

Interview mit Jay, Couchsurfing-Host, persönlich, 29.05.2017
Interviewerin: LS, Transkription: GS, Korrektur der Transkription: LS

Luise: Oh yeah? #00:00:01-4#

Jay: Yeah, as well as in Copenhagen and in Malaysia, in San Francisco ... I think. Where else have I been? Couchsurfing events, a couple of hang-outs, but yeah. #00:00:12-9#

Luise: But, that's nice. Okay, so you are like a Couchsurfing host. To start off in general what would you associate with Couchsurfing? So what would you associate with the name or the brand? #00:00:25-7#

Jay: Young people who have less money who want to meet people in authentic environments and in their homes. #00:00:38-7#

Luise: Okay, so why did you become a Couchsurfing host then or a Couchsurfer? #00:00:40-9#

Jay: I was traveling overseas, also in Malaysia actually ... maybe Thailand, but more Malaysia. So I've been to an event where people were very hospitable and when I came out to San Francisco I wanted to be a hospitable host as well, to return the favor. #00:00:58-4#

Luise: Yeah. That's nice. Yeah, and so what was like the initial thought signing up for Couchsurfing? Were you like a little bit, like nervous about it, 'cause// #00:01:12-5#

Jay: Yeah. #00:01:12-3#

Luise: It's about meeting strangers or// #00:01:13-9#

Jay: So // #00:01:15-0#

Luise: Was it all fine for you? #00:01:15-6#

Jay: So I've always traveled and I love traveling and meeting new people. I think living in someone's couch – since I haven't done it myself – can be a bit nervous, but I think if they have enough ratings, it's fine. #00:01:26-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:01:27-6#

Jay: But in terms of signing up, I think if they have enough ratings and I don't think they are sketchy – 'cause it's very dangerous, right, frankly if, or can be – if they don't have enough ratings and just don't know who they are. But in general, I think, if they have ratings and people say good enough things about them, I think it's fine. #00:01:49-3#

Luise: So, can you remember like one special Couchsurfing moment? #00:01:54-2#

Jay: So, I was in an island called (...) in Malaysia where this Belgian guy, who was probably in his forties and his wife was Indonesian, hosted a group of only about ten or so people in, for dinner. And the German, two German girls cooked, it was a very simple dinner. And the place he was working at didn't even have any lights, he was not that wealthy. And he had a group of probably ten to twelve Couchsurfers, just hosting them. And upstairs, we went upstairs, people who were sleeping – I didn't sleep there –, slept on the cement, you know, floor. #00:02:26-8#

Luise: Yeah, wow. #00:02:28-0#

Jay: And there were like eight to ten people. People from the U.S., Germany, I think other parts of Europe. And he was just, I feel like people who have so little give so much. #00:02:36-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:02:38-0#

Jay: And that was an example of where it's very memorable. And from there, it's like "Wow!". And the, it was very simple, it was like pasta or something, but just because of that, it's like, you're so giving. #00:02:48-2#

Luise: Yeah, and did you ever had like a bad experience or did you had like an uncomfortable situation? #00:02:57-6#

Jay: In San Francisco I used the hangouts feature on Couchsurfing. And this guy was just very awkward. He was from the South Bay or the area, and I couldn't tell why he wanted to meet up, it was just, don't know, it was just so, you know?! It was just an awkward experience, right? It was just a hangout experience. So that was one uncertain area. I think also some people, they use the app as a hook-up thing// #00:03:22-6#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:03:23-6#

Jay: I don't wanna say, it's awkward for me, but, you know, it's, I guess, it depends, right? So being interested in seeing you after your message, how many people look at it as purely friendship? How many people use it as like hopefully they meet someone and hook-up? #00:03:36-6#

Luise: Yeah, but I can tell you, so far like nearly all of the people I interviewed were like, "Alright, of course, if you really met someone and you feel like attracted to, it's alright to hook-up, but you, you won't expect it". #00:03:50-1#

Jay: Yeah, yeah. Makes sense. #00:03:51-1#

Luise: So, or you shouldn't like expect it, because yeah// #00:03:53-6#

Jay: Makes sense. #00:03:53-4#

Luise: If it happens, it happens, but if not, so that's not what it is all about. And so how did that feel to like really open up your home, your personal space, to others? #00:04:08-1#

Jay: Yeah so, so my experience was just a week ago, my first experience. And it was an Austrian and a German guy. We were meeting – when did you arrive in (*city in California*)? How long ago? #00:04:19-8#

Luise: Seven, seven days. Exactly seven days ago. #00:04:22-8#

Jay: Ah, so you were probably here for the (*local event*)? #00:04:25-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:04:25-8#

Jay: So, it was the (*local event*), we found each other through Hang-outs, we hung out all day, half the day, so a few hours. At these two guys were just telling me how they were doctors, and they were sleeping in their car, 'cause they were doing a road trip. And I'm

like, "I have a spare room, my roommate is away. Why don't you just sleep there?" So, I had spent time with them already, so I'm like, "It's unlikely these guys will kill me or rob me at night". #00:04:48-9#

Luise: (laughter) #00:04:49-8#

Jay: Possible, but very unlikely. #00:04:52-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:04:52-3#

Jay: So. #00:04:53-4#

Luise: And so you felt totally comfortable with like// #00:04:55-5#

Jay: Fairly comfortable. #00:04:57-3#

Luise: Yeah, inviting them? Ok #00:04:58-0#

Jay: Fairly comfortable. Yeah, yeah, I've spent many hours with them already, so. #00:05:01-9#

Luise: Yeah, that's nice. And how would you describe like the perfect Couchsurfing host? Like the ideal type? #00:05:14-0#

Jay: I think he or she would be, having a comfortable couch or maybe share what kind of area you should go check out. Yeah, they'll bring me around, but not ((when)) people are busy. #00:05:28-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:05:28-7#

Jay: But then, maybe we can cook or eat together, maybe I'll learn how, ((if I don't cook)), maybe I could learn how they cook and their native dish, and, yeah, I don't mind cleaning up, but, you know, when we will go out for a beer and then, you know, I'll buy them the beer or something, yeah. #00:05:45-3#

Luise: So yeah you would actually look for like personal interaction? You don't see it like just a cheap way to stay somewhere? #00:05:52-3#

Jay: No, no. #00:05:53-8#

Luise: Okay. #00:05:54-6#

Jay: So, so, some data points: I'm also older, I'm 36. So I think if someone who was like 22, it's different. #00:06:00-9#

Luise: Yeah, that's, alright, okay. So what would you consider before you accept a host, Couchsurfing hosting request? ... (very loud wind noises) Because a lot of people, (...), a lot of people just send out standardized messages, so yeah. #00:06:21-4#

Jay: Hmm. ... Is this person interesting? Did he or she read some of my materials? #00:06:27-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:06:28-4#

Jay: Can I learn something from it? Do I feel safe? #00:06:33-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:06:33-8#

Jay: How long, right? One or two nights is okay, but five or six nights, that's like. #00:06:38-3#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:06:38-7#

Jay: Let's see, what else? How many people they are? Usually people like have two people with them which is fine, but usually easier is to do one. Also where they are from, it's important. #00:06:52-5#

Luise: Yeah. And do you look for verifications? #00:06:56-2#

Jay: The verification, that official one, is okay, but I think it's more about how many people they have referenced, but then, there are – I even just show you one, I probably will say yes, but I'm not sure whether I will be in town. But someone just ... asked me, see, this (*name of a Couchsurfer*) guy. #00:07:15-8#

Luise: Oh, wow, that's pretty long, yeah. #00:07:19-3#

Jay: Hmm. ... I don't think, he's much of a bad grump, but he said, you know, he said who he is, he seems pretty safe, he's Belgian, you know, he's, you know// #00:07:28-4#

Luise: That's nice. #00:07:28-4#

Jay: But I see he's not verified here// #00:07:29-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:07:30-1#

Jay: No references, but because of how he explains himself or what he's doing// #00:07:34-8#

Luise: That's, yeah. #00:07:35-6#

Jay: It's probably okay. #00:07:36-5#

Luise: Yeah, that's nice. Yeah. And so how would you describe a good Couchsurfing guest? #00:07:44-0#

Jay: Hmm. #00:07:46-5#

Luise: Like what would you expect people to behave around your place and ... #00:07:53-2#

Jay: So, the one ((experience)) I had wasn't ideal. So, the two doctors and I said, "It's okay, you can stay with me if you wanna". And it was about 10.30 pm when I made the offer. And 'cause he said he was tired, I thought it was just: they come, we hang out an hour, we sleep. But then he brought another girl home, it was two guys and the girl – I invited the two guys 'cause they were traveling together. And we talked for an hour, two hours, they went out, they get some food, came back, we ate. But at the time I went to sleep, it was 2, 3 am which was like, I thought you wanted to sleep. #00:08:21-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:08:22-1#

Jay: And then, so then, but he, he then bring her to drop her off and then, luckily, I didn't need to open the door again. But ideally is like you're not inconveniencing me. But they are cool guys and I don't wanna complain about them, 'cause they are cool guys, but it was an inconvenience, right? But the ideal is that you make an arrangement, you come in, we sleep at a reasonable hour and then// #00:08:43-9#

Luise: And like respect personal boundaries and like// #00:08:46-9#

Jay: Yeah, yeah, exactly. #00:08:47-8#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. So do you or would you prepare yourself and your home for the arrival of a guest? #00:08:55-5#

Jay: I did. I cleaned up a bit, I had sheets for them, so I had a spare bedroom, so I had new sheets for them and, yeah. #00:09:01-9#

Luise: That's very nice. And how do you combine your hosting activities with your everyday life? #00:09:09-5#

Jay: This was a one-off-thing where it was pretty late in the evening already and yeah, I had to sleep later and then I had not enough good sleep at night, but, yeah, it's fine, it was one night. #00:09:20-8#

Luise: Yeah, so you don't think that it's, like sometimes it can be a little bit rough even if you have to like// #00:09:26-2#

Jay: It was rough, but then as I said, it was one night and that's where – but it would probably impact me in terms of deciding in the future where, he said he was tired but then him and his friend came later, and then there was another friend and she was nice, the friend they brought was a nice girl, so we chatted and exchanged details, but still it was an inconvenience to my daily life. #00:09:43-6#

Luise: Yeah, that's, that's right. I've spent, I think it's like a little bit rude to actually inviting someone else in. #00:09:50-2#

Jay: 'Cause I didn't really know, they didn't even tell me that she was coming. Anyway. #00:09:52-1#

Luise: Yeah, so wow. It's your, like your personal space. #00:09:57-2#

Jay: Yeah. #00:09:58-2#

Luise: It's super impolite. Did you write them a bad review? No? Did you write them a review at all? #00:10:04-0#

Jay: No, but he wrote me a review. #00:10:05-9#

Luise: (laughter) And what was// #00:10:07-3#

Jay: You, you can see it, 'cause it's there. #00:10:07-8#

Luise: Was it positive? Yeah? #00:10:08-4#

Jay: Yeah, of course. #00:10:09-3#

Luise: Okay. So what do you think about the Couchsurfing reference system in general? #00:10:14-8#

Jay: I think it's much needed and strong ... and no, I think, I think it's legitimate. So no, I think it's good. #00:10:23-1#

Luise: Yeah? Do you think it works out well? #00:10:25-2#

Jay: Absolutely. #00:10:25-6#

Luise: Okay. Is there anything that you would say is bad about it? #00:10:31-4#

Jay: You just don't know whether people just trade reviews, are they just their friends? Hmm, let's see what else could be wrong ... bad about the review system? Hmm ... The really bad reviews and the really good reviews: are they ever, ((mention)) or is it usually that, usually any hotel reviews, that's different. The bad ones really happened, but the good ones people don't bother, right? #00:10:56-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:10:57-8#

Jay: Usually. #00:10:58-4#

Luise: Yeah. And has a reference affected your Couchsurfing activities once? #00:11:05-8#

Jay: Where? The reference on me? #00:11:06-9#

Luise: Yeah. Did you like ever get one that you felt like that was inappropriate or unfair or? #00:11:13-6#

Jay: No, all my reviews are fairly good. That's why. #00:11:16-2#

Luise: And did you think in the beginning where, when you didn't have like one review, was that kinda like hard to find someone and to engage// #00:11:22-7#

Jay: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think so. I think so. Yeah, people was, now I've been around for a while, but you know, just ((“Hey, I don't know you”)), and// #00:11:34-3#

Luise: Yeah, so that can be like a little bit hard to engage with the community. #00:11:33-9#

Jay: Yah. #00:11:35-7#

Luise: So, you told me that you used the hang-outs app, so is that like, would you do it often to meet other Couchsurfers and to engage with the community? #00:11:47-1#

Jay: Yah. So, hmm, let's see. So I do, but, you know, the hang-outs app is like if I'm bored in San Francisco, maybe I go on a hang-out. Like if you have friends you don't necessarily have to be bored but // #00:12:02-4#

Luise: (laughter) That's right. #00:12:03-9#

Jay: (Stuttering) Pardon me, but what about being – even with friends, right? Sometimes you are just bored even if you have friends. #00:12:09-6#

Luise: Yeah or searching for new, someone new or new activities to do. #00:12:14-1#

Jay: So let's say, I want to drink// (typing sounds from mobile phone) #00:12:17-3#

Luise: (laughter) #00:12:18-3#

Jay: In the park. Drink with you. #00:12:23-2#

Luise: (laughter) #00:12:25-6#

Jay: So ((let's see)), who they are, right? And it's like, you know, sometimes there are interesting people and sometimes you go around, you know. #00:12:30-9#

Luise: Yeah. #00:12:32-6#

Jay: Gonna hang-out, grab beers, seems interesting. #00:12:36-7#

Luise: That's nice. #00:12:38-4#

Jay: Vegan dinner, ((fine)). #00:12:39-1#

Luise: And so would you say you actually met like interesting people with the help of this app? #00:12:43-9#

Jay: Yah. #00:12:45-0#

Luise: That's cool. #00:12:46-4#

Jay: Yah. Some interesting people, but, yeah, (...). It is just like a quick trip, you don't need to like spend too much time with them. #00:12:53-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:12:55-6#

Jay: Yeah. ... There's super (...) people, you know, seems like fun. #00:13:01-4#

Luise: And would you say you already had like, did you, could you develop some friendships through using Couchsurfing? Or was it like? #00:13:12-2#

Jay: I wouldn't say deep friendship, but, yeah, I definitely have some friends. #00:13:16-8#

Luise: Okay, but that's nice. So it's not only like, you're not only friendly for the ((actual)) like encounter, but yeah. #00:13:25-1#

Jay: Yah. #00:13:26-2#

Luise: You would say there are some long-term relationships. #00:13:29-9#

Jay: Exactly. #00:13:31-5#

Luise: Cool. ... Do you think you would behave different because you know that your Couchsurfing guest will write a reference for you? #00:13:42-2#

Jay: Oh yeah, absolutely. #00:13:42-4#

Luise: Yeah? #00:13:43-1#

Jay: I think, I think, because they matter so much, how good or bad, how good or bad a reference is, there's some kind of you feel obliged to be a better host or kinder, more nicer, yeah. #00:13:56-3#

Luise: Yeah. Okay and as I told you I already, or as well I'm researching Airbnb, have you ever used Airbnb? #00:14:07-7#

Jay: I've used it as a host as well as a guest. I stopped the hosting because my building doesn't allow it. #00:14:14-5#

Luise: Alright, okay. #00:14:16-3#

Jay: But I had a really good experience in LA with this guy who had a spare room and I stayed there, it was really nice, it was really helpful. I think because it's paid, they do a bit more of a better job for some time, this is a livelihood for some of them and this is a side income. It was just a fun thing, yeah, if you wanna be nice and they wanna meet people, but there's less ((a born right)). You always do better effort when you get paid. #00:14:41-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:14:41-5#

Jay: You, you get what you paid for. #00:14:42-7#

Luise: So what, when would you choose like Couchsurfing, when would you choose Airbnb? ... Does that make any? #00:14:57-3#

Jay: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm just trying to think of a situation. So, I would use Airbnb when I'm trying to stay somewhere that is really crowded and I can't find a hotel. #00:15:08-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:15:09-0#

Jay: Couchsurfing, when I hang out with people. I don't expect the Airbnb people to show me around or hang out with me. It's nice if they do. But Couchsurfing, yeah, if I go to hang-out, ((I'll find people who)) give me a tour, I do expect them, but that's part of the piece, right? Airbnb is like convenient location, I think, Airbnb – you just wanna convenience. #00:15:26-3#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:15:26-7#

Jay: Couchsurfing is just more friendship and much more, you know, interaction. #00:15:30-7#

Luise: Yeah, and I when I came here to (*city in California*), I heard that the city has like, is doing a lot of attempts to regulate Airbnb. How do you feel about that? #00:15:42-5#

Jay: I think the challenge is: (*city in California*) is a small city but everyone wants to visit and it's very hard to find accommodation, so it's probably needed. But it's sad that, you know, I think, it can't survive as a ((company)). #00:15:53-7#

Luise: Okay. So I'm out of questions already. If there is anything you feel like you need to share or you haven't had the chance to tell me yet, now is like your chance. #00:16:04-9#

Jay: Oh, I think Airbnb and Couchsurfing have some random ((parallels)) smaller or closer together. The big difference, I would say, is Airbnb is a commercial relationship,

Couchsurfing seems more authentic and seems more fun. Airbnb seems like you are doing it for a job or for the money. And so it can be a bit less fun and social and you don't develop true friendships from it, not that's not possible with Airbnb, but since Couchsurfing is truly altruistic, it usually will have much more inspired friendships and conversations.
#00:16:38-5#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that would be like my experience so far as well, so I totally agree with that. Yeah. Thank you so much. #00:16:45-6#

Jay: Oh, thanks for coming over here. #00:16:47-0#

Luise: Well. #00:16:47-6#

Jay: I hope you enjoyed the park. #00:16:49-0#