.

It is very easy to also lose sight of your group of friends and end up alone. Always keep close eye contact with the people you went with and remember: don't talk with strangers. If your friends advise you seriously regarding not being in contact with someone, follow their advice.

If the person, with whom you went on, is drunk and cannot drive the car, do not do it in their place, call for a taxi and go home. If you have no other way to get home, call your host parents, explain the situation and ask them to pick you up: they would prefer this than knowing later that you got in a car with a drunk driver.

You can have fun and still be responsible, avoid having any alcohol (it is illegal for < 18 y.) and because beverages in Portugal are quite strong and most probably you will not be able to handle it. Abuse of alcoholic beverages is also cause for dismissal from the program.

19. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

You may be unsure in some situations if you are being sexually harassed or if a particular person's behavior would be considered normally friendly. An important resource is your own instinct. Also, often your host siblings/parents and friends will be able to advise you about normal behavior of people from your age or older than you. You can also ask for help from your teachers, your AFS support volunteer or with the Support Coordinator at the AFS office.

Bear in mind that Portuguese are sometimes very physical (they hug and they kiss a lot, sometimes for no apparent reason) and many times they will behave like that without wanting to embarrass you.

Girls should be aware, though role models are changing, that Portuguese boys are still the ones who take the initiative to meet a girl, this means they will probably make a lot of comments, hang around trying to charm you in many ways (telling funny stories, asking you lots of questions, commenting on your beauty, etc), this does not mean they will get aggressive or try something more. If this does make you uncomfortable you

should talk with you host siblings, a teacher, your support volunteer, your Portuguese girl friends at school, they will be able to tell you what to do.

AFS girl students usually complain a lot because Portuguese men stare at them very often. Unfortunately this is a cultural feature that even Portuguese women do not like. It is also possible they whistle and say some things: don't look, ignore and walk away. Do not smile in return, even if it is funny, that smile will mean it is ok to harass you. Anyway you will be able to overcome it along the year, but feel always at ease to talk about it with someone you trust.

AFS boy students should also be aware of these issues. If you feel someone is putting you in an awkward or uncomfortable situation, feel free to share your concerns about it with someone from AFS and ask for help.

We advise you all to ask questions about sexual behavior in your community, amongst teenagers. You can ask your host siblings/parents, Intercultura-AFS volunteers, your support volunteer, or a special teacher at school. If you don't feel at ease to ask these kind of questions personally, please contact Portugal's AFS office by email. This could be very important for you!

20. LAWS, ILLEGAL DRUGS, ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

All participants are forbidden to use illegal drugs and substances. Explicit violation of this rule is cause for dismissal from the program and immediate return to the home country. It is most important that you remember this rule should you find yourself in a situation where illegal substances are being used – get away immediately. The best thing you can do is to stay away from those situations.

Abuse of alcoholic beverages is also cause for dismissal from the program. Many countries have a 'legal drinking age' and young people are not allowed to drink if they are below this age. It is very common to find people of less than 18 drinking, yet most families do not allow this behavior and the Portuguese law doesn't permit it.

Moreover, participants and their natural parents are fully responsible for damages caused by the participant, to third parties and any costs involved in connection with claims due to use of alcohol or drugs. Intercultura-AFS does NOT assume any legal liability for the participants.

Intercultura-AFS students are subject to the laws of their hosting country. Neither Intercultura-AFS nor the national government of the students' home country has the power to protect the student from punishment with respect to drugs, thefts and other legal offenses.

As an Intercultura-AFS student you are not permitted to drive any kind of motorized vehicle (car, motorcycle, moped). In Portugal a person must be 18 years old to get a car drivers license. We suggest that the Intercultura-AFS students do not get into any motor vehicle with a younger driver or with someone without a license or with someone who has consumed any alcohol or made use of drugs. If you are in this situation, you should contact your host family or someone from Intercultura-AFS, and they will tell you what to do to get home or a place where you should go. Remember - hitchhiking is strictly forbidden!

21. DISEASES & NATURAL DISASTERS

Portugal is a safe country and major disease breaks and/or natural disasters are not common.

Regarding general diseases you should be sure your routine vaccinations are up-to-date and make sure you take precautions regarding HIV (AIDS) and other sexual transmitted diseases.

Natural disasters are not common in Portugal. Sometimes the area of Azores suffers small earthquakes, if you're placed there you should discuss with your host family exactly what to do in these cases, but here's some general advice:

- Learn how to cut gas, water and electricity;
- Go to a safe place inside the house (room corners, beneath open door, or under a table or bed);
- Avoid unsafe places (elevators, windows, mirrors, chimneys, middle of rooms, exits); Outside home, go to an open space;
- Keep yourself calm.

During the summer the heat can cause serious health problems, so if the temperatures are high you should be careful and follow these advises:

- Drink lots of water or natural fruit juices (even if you're not thirsty);
- Avoid any alcoholic beverages, sodas and gas, with caffeine, with sugar or warm drinks;
- Do many meals but with low fat and as light as possible;
- Wear fresh clothes in light colors;
- Wear a hat, sunglasses and a sun blocker;
- Avoid standing in the sun or doing outside sports;
- Avoid going out during the more intense heat hours (around lunch time).

Another frequent problem during the summer are fires in forest areas. In case you spot a fire you should immediately call 112 (national emergency number) and get yourself as distant as possible from the hazard area. Follow the orientations of your host family and/or firemen.

During the winter sometimes we can have floods in urban areas. Usually there are alerts beforehand so people can be ready to act. In case of a flood, don't go near the flooded areas out of curiosity, stay at home or go to a high and safe place. Follow the orientations of your host family and/or firemen.





22. CONCLUSION

The best general advices Intercultura-AFS can give you regarding personal safety are:

- Get to know the Portuguese culture well through questions, dialogue and discussion with your host family, peers and Intercultura-AFS volunteers.
- Take seriously any concerns that your host family and school have expressed and follow their advice, even if you don't understand it entirely.
- Take seriously all the recommendation Intercultura-AFS gives you regarding your safety.
- Do not ignore your "instinct" in any given situation or feel you have to compromise your own personal behavioral values and beliefs. These are valuable resources in making decisions about what to do.
- Remember that it doesn't only happen to others: it can happen to you.

Now that you are aware of all of this, you are a little bit more prepared to live your AFS experience in Portugal!





Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

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