

WELCOME TO YOUR SURVIVAL KIT FOR VOLUNTEERING IN VORARLBERG

Hoi, dear volunteer! :)



You just have landed in one of the most beautiful regions in Europe. **Congratulations! :)**





I like to think about Dornbirn as the **city with the most beautiful sunsets** I have ever seen, since I'm in Austria. I call it **home**, because as you know, **home is a feeling** and this place gave me the best of them all.





I hope you will **enjoy every second of your project, like it was your last!**

Remember, all you have is **today**, because tomorrow you could be under a lockdown, or with an (almost) broken leg, haha! (Been there, done that).

I really hope that this kit is gonna be your **virtual best friend in difficult times!**

DON'T FORGET:
It's just the best time of your life!

So, it's probably your **first week** here. I hope you had a **nice journey and a wonderful welcoming from your host organisation!** Take your time to organise your room, your things, **your feelings**.

Get used to your **new home**. Go out, **take a walk, find the river, fall in love with the smell of the freshly baked patisseries and the tasty coffee from around the corner**, enjoy the **dreamy streets, the mountains and your new city!** :D

Now, if you get more comfortable with the situation, let me introduce you to some **tips and tricks** that may save some of your time and energy, while being here so you can have more for funnier things!



1. First of all: **Give yourself time!**

Don't forget to **always** look after **yourself and your well-being**.

Everything is new, don't expect to get used to everything from the first day/week or to feel everytime perfect. **Give yourself time** to forget things, to be confused and lost! That's how you will **discover yourself**. Don't rush the process. **Life is a journey**, embrace it!

Remember that you have so **many people around you**, who are there to **support** and help you! Susanne, your mentor, your tutor, your friends. Everytime you feel like it, just ask for anything you need. :)



GENERAL INFOS: TRAVELLING

For **every volunteer**, there is a **max lump sum available** to support your travel to **Austria and back home at the end of the project**. Whether it is sufficient to cover for both your incoming and outgoing travel costs depends on **how you organize the trip**.

This means, look for **good prices and a good route** to travel to Austria. You'll have to **first pay up front yourselves for your trip**.

As soon as you're here, AHA will **directly reimburse the money to you** when you hand in your **travel tickets, boarding passes**, etc.

The volunteers who **live closer by**, you can easily take the **train**. To **"Feldkirch" or "Dornbirn"**, depending on which city is closer to your hosting organisation.

For the volunteers who are **further away**, here are the **closest airports: Zurich (Switzerland), Friedrichshafen (Germany), Innsbruck (Austria), Munich (Germany)**. **Airport Friedrichshafen and Airport Zurich** are **closest by** and have the **quickest train connections to Vorarlberg**, if your hosting organisation doesn't come to pick you up. Still, **look at all the options to find a suitable trip**.

It's also **important** that you look for a **flight/train where you don't arrive too late**. If you **fly**, try to get a **flight landing around midday/early afternoon**, so that you arrive **to your hosting organisations before the evening**.

So, please **get in contact with your hosting organisation** where they will pick you up!

Here's the Austrian website for trains: <https://www.oebb.at/en/> Always check before you organize and book your trip/train-/flight tickets with the host organisation!

Talk about **what time would be good to arrive** and also what else is important to consider. I also recommend to - **with the current situation with Covid-19 - consider buying flexible tickets!!!!**

Volunteering agreements:

The volunteering agreements state **all the information and details about the finances (pocket money, food money, travel lump sum)**, as well as **details on your housing, your project, your tasks, etc)**. Also the **financial support for the sending organisations** is stated in there.

If possible, talk the agreement through **with your sending organisation** and then sign it.

After you have **sent it back to Susanne**, she will **sign it together with the host organisation**.

In the end **every partner will get one agreement!**

Kolpinghaus

- Your home for the next 9-12 months!

The Kolpinghaus in Dornbirn is a **very special place**, where you're not gonna get surprised by anything anymore after a while and where you will meet the most beautiful people, with whom you will make unforgettable memories!



What is important to remember:

A. Laundry room

- I would suggest you to **not leave your clothes to dry** there. You can buy for yourself or borrow from someone a clothes dryer and put them in your room (or you can hang your clothes in your room and wait for them to dry).
- Be careful when you wash your clothes, that you are **gonna be there on time when the washing machine is gonna be done** to take them out. Don't leave them there after your programme finishes. You don't want anything to disappear.
- Start and **collect 1 EURO coin** for your laundry days. You can use just those kinds of coins in the laundry room.



B. **THE Kitchen** from the 3rd floor - or how we used to call it: **THE BLACK HOLE**.

Why? Because we used to get in and get out after 7 hours. It was our first place to **hang out** with each other a lot, cooking, talking, or (my favourite) having a drink together :) The kitchen parties were the best way of getting to know each other better.

- You should follow the **same rules**. **Don't leave anything** there, unless it is **locked** in your cupboard.
- **Don't forget your keys INSIDE**, haha, because otherwise you're not gonna be able to enter alone
- Cook your **favourite recipes** and maybe surprise your international friends with some **traditional dish** from your country! :D
- Don't be afraid of the weird people that enter the kitchen sometimes, they are totally inoffensive
- And remember, in the beginning, it's ok if you eat a **lot of pasta**





C. The big variety of people

- You have noticed (or maybe you probably will) that in Kolping are living a **variety of people**: international students and volunteers, local students, people with a smaller income or people who don't have a home, so they are supported with money and food to live here.
- At first, I was a little scared too, but with time I understood that there is **nothing to worry about**, as long as I **take care of my things** (in the laundry room and kitchen) and as long as I **take care of myself**. That also means, that if you have any kind of problem, **YOU SHOULD talk** to someone about it. Sometimes you can solve problems just by talking openly to someone. I did and Susanne wrote an email to the Kolping reception and everyone was by my side, supporting me.
- Right now, after 7 months, I just **can't imagine the Kolpinghaus without these people**. They just make everything a bit more interesting and who doesn't like a bit of adventure in their everyday lives?

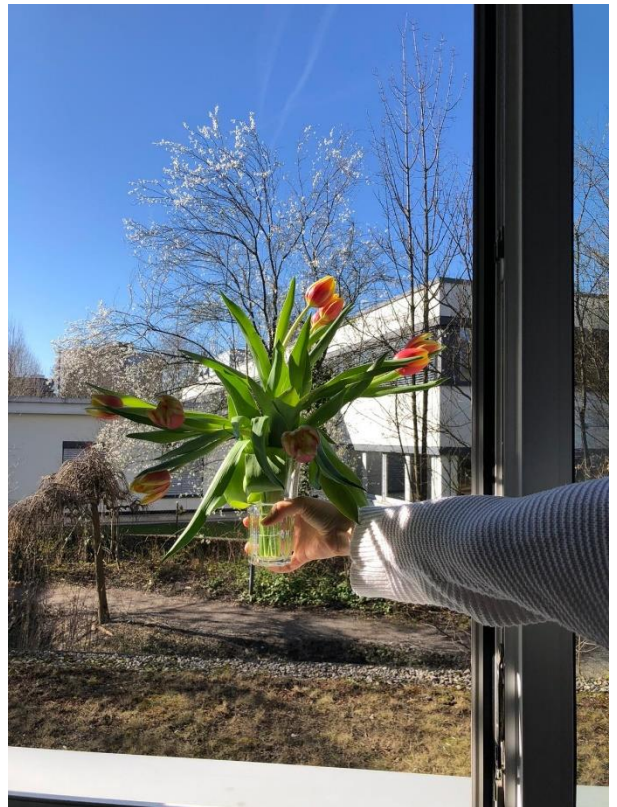
D) The Mailbox

- Don't forget to check your mailbox from **the first floor** from time to time! You could lose some **spicy magazines** from DM (Drogerie Markt) or who knows, a **love letter**, haha.



E) Your room

- Don't forget to use your **vision board** from the wall to keep there your best memories and whatever makes you happy! Don't hesitate to **personalise** your room. It's gonna make you feel amazing.
- If you need anything, you can ask **your mentor or your friends**
- If something is not working in your room (like your sink) or you need to change your lightbulb, the **people from the reception** would be delighted to help you. They are very nice :)
- If you have weird neighbors, who are doing a lot of noise or just weird noises every time, you **can also talk about it with someone** and if it's really bad **at the reception** or why not directly with that person, haha?



3. Now, you're probably thinking **how and when** are you gonna receive **Your Money** (for your travelling cost, food and pocket money)

A. You will have a meeting with Susanne and the other volunteers and she will give you the **papers** that you have to fill out, so that you can receive your money back. I hope you **kept your tickets**, because you will need them too.

Also, every time, when you will have to travel for your **training** (On Arrival and Mid-Term), **KEEP ALL THE TRANSPORT TICKETS** (also bus tickets), because only this way the National Agency can **reimburse you the money**.

B. **The money for food** depends usually on **every organisation**. You should either agree with them on a day when you will receive your money every month (the first or the 15th) or you should do it the way it's written in your volunteering agreement. A good idea would also be to talk to them about this topic in your first week, without feeling bad. It's your right! :)
It's really **important** that you receive your money **every month** and if it won't be like that, **YOU HAVE** to speak to Susanne about it.

C. You will receive your **pocket money** (usually) on the first friday of every month. Susanne from aha will transfer it to you.

D. Your **credit card** - you can either **use your from home** or **open a bank account here** and so receive an austrian card, where they will put all your money. Don't forget about this topic! Also, if you want to open a **new bank account**, you should know that it will take **about 2 weeks for your card to arrive**. Keep this in mind, when talking with your organisation about your food and pocket money. For example, in my case, they gave me my food money cash the day I met them (my second day in Austria).

4. THE DIALECT - It **doesn't really matter** if you already have any german knowledge or not. I just hope you are **prepared to learn a new language**, because, baby, the dialect from here is something **really special**. It's normal to feel frustrated at the beginning, if you don't understand :).

Austrians: *speak dialect to me*

Me: *not understanding anything *

Austrians:



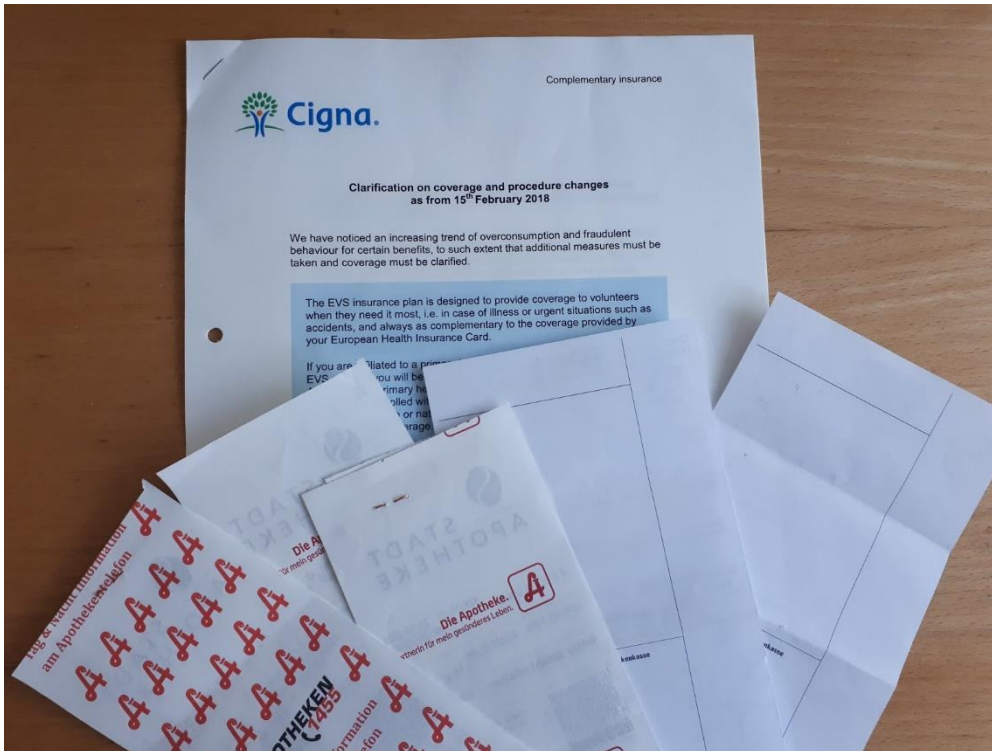


Hochdeutsch

Dialect



5. CIGNA - your **best friend** and also **worst enemy** in hard times (because it takes them a lot to reimburse the money -> 2,3 weeks)



A. If you are **NOT covered by your national insurance** (with the European Insurance Card), then you will be covered **FULLY BY CIGNA**: Then have to know these things:

- **If you need to go to the doctor** -> you will need first a **doctor**, where to go to. Then after a doctor will see you, you will receive a **bill** and your **recipe** for the medication. It's important to **KEEP EVERY PAPER YOU RECEIVE**.

After you go with the recipe to the pharmacy, they will put a stamp on your recipe, **ALWAYS BE CAREFUL THAT THEY GIVE THE RECIPE BACK TO YOU** and you will also receive a **receipt**.

First, you will have to **pay yourself** for your medication and that's why you have to **keep everything**. You will need them **for Cigna**, so that you can prove them and that's how they can **give you the money back**.

Then, you have to **take a picture of all the papers** (recipe from your doctor with the stamp from the pharmacy on it and the receipt for the medication) and then **upload** them on your **Cigna account**.

Normally, if you have money, you should also **pay for your bill from the doctor** for the fact that he/she saw you and then **upload everything on your account as well**. But if the amount is too high, **AHA can pay for you** and then you will have to **return the money** that Cigna will reimburse you, **to AHA**.

- **If you had an accident**, things are gonna be more complicated, because you will need to see (probably) many different doctors, but you will be **guided by the doctors from the hospital/ambulance/or your doctor**, so don't worry :) .

The **rule is the same as with Cigna**. You have to **keep EVERYTHING** and **pay for everything you're able to** and for the rest **AHA is gonna help you**.

If you will need a **guarantee of payment**, for example for something **very expensive**, like a magnetic resonance imaging, you have to **call Cigna or send them an email and ask them every time if they are gonna cover the costs (payment guarantee)**. They will, if it's related to an urgent situation.

A. **If you ARE covered by your (national) insurance - European Insurance Card**

Then you go to the doctor / medical service place and you **ONLY** show your European Insurance card. This should be sufficient for them. You will most likely not receive a bill, because the bill will be directly handled between the national insurances.

You only might have to pay a very small fee for medication, depending on the agreement your national insurance has. If this is the case, that your national insurance doesn't fully cover something, get a statement from them about this. With this statement and the bills uploaded to your Cigna account, CIGNA (as your complementary insurance) will give you back the rest of the money!

In the end, you shouldn't have any costs yourself for medical treatments or medicine.

B. **IMPORTANT IN ANY CASE:**

If you have European Insurance - don't tell them that you also have private complementary insurance through Cigna. **ONLY** show your EHIC! This will be the most uncomplicated for you. Remember this :D

If you don't have EHIC, you should be covered fully by Cigna, so as mentioned, you will receive the bills yourself and you have to upload them to your Cigna account to get the money back.

KEEP ALL THE PAPERS; DOCUMENTS; BILLS; RECEIPTS! Every piece of paper, keep it. If it's something you have to hand back in, be sure to at least make a picture of it, so you have proof.

Cigna (and probably also your national insurance) only covers medically necessary treatments and medicines. So if you have pain, if you had an accident, if you're ill - the costs for your treatments etc. will be covered.

Cigna will NEVER pay for beauty-treatments or health supplements. So if you buy vitaminshakes or want to have a facelift, you're gonna pay for it yourself ;)

6. MAXIMO CARD- This is gonna be your **biggest blessing** while living in Vorarlberg. You're gonna **thank AHA** every time you will have the opportunity to escape in another city. **It's crazy.**

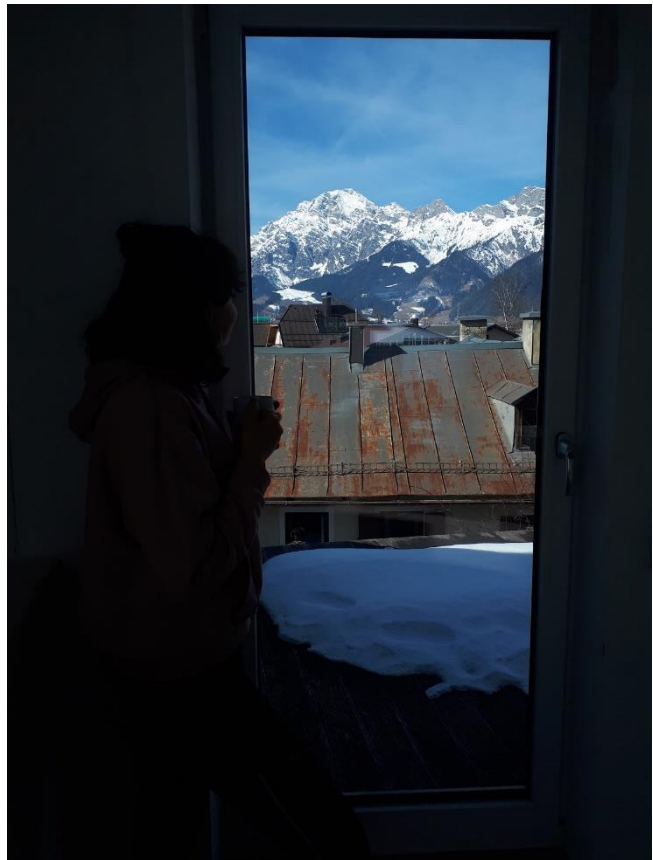
What is it? It's a **small card** that will allow you to **travel everywhere in Vorarlberg + Lindau, Germany** (great, right?) by bus and train **FOR FREE** during your project. So please, use it **as much as possible**, it's amazing.



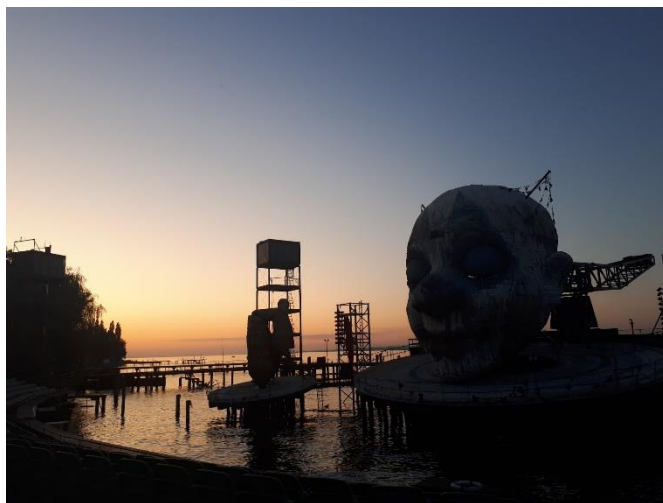
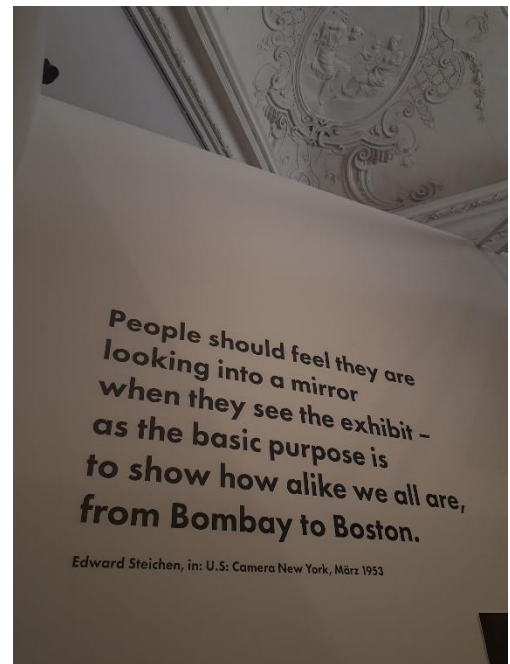
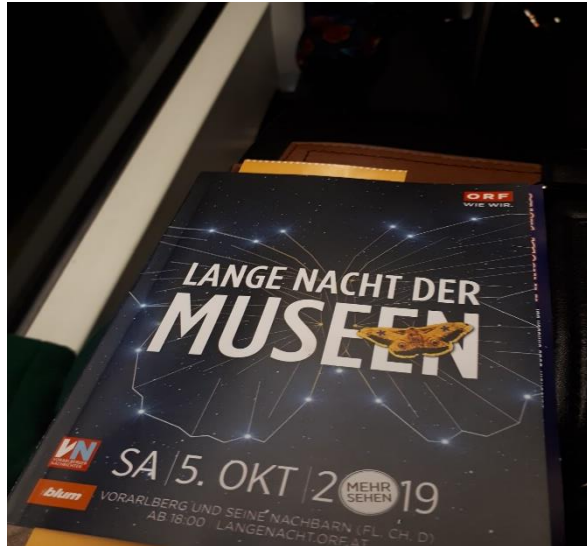


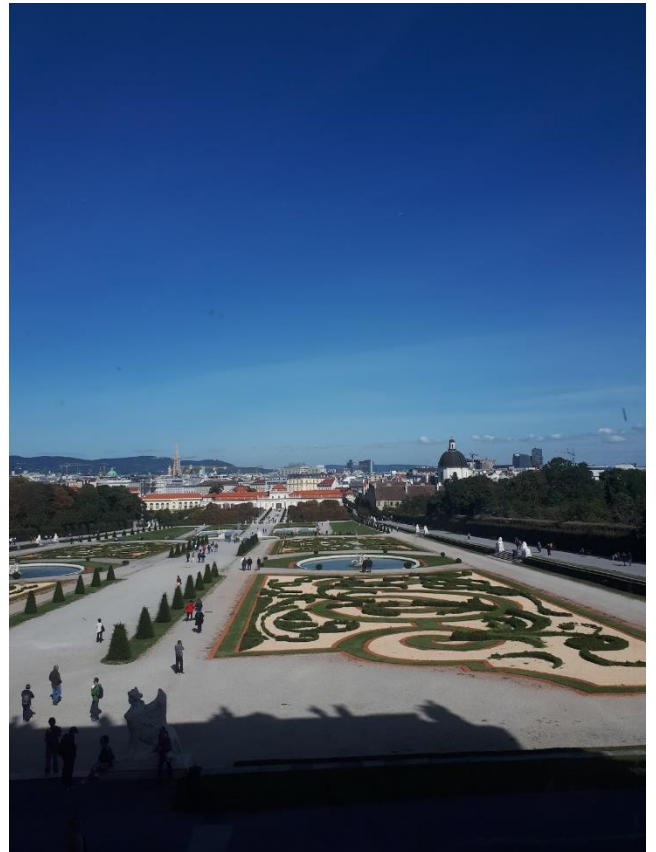
7. ÖBB Vorteils card - This is **another blessing**, that will allow you to go **everywhere in Austria** by paying just **half of the price** of the ticket. Come on, Vienna is already calling. What are you waiting for? I hope not for another quarantine.

8.



Kulturpass - Hold on, this one is **even better**! With this **magical pass**, you can go to sooo **many cultural places FOR FREE**, in the **whole Austria**! Wow, right? You will receive a looong list with all the museums, theaters, cinemas, where you can use it.





9. MR JOHN'S - Such a cool name, right? For us (the last volunteers) it was a special place. We had a **tradition** to go there every wednesday. On weekends, we were always continuing the party in **Vakanz**.



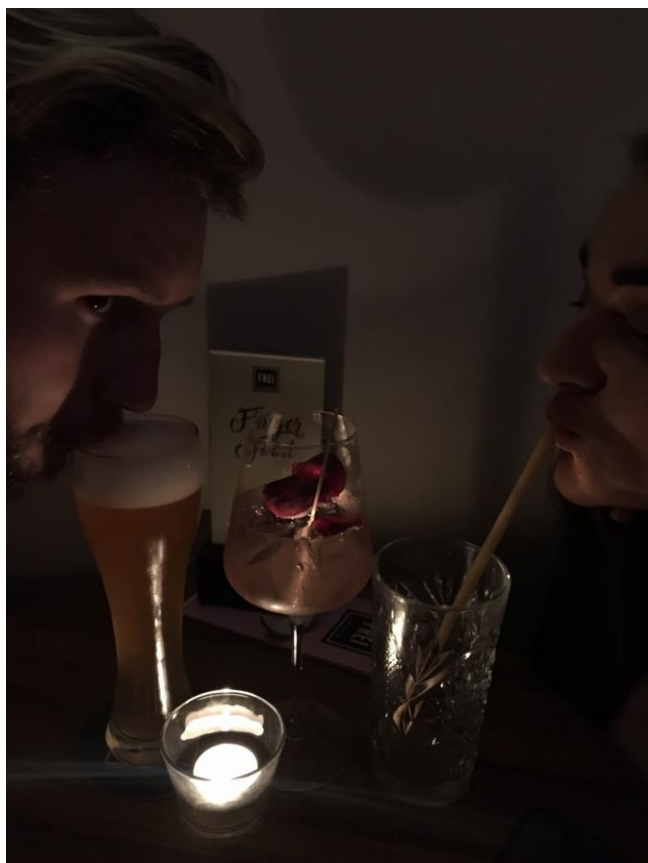
Mr John's it's for sure not the best party place ever, but I think for us it meant **more than just a pub**. While upstairs there is a **Shisha Bar** and **cool parties**, downstairs you can play **billiard** and enjoy some good and **CHEAP** (for Austria haha) drinks.



It was about meeting all the time **new people, random nights, friendships that turned into family** (because we were always taking care of each other, even when we were really drunk), **adventure** (because you never know **when, how or with whom** you're gonna come back...**you just know that you are going** and the rest it's usually a **surprise**) and also the fact that we got to know the stuff, like the barkeepers, the DJ's or the SECURITY guys, made us really **feel like at home** there.



But of course, there are so many other options too, in Dornbirn, but also in other cities in Vorarlberg.



If you are **not necessarily a party person** and you would like to **spend your mornings rather somewhere far away in the mountains**, than being hungover in your room, you're very lucky! **Vorarlberg is the best place for that.**

10. THE NATURE - What really **made me fall in love** with this place was definitely the variety of places to go, whenever you need some fresh air or a quiet, calm place. It's pretty easy to escape there. Let me show you one of my favourite places.





11. German course/Alternative course

Normally, you will have the chance to have **one or two german courses** during your project, which will help you **fall in love** with this language or get better at it.

But if you already have a **very high german level or you're a native speaker**, you have **the chance to choose another course**. I chose, for example, Russian as a new language.

Also, it **doesn't have to be a language course**, one of the other volunteers chose a dance course! Feel free to do what it's best for you!

12. aha + Susanne - definitely your BFF's during this year

So basically having **aha and Susanne** is a **luxury** that not many volunteers benefit from, so you should be **really grateful**.

aha is the organisation that **coordinates all the volunteers from Vorarlberg**. They also have a lot of **cool volunteering opportunities**. You can check them out and do some of them, if you have free time left and you would like to involve yourself in helping others.

If you have **any kind of problem with your hosting organisation** or with the one **from home**, they will be right next to you to help you with everything they can :) .

Susanne is literally the **most amazing coordinator** I have ever had. Besides the fact that she is **really cool** and understands us, her **engagement**, when it comes to supporting us, is absolutely unbelievable. She says all the time, "Well, that's my work, it's normal to act like that", but we all know that these kinds of people are something that we should **appreciate a lot**.

I can't explain in words how **thankful I am for everything she did for us**, all the **long e-mails full of kindness and care**, that she was writing to us every time, all the **phone calls filled with love**, her **positive attitude, when we were down** and all her **good intentions**, every time we needed something. Because of her, I felt like everything was possible and was gonna be fine, no matter what :).

13. YOUR MENTOR - the list with the BFF's continues!

Because **AHA really takes care of everything**, so that **YOU will have the most amazing experience**, here in Austria, they also thought about finding someone suitable for you, who is gonna show you everything around. Where to go out, eat, shop, explore and some really **valorous tips and tricks** that will make your life a bit easier and hopefully, more interesting :D .

But, that's just their experience! You are **free** to discover new things on your own and to decide what is better for you (like I did :D).

You just should know that you have **a buddy there for you**, everytime you need some advice or when you feel like talking to someone, who already has been through this crazy year :).



14. Your tutor from work - another BFF (not done yet haha), but from WORK



This amazing human should take care of you **at work** and by that, I mean that this person should be there for you for **any question or problem** you will have. You also should have **monthly meetings**, where you talk about **how you feel, what is ok, what is not so good and what is next** (like implementing your own project).

Usually, this person should be there for you, with every issue that you will encounter regarding your hosting organisation or work that you have to do. It should be **your opportunity to be honest** about your experience there, because **it's important that you feel good**, but also that your **hosting organisation is satisfied**.

Your tutor should also help you complete your **Youth Pass**, because you have to write what **new skills you think** you've gained during your project, but also **from your organisation side, what you've learned**. (Please do it step by step, not all at once in your last 2 weeks :D).

15. The monthly meetings - this is something great!

First of all, it gives you the **chance to talk to Susanne about your project**. She is more than happy and curious to get to know more about your experience overall. If you have **any kind of questions or problems**, with whom all your BFF's couldn't help you or if you **just want to share your funny stories** from work or from your everyday life in Austria, now it's the chance!

If all this wouldn't be enough, you also get the opportunity to **visit every month another organisation**, where the other volunteers work. And all this, while **having a good coffee and a nice breakfast**, with everyone.

I simply loved these meetings! (You should write your questions/ideas down before, so you won't forget any important detail, because Susanne can't wait for them, haha!)







16. The monthly activities with the other volunteers and mentors - This is something, you really don't want to lose

This is a very kind initiative from **AHA, our mentors and ex-volunteers**, who are offering us the chance every month to do an **exciting activity in Vorarlberg**, all together. So, that's how you can get to know **the others and the traditions, cool places** from here, better.



Now, after spending some quality time reading this, take a **glass of champagne and start to celebrate!** Why? Because your **adventure just started and you are alive!** Is this not enough?

:)



I wish you a **lot of crazy events, friends for a lifetime, valorous experiences** that are gonna **change you, gratitude** and to **FIND YOURSELF :).**

I hope we are gonna meet soon! :D

Stay healthy, safe and happy!

HUGS AND KISSES FROM THE EX-VOLUNTEERS