

**Interview mit Russel, Couchsurfer (Host/Gast) und Mitarbeiter von Couchsurfing, persönlich, 28.05.2017**

**Interviewerin: LS, Transkription: GS, Korrektur der Transkription: LS**

Luise: Alright. #00:00:03-5#

Russel: Yeah, so I hosted for my first time 'bout a year and a half ago ... and hosted maybe like ten people, ten to twelve. #00:00:14-5#

Luise: Here in San Francisco?// #00:00:15-8#

Russel: Different groups of people, yeah. #00:00:20-1#

Luise: Okay. #00:00:21-9#

Russel: I always loved to host back in Detroit. I had to live with my parents, so I lived in like a tiny apartment, so I never had a chance. Yeah. #00:00:26-7#

Luise: But would you think your parents would be down for that? #00:00:29-2#

Russel: Maybe now. But when I was younger, no. #00:00:32-0#

Luise: Okay. So let's ... in general what would you or what do you associate with Couchsurfing? Like ... #00:00:43-9#

Russel: What do I associate with Couchsurfing in general? #00:00:45-2#

Luise: Yeah. In general. #00:00:47-1#

Russel: Like words or (...) thoughts? #00:00:48-2#

Luise: As you like. #00:00:49-8#

Russel: As I like. ... Couchsurfing for me is cultural exchange, so I associate learning about people's histories, lifestyles, kind of take in what people learn from their travels and kind of trade it with what you learned from your experiences, yeah. I'd say cultural exchange is really at the heart, ((word for)) I think of when I think of Couchsurfing. Of course I was thinking of like my personal experience with it which are like traveling, meeting new people ... More personally like, you know, I've been like on a trip to Austria and the Czech Republic where I was couchsurfing and some of, ((like)) the people I met there and the dude (*name of an Innsbruck Couchsurfer*), he was the first person I was couchsurfing with. #00:01:34-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:01:35-5#

Russel: In Innsbruck, Austria, it was awesome. A ((really)) like the coolest experience ever. #00:01:41-9#

Luise: Yeah? Why was that? #00:01:44-1#

Russel: I don't know. It was just like, the first intro to, we were like, you know, not sure of what to expect. And it was me and my buddy traveling all around Europe and we tried Couchsurfing for the first time with him and his roommates. And like they turned to be like

super cool, like took us around the city for the first day and we just like bought a bunch of beer, and I was drinking beer at night at their place. #00:02:03-2#

Luise: (laughter) Yeah. #00:02:03-8#

Russel: And ... there's private ones ... So yeah, we were after for, we was just gonna stay with them for one night and then move on to Salzburg. But while I was like sitting on the couch, I was looking through some of the drawers like next to the couch and in one of the drawers was a ... like dirt with like mushrooms. #00:02:29-1#

Luise: Okay? (laughter) #00:02:30-5#

Russel: And, yeah, I'm like, "Oh, that's weird", like, "Are these like mushrooms mushrooms?". #00:02:35-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:02:35-8#

Russel: And he's like, "Oh, yeah, I forgot those were there". I'm like, "Oh, you just like growing them casually?" He's like, "Yeah, like we (stick them around), but not anymore". And I'm like, "Oh, okay". He's like, "Do you wanna take some?", I'm like, I mean, "No, it's like, you know, eleven a clock and I'm drunk" where he's like, "Oh, you guys can stay tomorrow and I'll like take you on a hike". #00:02:56-1#

Luise: Nice. #00:02:57-0#

Russel: "What? Okay!" It was like my buddies' first time and like my second at daytime. But it was the coolest thing ever. It was like, ((first thing)) in the morning, like we woke up the next morning, he like made us tea and we drank our mushroom tea and we went for like a barefoot hike like in the mountains in Innsbruck. And I ((want)) you, I want you to picture Innsbruck which is like a tiny, little city surrounded by mountains. #00:03:20-0#

Luise: Yeah. That's nice. #00:03:23-0#

Russel: And like, just had the greatest experience of like learning to see his worldview, like (*name of the Innsbruck Couchsurfer*) is a very interesting guy, like, you know, he is one of, he is like calm (...) like ((zen-ed)) people that I have ever met in my whole life. #00:03:34-2#

Luise: And it's nice to have someone around who is so experienced, especially, yeah// #00:03:38-8#

Russel: In both ways. Yeah (laughter). #00:03:40-2#

Luise: Yeah (laughter). #00:03:41-0#

Russel: Yeah, in both ways, guiding the trip and guiding the trip. Yeah. #00:03:44-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:03:45-2#

Russel: So that was just like the coolest like adventure ever, from like first time I couchsurfed and after that I'm like, "Alright, this is awesome, like"// #00:03:52-9#

Luise: Nice. #00:03:53-6#

Russel: "Like I trust anyone who is on the site". #00:03:55-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:03:56-3#

Russel: Yeah. #00:03:57-1#

Luise: But was your initial impulse to sign up? #00:04:02-3#

Russel: Hm. #00:04:04-2#

Luise: What did you hope to// #00:04:05-9#

Russel: It just sounded like something cool I wanted to try out.#00:04:08-2#

Luise: Okay. #00:04:08-7#

Russel: And we stayed mostly at hostels which I really liked. #00:04:10-9#

Luise: Yeah, you do? #00:04:12-4#

Russel: I'm like, yeah, I do. It was just fun like, and I was like a freshmen year from college, so I was 19. And we get to go around and party with a bunch of tourists all over the world. #00:04:23-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:04:24-0#

Russel: It was really fun, you know? #00:04:25-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:04:26-5#

Russel: I guess like we went to Innsbruck and there wasn't like a big hostel, so I'm like, "Oh, I might as well like ... stay with someone who knows the city better", you know? #00:04:34-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:04:35-3#

Russel: But like, I'd say the real reason we do was just like there was something new and sounded cool and I got a friend who did it, so we just wanted to try it out. #00:04:42-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:04:44-0#

Russel: And then I think from that we learned like, "Oh, like people show you around, and like you get a better take and like, you actually have like a lot of like just live conversation with (*name of the Innsbruck Couchsurfer*) in his garden. #00:04:55-4#

Luise: Wow. #00:04:55-1#

Russel: And it's like those are the moments I remember the best from like Innsbruck and like you wouldn't get that otherwise, right? #00:05:02-1#

Luise: That's right. Except from the, or beside the story of Innsbruck: What would be like another really cool moment you have in mind when you think about Couchsurfing or your whole Couchsurfing experience? #00:05:18-5#

Russel: ... Like another? I guess like the second biggest thing in traveling that I really like enjoyed or found unique was ((last June in January)). I was in Scotland for Hogmanay. Do you know Hogmanay? #00:05:32-0#

Luise: No, what is that? #00:05:34-6#

Russel: It's a big, kind of New Year's festival. #00:05:37-1#

Luise: Okay. #00:05:38-1#

Russel: But really big. ((Five)) people come from all over like UK and then there's like a million people in Edinburgh that weekend. And it's like fire, like a torch festival, people be like spinning like poi and fire and stuff like that, really cool. But like I went with my sister, I wouldn't really know many people there and so I like checked in Couchsurfing and there was like a meet-up. And everyone like met up in a bar and it was cool like, so I'm like, "Oh, I like" – I've been traveling with just my sister for the past three weeks, so I was like, "We could go and have a blast", but ((most of all, we)) want meeting people, too, right? #00:06:15-0#

Luise: That's right, yah. #00:06:15-3#

Russel: So we met out the bar, like it was like 20 people at the bar. And then we all just went to the festival together and half of us got lost, half of us got like re-grouped into smaller groups. We was just like we all party together and like kind of staying out really late. That was cool. I had a really like, I felt like I had a clique of friends that I was with, even though you just kind of just met them that night, you know? #00:06:36-2#

Luise: But would you say there is was like some experience you didn't like or you felt uncomfortable using Couchsurfing so far? #00:06:46-2#

Russel: ... #00:06:47-3#

Luise: No? Not at all? That's super cool. That's super nice. ... How would you describe the ideal Couchsurfer? #00:06:58-3#

Russel: Hmm. #00:06:59-5#

Luise: Surfer and the Host. #00:06:59-6#

Russel: Like stay, staying in my place? #00:07:03-6#

Luise: Yah. #00:07:02-9#

Russel: So, for me? Like the way I look forward on my booking for people that are requesting to stay? #00:07:11-0#

Luise: Yah. #00:07:11-9#

Russel: I think the most ideal is someone who is very friendly and like interested in conversation. Yah, the opposite is when someone just doesn't wanna talk like, yeah. #00:07:23-2#

Luise: Yeah. Sure. #00:07:25-2#

Russel: ((Which)) I had one of those (...) who ((just didn't want to)) kind of talk//  
#00:07:28-4#

Luise: Really? #00:07:27-5#

Russel: We had two girls staying over this weekend, (*girl A*) and (*girl B*). (*Girl A*) is really cool. They are road tripping together, they met through like another travel site and it's like ((a four months vacay)). But like, it's just like the most important thing is to down someone. And you go like, "Oh, tell me about yourself", you know, like blablabla. Like, this was like not, no due to ((stupefaction)), you know? So I was talking to (*girl A*) about what she studied and what she like did before she quit her job and travel. And I'm like, "Well, yeah". ((And when I asked (*girl B*)) what she studied, she was all like, "I'm going to school", I'm like, "Alright, cool, like you know what did you do before you travel?". #00:08:02-4#

Luise: (laughter) Yeah. #00:08:03-5#

Russel: Yeah, like, "What kind of stuff did you do before you travel?". She was like, "Oh, nothing". #00:08:08-6#

Luise: Okay. Oh, I hate those// #00:08:09-3#

Russel: I'm like, "I'm like cool, I'm"// #00:08:11-0#

Luise: (laughter) #00:08:12-5#

Russel: You know, like, "Do you have any like, you know, things you trying to see while you are here?" She was like, "Oh, I just kind of travel ...". #00:08:19-9#

Luise: Yeah. (laughter) #00:08:21-1#

Russel: And I'm like, "Okay?", like, you know, it's like ((pulling)) like, "You don't wanna? Alright", you know. #00:08:29-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:08:30-3#

Russel: Yeah, conversation has to be two-sided, right? You have to kind of give and take. #00:08:28-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:08:29-8#

Russel: So that's what I don't look for. It was just so painful. So someone's like, like if you can get someone who's like a conversationalist like that's the best thing ever, right? #00:08:40-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:08:40-2#

Russel: It's like they bring you like to interesting places like, sometimes it happens naturally, but like, you know, some people you meet and like, and meet like within like a couple of minutes you already like engage in like a really intellectual level in like an interesting topic. #00:08:53-6#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:08:54-9#

Russel: Like those, like those I can remember. It's like even like traveling like staying in a hostel or traveling like, one of my favorite memories from Thailand when I traveled last summer: I've stayed in, I've stayed in mostly hostels, 'cause they're like so cheap, you know? #00:09:10-1#

Luise: (laughter) That's right. #00:09:10-7#

Russel: It comes like 4 dollars and they have a nice bed and, you know, whatever. And then one night, like we were this big group of people, we went out and whatever like I ((didn't really like)) the club and I wasn't really feeling ((it)). I was talking to this German guy for a while and I'm like "Oh, you wanna get a beer just like in this outdoor restaurant?" And we got a beer and like, within like a second we are talking about like, you know, the difference of like ambitions with like people in different continents and then like what it means like to find purpose (snapping his fingers three times), it was just like really quickly. Like we became really, really engaging and like talk for like a couple of hours, you know. And afterwards you leave the conversation just like energized and like, I'm like, "Oh, I could have like a hundred conversations with like my best friends like we might only get there like one out of twenty times", you know? #00:09:58-0#

Luise: That's right. #00:10:00-0#

Russel: Depends on the friends, but it's like, that's always really exciting. Like I love getting into those random conversations with people, 'cause they are like energizing. #00:10:09-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:10:10-0#

Russel: They give you energy, you know. So I say, that's one big thing. I look for those, like people who ... can display their interest or be conversational. I think everyone is apparently interesting, in some way ((you'll)) perform// #00:10:27-4#

Luise: So everyone has a story to tell? #00:10:27-5#

Russel: It's just, yeah, it's just sometimes difficult to like figure it out what that thing is, you know? #00:10:33-8#

Luise: That's right. #00:10:34-3#

Russel: Like this girl, (*girl B*), like, she like didn't study anything, has not traveled much, like I'm sure there is something about her upbringing or her personality or the way she sees the world that is, that I can learn from, that's interesting. #00:10:46-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:10:47-7#

Russel: After spending two days with her, I did not get it. #00:10:48-9#

Luise: (laughter) #00:10:50-1#

Russel: You know, I got none of it. #00:10:54-3#

Luise: (laughter) Alright, yeah. So what do you keep in mind when you are hosted by someone? So you try to like open up to tell about like your life, your point of view? #00:11:08-1#

Russel: As much as possible, yah. #00:11:08-8#

Luise: Okay. #00:11:09-9#

Russel: It's like, when I traveled in Europe, one thing I did what I think was really good, like just in general worked out really well, was I had a USB with some of my favorite movies and music on it. And the funny thing is, when I talked to (*name of the Innsbruck Couchsurfer*) about it, like we got into movies really quickly, 'cause he is a big movie buff and I'm kind of a big movie buff, and he had a hard drive with all his favorite movies, like I ended up giving, like giving him some of the best, deleting everything on mine, so I can take more movies from him. #00:11:42-6#

Luise: Nice. #00:11:43-7#

Russel: Hm. #00:11:44-9#

Luise: (laughter) Okay. #00:11:44-4#

Russel: And then I got so, like one of my, one of my favorite movies of all time he gave me and// #00:11:49-7#

Luise: What is one of your// #00:11:50-4#

Russel: I always, I always recommend it to people with like, who are kinda like movie, movie buffs. #00:11:54-8#

Luise: Okay, so what is it? #00:11:56-8#

Russel: It's called "Oldboy". #00:11:57-3#

Luise: "Oldboy"! #00:11:57-2#

Russel: South Korean movie, you seen it? #00:11:59-1#

Luise: Yeah, yeah, of course I saw it, yah. #00:12:00-7#

Russel: It's so good. I'm like, I've never heard of it before then. He's like, "Oh, you gotta watch it", like I'm really big into psychological thrillers. #00:12:08-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:12:09-2#

Russel: And kind of emotional, like revenge thrillers, you know, that takes the ((knaves)). Yeah. #00:12:13-4#

Luise: (laughter) Nice, okay. #00:12:15-9#

Russel: So that exchange of like music and culture I feel like is really big, so I try to do that whether it is still like, physically like, "Here it is" or like, "Here are some bands to listen to". And also just like being, like if I can go into someone's home and like make their weekend more positive than it would have been otherwise, then like it would probably feel pretty good hosting me. #00:12:39-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:12:40-2#

Russel: You know? #00:12:39-8#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. #00:12:41-8#

Russel: I'd say that goes through life, not just ((hosting)), right? #00:12:50-0#

Luise: So what would you say, did you actually keep in touch with a host or travelers or your hosts after a stay? So the (*name of Innsbruck Couchsurfer*) guy sounded like you became like friends afterwards? #00:13:00-3#

Russel: We're friends. I talked to him for like ... two months and I haven't talked to him since. #00:13:06-2#

Luise: Yeah? #00:13:07-2#

Russel: But if I was back in Austria, I would hit him up and I hope if he was in California he would, too, you know? #00:13:12-8#

Luise: (laughter) Okay. #00:13:13-3#

Russel: I don't wanna say we are like friends now, but like, that's like another person I have a connection with, you know? #00:13:18-8#

Luise: Okay. #00:13:19-6#

Russel: But it also depends, like this guy, (*name of a UK Couchsurfer*), just came from the UK, who couchsurfed at our place. He actually, he was at our place during Brexit // #00:13:29-6#

Luise: Wow. #00:13:30-7#

Russel: Like while we were watching what was happening, he stayed with us for a week. And it was like wild to like see from his perspective like how all this change was affecting him personally. I'm like how he's gonna go home to a different country. #00:13:42-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:13:42-8#

Russel: And I'm like, he's like – like I think, I'm relatively literate, relative to most Americans and like world context, we are like very, very ignorant. So like it was very helpful to have him like lay out like, “This is what's happening”, so I wanted to ((comfort)) that, but also like we shared a lot of experience. And he ended up traveling in California, coming back to our place again. And we were more than happy to have him and then he like traveled like elsewhere and ... And after one week, our whole house went to Peru. But he came back to California like for a night, like a LA layover, and he was like, “Hey guys, can I crash for one night before I go?”, and we were all like, “Oh, we are all in Peru.” But he actually had a house key, because we just never asked for it back and we were like, “Oh, like feel free to stay at our place”. So he stayed at our place when none of us were there. #00:14:37-9#

Luise: Wow. #00:14:38-8#

Russel: It was totally cool. He still got the house key, like, he's like totally welcome to show up whenever we are there or not and like get into the place. So like with (*name of the UK Couchsurfer*), we're still in touch. #00:14:48-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:14:49-4#

Russel: So if I ever come to the UK, I'll absolutely stay with (*name of the UK Couchsurfer*), yeah. #00:14:53-0#

Luise: Okay. So it's not just like for the actual Couchsurfing encounter that you are like engaging with someone? Yeah. #00:15:03-0#

Russel: Absolutely, yeah. Like, I mean, (*name of the UK Couchsurfer*) I'd say is someone who has kinda very much transcended that boundaries, 'cause like, I don't know, he's cool, we got along. #00:15:13-4#

Luise: Yeah, sure. #00:15:13-2#

Russel: But like you know with (...), when like the whole like Trump election was happening, we were talking a lot 'cause there it was very similar to the kind of conversation we were having during Brexit. #00:15:23-8#

Luise: Yeah. Wow, that's nice. #00:15:27-5#

Russel: Also very scary shit. #00:15:29-8#

Luise: Yeah, it is. So what would you say what do you consider before you accept a hosting request? Like what would be some criteria you have in mind or do, you are you screening the whole profile, or are you looking for verifications? #00:15:48-0#

Russel: Yeah, I don't really read profiles that much. I look for verification, references and then whatever message they sent. I don't really, I don't really read profiles. #00:16:00-2#

Luise: Okay. #00:16:01-1#

Russel: It's just that thing that, like they are not very cognitive. Like, like you could be really cool, but also just kinda like lazy and just write like, write like two words and I'm like just gonna be like, "I don't know?!". Or you could be like really outgoing and write a ton on your profile, but like not actually like be that fun of a person. But I feel like from the kind of message people sent you, you can get a really good view. #00:16:26-6#

Luise: So what should a cool or a good message include? #00:16:30-9#

Russel: I can show you an example. #00:16:33-5#

Luise: (laughter) #00:16:35-0#

Russel: So one side effect when you work, working in Couchsurfing is that I sign on to the app every day. Like ((this morning)), I was changing stuff, or looking at stuff, so now my log, like my log on rate is really high. #00:16:48-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:16:48-9#

Russel: So I'm like really high up in the host algorithm now which is obnoxious 'cause now I get a bazillion requests. So like this is bad, but I have like six requests right now that I haven't responded to. #00:16:58-7#

Luise: Wow. #00:16:59-2#

Russel: Hm. #00:17:00-4#

Luise: (laughter). That's cool. #00:17:01-4#

Russel: So I get five a day. #00:17:03-9#

Luise: Wow, okay. #00:17:05-0#

Russel: So. #00:17:05-6#

Luise: Yeah, that, actually when I came here I tried to find a Couchsurfing host, but it was super difficult. #00:17:11-6#

Russel: Scroll down the list a little bit. The people at the top get inundated with requests while the people on page two might receive none. So. #00:17:22-9#

Luise: But you know at the same time there were a lot, I don't know// #00:17:24-0#

Russel: We, we are working on that, too. #00:17:30-1#

Luise: If this is like a San Francisco thing, but there were like a lot of nudist places and people looking for potential dating partners. #00:17:34-9#

Russel: I do really think they should be saying that on their// #00:17:36-2#

Luise: Yeah, yeah, they do, but at the same time it makes it harder to find someone. #00:17:41-7#

Russel: Absolutely, yeah. Yeah. It's just the nature of people being people// #00:17:47-4#

Luise: Yeah, of course. #00:17:47-9#

Russel: But that is actually something we don't try to ((congregate)). I'm more like – for example, this is a bad message. #00:17:55-9#

Luise: (reads out loud) Just looking for a place to crash tonight? Yeah, alright. #00:17:56-9#

Russel: Like, like I usually write people back, I don't write back any kinds of ((those convos)). I just// #00:18:00-4#

Luise: Yeah, of course. #00:18:03-1#

Russel: However, there was one, there was one really good one that I liked. I had to say no unfortunately, but ... .. So like, this is like, this is like // #00:18:21-1#

Luise: Like a long one? Yeah. #00:18:21-5#

Russel: This is like really long, maybe a little bit longer than I'd have liked, more like than I prefer to read, 'cause I'm probably not gonna read the whole thing. #00:18:29-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:18:29-8#

Russel: But, yeah, like it's like really personal, like, she's like, first of she tells me about herself. Like it's the biggest thing like tell me like who you are and why you are traveling.

Like 'cause if you don't say that, it's like, that's like the main big context, that's like, "I'm so and so, I'm traveling for this reason and I wanna stay with you". That's cool, that's like say ((one)) more stuff, you know? #00:18:48-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:18:50-0#

Russel: But like also goes like a bit, "About myself", like, you know, "We've already couchsurfed", like something like that, that's awesome. #00:18:57-0#

Luise: That's cool. #00:18:57-1#

Russel: So, like I look for references just so, you know, that they be like, you know, ((that I welcome)) people that I can get a good experience with them, the chances that I can get them the same experience is flat out, so I definitely look for that. Like I know, there are always some people who haven't had the chance to travel before, so that's not the end ((of it all)). And then like if your are verified like I think that just shows that you like took the extra step to be like, "I'm serious about this" as opposed to like, "Oh, like I'm gonna sign on, send some request and see what's up". #00:19:29-1#

Luise: But that's not a requirement for you, the verification? #00:19:32-5#

Russel: It helps a lot. But if I get like ten requests, I'll probably gonna go with someone who is verified over someone who is not. #00:19:38-7#

Luise: Alright, sure, okay. Yeah. #00:19:43-4#

Russel: It's also a safety thing, right? You know they are who they say they are. #00:19:45-6#

Luise: That's right. #00:19:47-6#

Russel: Like I'm not, I'm a very trusting person. And I don't really think I think about the safety portion that much, but like it's pleasant ((this way)), you know? Like I'm very trusting, I give pretty much every Couchsurfer keys to my house like when I go to work, but like, you know, so I wanna make sure you're ... #00:20:02-0#

Luise: Trustworthy. #00:20:02-3#

Russel: Trustworthy. #00:20:03-9#

Luise: Yeah. So how do you prepare yourself and your home for the arrival of a new guest? Is there// #00:20:11-8#

Russel: I don't// #00:20:12-9#

Luise: Is there anything particular you do? #00:20:14-6#

Russel: No. #00:20:15-8#

Luise: Like cleaning the house, tidy up? #00:20:19-2#

Russel: If I have time, I'll try to, I'll try to clean up. #00:20:22-0#

Luise: Okay. #00:20:23-0#

Russel: And I think this might be a big difference between, at least what I think are the expectations involved with Couchsurfing and with like Airbnb. #00:20:30-9#

Luise: Exactly. #00:20:31-1#

Russel: So if someone was paying, if someone is paying me, I would obviously like, you know, clean up, (...) fresh towel, whatever like that kind of stuff. Like for Couchsurfing, like I will do my best to be a good host, but like I'm also like you're just kind of like entering my lifestyle. Like I don't really actually even go out of my way that much like show people around, I will take you to do what I'm doing. And like ideally my life is interesting enough for you to have an awesome time. #00:20:59-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:20:58-9#

Russel: And I think that's often the case. #00:21:00-3#

Luise: Okay. #00:21:01-3#

Russel: So like let me still like, like last Thursday night these two girls like came over, like if I was by myself I just probably like hung out with my roommates and went to bed 'cause it was a Thursday night. #00:21:12-5#

Luise: (laughter) Yeah. #00:21:14-0#

Russel: But like since they are here I'm like, "Oh, let's go to Twin Peaks", and like drove them up to like see the city. #00:21:17-9#

Luise: Oh yeah. I've been there. #00:21:19-1#

Russel: Beautiful view, right? #00:21:21-2#

Luise: Super nice, yeah. #00:21:21-9#

Russel: And if you go during sunset, it is amazing ,cause – I took them for sunset// #00:21:24-6#

Luise: Ah yeah. That's a good recommendation, yeah. #00:21:25-8#

Russel: And like I had some, I had some Chilean wine from my last Couchsurfer, (*name of Chilean Couchsurfer*), who stayed with me a couple of weeks ago. He's actually doing some research for his like post-PhD project on like sociology with like transsexual treatment, very interesting. #00:21:44-3#

Luise: Wow, yeah. #00:21:45-7#

Russel: So he, he was doing like a few speeches ((on his stop)) in New York. Anyways, he was awesome, left, well, some Chilean wine. So I took it and we drank the wine and it was like, you know, that was like, well, okay like, it's easy for me (('cause it's like)) right here// #00:21:59-9#

Luise: Yeah. #00:22:00-7#

Russel: But I'm also like showing you whatever I like about my city. And like I enjoy going to see sunsets on Twin Peaks a lot, you know? So like// #00:22:09-6#

Luise: That's nice. #00:22:10-9#

Russel: But like I also didn't do anything for their arrival. Like they showed up, actually I wasn't even home, like they showed up early before I was home from work, so my roommate (*name of one roommate*) let them in. #00:22:20-5#

Luise: Okay. #00:22:20-7#

Russel: And then I came like an hour later and they were just talking to my roommates. #00:22:23-3#

Luise: That's nice. #00:22:23-8#

Russel: But it's like, I don't know, like I feel like giving someone a place to crash and like having the opportunity to like, you know, meet them and, obviously it's like kind of enough. #00:22:36-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:22:36-2#

Russel: Hmm, I was still like being like, I'm not tell you (...), being the way I am, I try to be as ((accommodating)) as possible, alright, like, “((Help yourself with the fridge))”, like which is usually not much, like, you know, if I'm making myself breakfast in the morning, you know, like I make you breakfast in the morning. #00:22:50-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:22:51-6#

Russel: Like I enjoy all that (...), but like I wouldn't step out of my way to do it, you know. #00:22:56-3#

Luise: Okay. So how would you like in general combine your hosting activities with your everyday life? Because as you already told me, would you do it like, would you try to like really change something or if you would like invite some friends over, you would be like, “Okay, today there are some friends coming, you have to deal with that”? #00:23:21-7#

Russel: Yeah. Ah, yeah. Let's see. I mean obviously, trying to be the most inclusive always is like important. But like, I'd say like having people over makes me a little more likely to do more fun and interesting things. #00:23:37-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:23:38-0#

Russel: But like, I think that would be almost like equal as if like I had a friend visiting from Michigan as if had Couchsurfers. Like on Friday like, on Friday like we were hanging around the place but seven o'clock, kinda talking and I'm like, “Okay, like let me bring some people over”, like I had some friends texted like, “Oh, come over, we start pregaming”. Like, by like nine o'clock at Friday, we had like twenty people over and we were just like playing beer pong, you know, like partying and like we all went out to a bar together. #00:24:06-3#

Luise: (laughter) Yeah. #00:24:06-5#

Russel: And like the girls had a great time. #00:24:07-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:24:08-6#

Russel: ((For instance)) like if no one was there, that could have probably, realistically happen, too, like that happens a lot in our house. #00:24:15-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:24:15-8#

Russel: So like, I think we are very ((accommodating)), like showed them a great time, but like, I wouldn't say I went out of my way. Like I invited my friends, they are always over and like I introduced them and stuff like, but like, it was still like a Friday night in my life, you know? #00:24:30-3#

Luise: Yeah. So you don't feel like you have to act in a specific way or you have to do like, you have to compromise on like your own activities or interests? #00:24:46-7#

Russel: Yeah, not, not very much. That could be a person by person thing. And I think that goes back to what I'm looking for in people, too. Like I almost prefer to host two people over one, because you can run the risk that like – and this has happened before – you get like two like Italians who like, you know, would prefer to speak in Italian and like sit on the couch like and just like interacting and like ... #00:25:06-5#

Luise: (laughter) #00:25:07-3#

Russel: Oh god, that's happened like once, you know, I wouldn't say that happens very often. But like I, I wouldn't give that up with the flexibility of like on Saturday. #00:25:17-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:25:16-9#

Russel: Like if there's one person, I feel a little bit more compelled to like take him around the city, walk around like be more accommodating. It's like, you know, "What do you wanna see?", like, "Oh, you wanna see the bridge? Like let's go", you know? #00:25:26-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:25:27-4#

Russel: But if there's two people, I might go if I wanna do it. But like if I'm like, if I have a lot of friends going to Dolores Park and if I just wanna chill in Dolores Park, it's like, I would be like, "Bye, have fun, I'm gonna go to Dolores's Bar, you are welcome to join", you know? #00:25:40-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:25:41-0#

Russel: So I like having my own independence. #00:25:43-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:25:44-7#

Russel: As much as anyone. So I like having people who are similarly independent. #00:25:50-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:25:51-5#

Russel: Which means like having two people is awesome. Sometimes you have one person who's like, "Oh, I'm just gonna walk around the city", and I'm like "Cool, have fun". #00:25:56-2#

Luise: And so that you are not like be responsible for their whole// #00:26:00-1#

Russel: Experience. #00:25:59-8#

Luise: Experience. #00:26:00-6#

Russel: Yeah, I'm a part of it. And I think it's really exciting to be like someone's portal into my city. #00:26:06-7#

Luise: Yeah, yeah. #00:26:07-1#

Russel: It's not really my city, like I'm new in this city, but like I can shape their understanding of it, you know. #00:26:11-4#

Luise: That's right. #00:26:11-7#

Russel: Like when they leave, when they leave, if they left, they said like, "Oh, like the bar scene is awesome", just 'cause they came out with me a few times. #00:26:17-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:26:18-6#

Russel: And like saw what my bar habits are like, and like the friends I take with me. And that is awesome, you know? #00:26:24-8#

Luise: Yeah, that is really nice. Yeah. #00:26:26-7#

Russel: But like I also don't wanna feel responsible for their whole understanding of the city. #00:26:34-1#

Luise: Yeah. Yeah, sure. #00:26:31-3#

Russel: But if I can make it a little better this way// #00:26:33-2#

Luise: That would be a lot, yeah. #00:26:34-6#

Russel: It's a lot, yeah, right? #00:26:35-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:26:37-3#

Russel: You know if, if it's like, if it's like my sister coming to visit, my younger sister lives in Michigan still. And she's coming to visit a few times, like I feel responsible for her whole understanding of the city. #00:26:47-2#

Luise: Yeah. Of course. #00:26:49-3#

Russel: Which is cool, you know? Like and I wanna make sure she like gets like, understands the food of (*city in California*) and the sites, like the hiking around (*city in California*), like I'm gonna show her everything. #00:27:00-2#

Luise: (laughter) #00:27:01-1#

Russel: But that's a little bit different. You know, I'm a little bit more invested in her experience. #00:27:04-6#

Luise: Yeah, of course. And you are her older brother, so. #00:27:07-5#

Russel: Yeah. #00:27:08-6#

Luise: A number of expectations, I guess (laughter). #00:27:11-7#

Russel: Yeah, that's right. #00:27:12-4#

Luise: So what do you think, how should a guest treat you and your place? Like in terms of personal boundaries and privacy. #00:27:25-9#

Russel: I try to make people feel at home, so I hope people will feel at home. It's easier for me. I can, I can take it back to the same week for an example, like, I mean, (*girl A*) kind of felt ... like other (...), like she feel at home like a lot easier. So it's small things like if she wanted like a glass of orange juice, she would like go to the cupboard and be like, "Oh, which one is the glasses?". Whereas, I think, like (*girl B*) would like wait to be offered which is like respectful, I mean a ((cultural)) thing, but like if I have to offer you everything, like so you're comfortable like, that is just more on me. Like I want you to just go and grab like// #00:28:02-3#

Luise: Yeah, so you wouldn't mind at all? #00:28:03-1#

Russel: Maybe ask like, "Hey (*Russell*), can ((I have a)) towel?", like, "(*Russell*), where the glasses at?", like, "Oh, like you're drinking a beer, can I have a beer, too?" #00:28:11-3#

Luise: Okay. #00:28:11-1#

Russel: You know, like I do my best to offer you, but like no, sometimes you like forget or like I might do something for myself, like I'll hope you ask, you know? #00:28:18-5#

Luise: Yeah, yeah, sure. #00:28:19-4#

Russel: But also like respectfully, right? Like if someone was coming who's like take shit and be like, "Ah, like blablabla", like that be a little weird. But this also never happened. #00:28:30-6#

Luise: Okay. #00:28:28-7#

Russel: Yeah. #00:28:30-0#

Luise: So you never got the feeling that someone crosses your personal boundaries or be like intrusive? Is this a word? #00:28:39-4#

Russel: Yeah. I've never come across that. #00:28:41-2#

Luise: Okay. #00:28:41-8#

Russel: I also have very high ... what's the word? A very high tolerance towards it, probably. #00:28:48-9#

Luise: Alright, okay. #00:28:51-2#

Russel: So what, what I would seem uncomfortable with if I had ((to give in)) to some people. #00:28:55-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:28:55-7#

Russel: So the closest thing I had to that is with this guy (*name of a Couchsurfer*) who is awesome, musician, traveling down south on a low budget. He was gonna stay for a week and then go to Yosemite. And he end up just like being like, "Oh, I don't wanna go to Yosemite blablabla", ended up staying for two weeks. #00:29:10-1#

Luise: Wow. (laughter) #00:29:12-3#

Russel: And ended up staying like another like half a week. So he was there for like two and a half, almost three weeks. #00:29:17-4#

Luise: What? #00:29:18-4#

Russel: Which is like ... it was like pushing the boundaries of like staying really long. #00:29:24-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:29:24-6#

Russel: ((But)) like, he gave us the opportunity, he was like, "Hey guys, like is it okay like, you know, I like to stay", like if I wanted to be like, you know, "Honestly, we would prefer you to move on, like ((move out))". But he was also like the most low maintenance human being ever. #00:29:37-8#

Luise: (laughter) #00:29:38-4#

Russel: Like, you know, like having him in my living room, it was like nothing. Like I trusted him fully, he's a really nice and fun loving kid. Turns out, my roommate (*name of one roommate*) basically like works from the couch. So ((then)) (*name of one roommate*) liked having company. #00:29:52-4#

Luise: Oh nice. #00:29:52-6#

Russel: He's at home all day long. So they were just sitting on our couch, and, I mean, all (*name of one roommate*) does is smoke weed and program all day. He's now got ((a little friend)) and smoke weed with him all day long. #00:30:01-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:30:01-7#

Russel: Hm. #00:30:02-2#

Luise: (laughter) #00:30:03-5#

Russel: So I think, he enjoyed having him around. #00:30:05-9#

Luise: Turned out great. #00:30:06-2#

Russel: Yeah. So it worked out well. But like, it's definitely the kind of thing like, yeah, he was like pushing the boundaries of like what's appropriate, you know. But it's// #00:30:16-7#

Luise: That's right. #00:30:17-0#

Russel: For example, for him like after a week like I didn't have to offer him ((anything)) like, "Oh, like do you want a beer", or like, "Oh, like do you have a fresh towel?". Like if he he knows where things are, then he can grab them if he wants. And if he doesn't have

something, he will ask for it, you know, so there's, for me there's no pressure, you know? I can live my normal life and do whatever the hell I want and ((for (*name of one roommate*) it's) more company. #00:30:40-6#

Luise: Yeah, that's, yeah that's right. #00:30:41-1#

Russel: Which is cool. #00:30:42-4#

Luise: So you got another flatmate. #00:30:43-7#

Russel: Exactly, yeah. And it was cool, yeah. #00:30:45-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:30:45-6#

Russel: And we (...) together like it didn't bother me. #00:30:47-7#

Luise: Okay. Yeah, so the last part is more about the reference system. So what do you think about the Couchsurfing reference system in general? Like do you think it's supportive, do you think, is there something that's good about it? Is there something that's bad about it? #00:31:07-6#

Russel: Ah, I think it's definitely necessary. #00:31:10-3#

Luise: It's necessary, okay. #00:31:11-2#

Russel: I think, it's the most important system. Like verification is cool, I think it's like a little bit of like, okay, it'll help you get over that barrier. ((It reduces)) that barrier of like, I don't know if I can trust him. #00:31:26-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:31:26-8#

Russel: I mean references, like if it appears to you, like, you know, ((I need)) a little bit of a push, like references give ((you definitely that)) push. #00:31:34-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:31:35-4#

Russel: So if you are staying with someone verified, I'm like, "Okay, they are comfortable saying their identity". #00:31:41-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:31:42-4#

Russel: Cool. If they hosted 15 people and everyone's like, "Oh, these guys were awesome like I would highly recommend staying with them, they did this for me, they did that". I trust it, you know, like// #00:31:51-0#

Luise: Yeah, yeah. #00:31:51-6#

Russel: Like, like I trust it. Like, you know they stayed with these people, you know they had a great experience, like if, you know, some people have like a hundred referrals. Like that is the safest thing you can possibly do, like that's safer than, you know, meeting up with someone on Craigslist, that's safer than getting into an Uber, like 'cause that's a lot of people being like, you know, "They're trustworthy//". #00:32:10-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:32:11-2#

Russel: "And they're fine", and, you know, stuff like that. So I think referrals are awesome. The system on Couchsurfing has changed a lot in the past. #00:32:17-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:32:18-4#

Russel: So like five years ago, it was like a vouch system, like, so at the very beginning of Couchsurfing – and I wasn't ((on)) at this point – in like 2004, it was ((so, more)) like, there were certain ambassadors who could give vouches. And you had to get a vouch from an ambassador in order to do it. And when once you had a vouch, you became an ambassador and you could vouch other people. But like once you had like a certain amount of vouches, you could ((end give them out)). Yeah, so I think, it was like very trusting to know that it was a friend of a friend in a way. But it was also a bad system because people were like ((pay)) for vouches so that they could become like an ambassador and then they could give vouches which is very valuable 'cause it was a limited number and like, yeah, each person could only give out like three per month or something like that. #00:33:15-4#

Luise: Wow. Okay, I didn't know about that. #00:33:17-6#

Russel: So, yeah. So it was good in that it was trustworthy, it was bad in that it was flawed and people abused the system. So now it's decentralized, anyone can give anyone anything which I think is much better. I think it functions well. It was interesting that the founder of Couchsurfing actually left Couchsurfing a few years back and tried to start a new like app network. #00:33:45-6#

Luise: Yeah, what it is called again? Wonder? #00:33:47-5#

Russel: Wonder, yeah. Alright, you are familiar with that. #00:33:49-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:33:50-1#

Russel: And I don't know much about it, maybe you can tell me more, but it was like all about vouching// #00:33:57-0#

Luise: It's about rating people, like their, the whole person. #00:33:58-3#

Russel: Yeah, so we meet and afterwards, I be like, "Lulu was like really friendly, but like I don't know if she was that trustworthy like//"? #00:34:02-6#

Luise: Yeah, yeah you can rate me like in terms of profession, like personal interaction and I don't know the others, but some// #00:34:14-6#

Russel: Just taking that reference system and like making it for everybody. And it is not, it failed. I think he is giving up on it or he already did. #00:34:22-0#

Luise: But I think it would like feel super awkward. Do you know the TV series "Black Mirror"? #00:34:28-7#

Russel: People talked about that, every time I had this kind of conversation someone brought that up so, but I still haven't seen it. #00:34:33-8#

Luise: Oh really? You have to watch it. There is this one// #00:34:34-9#

Russel: I shall, I need to watch it. #00:34:40-5#

Luise: Yeah, there is this one series where it's all about people rating each other after every interaction they got and it's super, super cringey and awkward. #00:34:48-0#

Russel: It's kinda dystopian, isn't it? #00:34:48-5#

Luise: Yeah, it is. #00:34:48-6#

Russel: It's very dystopian. You don't wanna have to worry about that. #00:34:52-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:34:53-2#

Russel: Hmm, yeah, so I think it has a purpose. I think it functions well in this setting. I think it's proven that it does not function well or would be really intrusive in like an everyone rate everyone kind of setting, you know? #00:35:07-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:35:08-8#

Russel: Hm, I think that's a very, very interesting study. #00:35:12-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:35:13-5#

Russel: To learn more about how people feel about that, would be fascinating 'cause// #00:35:16-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:35:17-6#

Russel: It, it, 'cause its purposes (...) varies, like if I knew the trust rating for every person on Craigslist or Airbnb like, that would be so helpful. #00:35:25-6#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:35:27-4#

Russel: Alright? I was talking with (*girl A*), (...), she actually had, so she has couchsurfed a lot and airbnbed a lot, had only positive experiences with Couchsurfing and mostly Airbnb, but had one experience in Rome with Airbnb which is like, like she felt like very much in danger. Like ended up like going into an Airbnb and there was a room for two, her and her friend, (*name of girl A's friend*). And they go into the house and there were 15, 15 older men staying in this place. #00:36:02-4#

Luise: What? Okay. #00:36:03-2#

Russel: And their room was through the bedroom of one, of the host. #00:36:07-9#

Luise: Ugh, yeah? #00:36:10-0#

Russel: And it was like the kind of thing where, they were like, like they are like, "Okay, this is kind of weird, like ((way too many)) signals" – they had a few other things like throughout their experience that really tipped them off –, like, "Okay, like I don't feel save". #00:36:19-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:36:19-9#

Russel: And they ended up leaving, like not staying the night. #00:36:22-4#

Luise: Wow, but when you do that, you are actually not allowed to review the host.  
#00:36:26-0#

Russel: 'Cause you need to stay there? #00:36:26-5#

Luise: Yeah. If you// #00:36:29-0#

Russel: So// #00:36:30-0#

Luise: At one point you have to like cancel or like – oh what's the word? Leave earlier than than you're supposed to, you don't get the chance to review the person which is like super// #00:36:45-6#

Russel: They reported it to Couchsurfing, or they reported it to Airbnb, 'cause she was like really, really uncomfortable. And none of them spoke any English, so they like thought that they've been talked about all the time, like ... very strange. ... Yeah, so like, stuff like that though, like that would've been a really great thing to have a more personal referral system, you can look the person up and be like, "That's really weird", like, like that's an experience like when most people ((had been going through that)), you know, you could share that. It would be valuable. #00:37:20-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:37:22-0#

Russel: Hmm, but// #00:37:22-5#

Luise: So has a reference affected your Couchsurfing activity once? Maybe at the beginning? Because I think when you're starting// #00:37:29-4#

Russel: Of other people or? #00:37:30-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:37:31-5#

Russel: Or my own reference? #00:37:31-9#

Luise: Your own, getting referenced by other people. I think it's especially important at the beginning when you're like starting, starting off. ... Or did you have like any// #00:37:44-8#

Russel: It's very important starting off. When I started off, I was just getting like friend references from my friends which I think helped. And then, you know, I got a host reference from, you know, (*name of Innsbruck Couchsurfer*). #00:37:57-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:37:57-9#

Russel: And then I still don't have any references from people staying with me. People just forget to do it a lot of times and I feel uncomfortable asking. #00:38:04-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:38:05-0#

Russel: Hmm. #00:38:05-2#

Luise: Why is that? #00:38:07-6#

Russel: I don't know. But also I'm in San Francisco, in Castro, like I don't need references, like people will stay with me no matter what. #00:38:12-7#

Luise: Okay. #00:38:13-4#

Russel: You know? 'Cause people like to say it's tough. #00:38:14-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:38:16-2#

Russel: So, I don't feel like it's as necessary as a host. But, well, I will definitely need Couchsurfing in July in Washington, in Vancouver, when I travel, so I wanna make sure I have enough references for that. #00:38:28-4#

Luise: Okay. So but you are kind of disappointed when you don't get a reference after// #00:38:32-7#

Russel: Yeah, definitely, yeah. Which is like it's not the biggest deal, like what's important is that I had a good experience and we are more like Facebook friends, but like, you know? #00:38:42-7#

Luise: So you would always try to write a review? #00:38:45-6#

Russel: Yeah, I always, I always do. #00:38:46-8#

Luise: Okay. Okay. ... #00:38:51-4#

Russel: Kind of like good will, right? #00:38:52-2#

Luise: Yeah (laughter). ... So last, you're nearly finished. What do you consider when writing a reference for someone? So what would be topics or things you would include? Or you pay special attention to? #00:39:13-8#

Russel: Hmm. ... Since (...). I guess, I mostly talk about the person's like disposition, like some people are very outgoing and more partier, some people are more conversationalist, like I always mention like, not like very like expressively, but like, "Oh, like they were great, we were like partying, had an amazing time" or like, "They were great, we like hung out and like it was really low-key and they were great conversationalists". #00:39:41-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:39:42-3#

Russel: You know? And I feel like people can interpret ... what you're trying to say about someone very easily. Like if I'm like, like, "Oh, Lulu is really cool", like, you know, "Would host again", it's probably like, okay, like she was cool. #00:39:57-2#

Luise: Yeah. #00:39:58-0#

Russel: But like probably not that interesting, you know, but if I go// #00:39:58-8#

Luise: Yah, not super special// #00:40:00-9#

Russel: "Oh, Lulu is amazing, we had such a great time doing this and that shit", like, you know, share experience, like, "Doing this and that with me and like would absolutely love to, you know, come like, come back to San Francisco, please". #00:40:10-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:40:11-5#

Russel: You know like that's different. #00:40:11-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:40:12-4#

Russel: You, you can feel that, you know? #00:40:13-9#

Luise: Of course, yeah. #00:40:14-0#

Russel: So that's mainly what I do. Like for that last (group)), "Oh, they were cool, you know, they were great, would come out to the bars, like, you know, would host again". For (*name of Chilean Couchsurfer*) I'm like, "Oh, like absolutely lovely dude, like, you know, I hope I have a chance to stay with him in Chile", you know, make it a little bit more loving. I think people sense that really well. I would never, I would never really bash someone unless there was like a really, really negative experience when I wish I never had.  
#00:40:42-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:40:42-7#

Russel: And even if it was like a very, very mediocre experience, maybe I just wouldn't review (...). #00:40:46-7#

Luise: Yeah, of course. So do you, do you use Airbnb? Have you some Airbnb experiences as well? #00:40:55-4#

Russel: Yeah. #00:40:56-9

Luise: So what do you say, when would you prefer an Airbnb over Couchsurfing?  
#00:41:02-2#

Russel: So, yeah, so Airbnb I'll use if I'm ... I guess, I wanted to say, really last minute, so I need a place to stay, ((I'm on)) Airbnb. I'd say the main time I'm using Airbnb is about like for going on like a trip for like a purpose and I don't wanna meet new people. #00:41:19-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:41:20-0#

Russel: So like// #00:41:19-8#

Luise: So you have like a busy schedule or? #00:41:22-3#

Russel: Busy schedule or like if I'm like going to like party on the beach with like, like ten of my best friends, like we're gonna get an Airbnb. #00:41:30-5#

Luise: Okay. #00:41:30-4#

Russel: I don't need, like I'm not there to meet anyone. I'm there to be with my best friends, you know what I mean? #00:41:35-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:41:36-6#

Russel: And like do crazy shit with my good buddies. More like, if I'm like, like first time I used Airbnb, I took my girlfriend at that time to Cleveland, so like we were going to see shows, like I wanted like one-on-one time like, like I don't want to be in someone else's home and like spent time with other people, like I'm taking her on a trip, you know?  
#00:41:58-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:41:59-8#

Russel: So I will use Airbnb and ((stuff)). #00:42:02-7#

Luise: But// #00:42:02-5#

Russel: But if I'm, if I'm trying to like explore a new city or like, you know, my goal is to explore a new city or my goal is to meeting people, then I'm gonna use Couchsurfing. #00:42:12-4#

Luise: But how do you feel about this whole Airbnb idea when it first came up? Because I had the feeling that a lot of Couchsurfers were like, I don't know, feeling like a little bit betrayed, because it was like their idea and then they would take that and put that like in this commercial interaction. #00:42:32-9#

Russel: Yeah. I think there is a space for both, so I think both should exist. #00:42:37-0#

Luise: Yeah, okay. #00:42:38-7#

Russel: Like, like not everyone who couchsurfs would use Airbnb and vice versa. #00:42:43-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:42:44-3#

Russel: Well, while Airbnb is more accessible for everyone, not everyone who uses Airbnb would also consider Couchsurfing. #00:42:49-9#

Luise: That's right. Yeah. #00:42:52-2#

Russel: And some people need money. Also it's like some people have a home in Tahoe that they only use like a little bit of the year, like basically it's ((not their)) home, like that's not a good platform for Couchsurfing 'cause the house is empty. #00:43:04-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:43:05-2#

Russel: But if you can like offer it on Airbnb and make a lot of money off season that could have gave you the affordability of a lifestyle to own two homes. So, like that's something that Airbnb is very necessary for, but Couchsurfing wouldn't be a fit. #00:43:22-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:43:22-4#

Russel: Yeah, what's cool, what's cool is like, I think there's like personality and demographic types. Not only for each platform, but for each proportion of each platform. Like I was talking to one of my friends' parents, explaining them the new company I was working on, they were like, "This is weird", you know, like, my like, you know, my dad's, my dad's fifty year old friend would never couchsurf. #00:43:41-3#

Luise: Yeah. #00:43:41-9#

Russel: Like he has plenty of money, like he would get a nice hotel or maybe a nice Airbnb when he is traveling. He would still love to meet new people, so he could like, he could definitely still be a host. He has a big house, his kids moved away. Like I could definitely see him hosting people and he could definitely see himself hosting people. Or he could see himself like doing like meet-ups and like meeting up with people, with locals through Couchsurfing in a city. But actually staying on a couch, that's not his interest. He wants to

have a nice bed with room service, you know, 'cause he can afford that lifestyle.

#00:44:15-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:44:16-2#

Russel: So like certain aspects, the meet-up, the hosting could still be a fit. Couchsurfing would never be a fit and that's fine. In the same way Airbnb would be a fit, but like he would never charge someone to stay in his home, 'cause like, he's like, "For what?". Like if he is bringing someone into his home, it's to like meet them, like show them around and be hospitable. #00:44:37-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:44:38-3#

Russel: So like he would be a host for Couchsurfing, but not for Airbnb. And he would travel and stay through, for Airbnb, but not through Couchsurfing. #00:44:44-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:44:45-3#

Russel: Hm. #00:44:46-2#

Luise: That's right. #00:44:46-8#

Russel: You know? So I think there is like very unique offerings based on who you are. ... Hm. #00:44:53-5#

Luise: Cool, so yeah. I'm out of questions, but if you think there are some, some stories you should share or you should add, or is there something you feel like, "Oh, we haven't touched this one", now it's time, feel free (laughter). #00:45:11-1#

Russel: Have we touched, have you asked me the most important things? ... I don't know, a big thing that we talked about at, at like, at Couchsurfing, and a big thing I think about now, is like, we know like a lot of people search for hosts, like the percentage of people who like search for hosts compared to the amount of people who like sent a request to a host is very different. So like my job, like paying attention to is like make that number closer, but like that's also not in my control, right? #00:45:47-8#

Luise: Yeah. #00:45:48-4#

Russel: So like there's small things I could do, like I can move around like the buttons on a page or like make like the, not like, you know, send requests, make that like, you know, requests to stay or something like that, and that are like – I'll give a little bit of a defense, but there's like this gap which exists, because some people just aren't ready to send a request. #00:46:06-1#

Luise: That's right.// #00:46:06-4#

Russel: So I think a lot about// #00:46:06-8#

Luise: Or you don't find someone you like feeling matched to. #00:46:10-7#

Russel: Right. #00:46:10-9#

Luise: Yeah. #00:46:11-6#

Russel: Yeah, I think that's part of the not ready, you know? So like, like I'm thinking like how can we make that smaller? Like changing the algorithm of how you find hosts? That could maybe help a little bit. #00:46:23-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:46:24-0#

Russel: So make you find better hosts. Some people, I think, just aren't mentally there where they are like, "I'm willing to put myself out yet" or like, "I'm not totally (bought) into the system or the safety of it or this type of lifestyle choice", I don't know, I really don't know. But there's like that gap there, so like I'm more trying to understand more about what exists there. I think safety is one big one. #00:46:49-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:46:48-0#

Russel: And I think once you do it once, that's just totally out ((of the way)), you know? #00:46:52-4#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:46:54-6#

Russel: But you know, that safety for the first time, well, I don't know, maybe a personal friend? Like, like someone, like as, if, if you're a little bit more adult, like maybe like you don't want ((to stay with a friend and be)) like, "I'm sleeping on these couches". #00:47:07-5#

Luise: Yeah. #00:47:08-3#

Russel: I don't know. For me like that's awesome. I tell my friends like, "Dude, that's so cool", you know. Like if my dad was like, "Yeah, I travel for a business trip and stayed on this couch instead of the Marriott", I'd be like, "What?!". That be like weird, like// #00:47:21-2#

Luise: (laughter) #00:47:21-4#

Russel: Like isn't that uncomfortable? So maybe that's ((something)) for some people, yeah. So, I think like what makes up for that is a very interesting problem and different probably for every person. #00:47:34-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:47:35-4#

Russel: I would be better in my job if I could figure out what all these things are. #00:47:39-0#

Luise: Yeah. That's right. #00:47:40-4#

Russel: And yeah, it differs a lot by person, though. So it's, I think, there's not like one ((optimal)) solve, there's a lot of different things that goes into it. Like for me, like I'm a low barrier to be ready, you know? #00:47:51-0#

Luise: Yeah. #00:47:51-2#

Russel: It's like what I do here is in my house, you can do it, like I already had tried to travel as much as possible as a college kid, like I'm traveling with me and another male friend, like my safety like, worst case of uncomfortable is we have to leave the situation. Very few situations will actually be unsafe. Like the absolute worst that can happen is like

someone like hold us at gun-point and takes our stuff, whatever. That's, that's a risk, that's a risk I'm willing to take for the probability of that happening, you know? #00:48:18-2#

Luise: That's right. #00:48:19-6#

Russel: You know? #00:48:22-3#

Luise: I don't know why, but for me it's like// #00:48:23-8#

Russel: For, for girls it's different, though. When you travel, you're not, you're not thinking of someone taking your money, you are thinking of like, like getting caught up in like a sex trade or being like physically, you know, taken advantage of which is like very, very, that's at, at a much higher stake. #00:48:39-1#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. #00:48:39-0#

Russel: You know, I'm worried about my material possessions, not my body. #00:48:42-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:48:42-8#

Russel: So I think, there's very different things at stake for different people. #00:48:45-8#

Luise: Yeah, that's right. But for me, it's always easier to accept a host request, than to actually send one out by myself. #00:48:53-3#

Russel: Really? #00:48:54-3#

Luise: Yeah, because I think, you know, when I host someone, it's my place. I know what's going to happen. I'm like a little bit more in control. #00:49:03-2#

Russel: You can guide the experience a little bit? #00:49:04-4#

Luise: Yeah, and, yeah, for myself I find it, sometimes I find it hard to really decide, or to really get a feeling for, "Okay, what could this Couchsurfing host might want me to be like or to act like". I don't know. #00:49:23-2#

Russel: Yeah, I can definitely, I can definitely see that. Especially when you stay with someone new, you feel a little bit more compelled to do// #00:49:32-0#

Luise: Exactly, right? #00:49:32-9#

Russel: What they were like, and be, be respectful or stuff like that. #00:49:36-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:49:36-9#

Russel: No, I agree. Whereas in my house, like I was talking about, like I try like be respectful, like if we have cultural differences, like I'll try to, you know, ((split)) that, but like at the end of the day like you are in my house like I'm gonna do what I do in my house. You know like, like, you know, what I mean? Like I don't know, like I'm very comfortable in my house. I take my shoes off like // #00:49:58-7#

Luise: Yeah. #00:49:58-2#

Russel: Last week I took my shirt off, like if that's uncomfortable you, I'll try to like be ((accommodating)), but like I'm also just ... doing me, you know? #00:50:05-4#

Luise: Yeah. #00:50:06-2#

Russel: Like I drink, like if you don't like drinking, like you kinda, kind of have to deal with it like// #00:50:10-4#

Luise: Yeah, yeah, sure. #00:50:11-6#

Russel: I drink on the weekends, you know? #00:50:12-2#

Luise: Sure. Yeah. #00:50:13-8#

Russel: But like, you know, I'll tone it down a little bit for you. If you be in someone else's house, like if you don't drink in your house, I'm not drinking in your house, you know, like if you// #00:50:20-8#

Luise: Yeah, yeah, so you would like to stick to the unwritten rules. #00:50:26-5#

Russel: Right, as well as possible. #00:50:28-6#

Luise: Yeah. #00:50:29-3#

Russel: You know sometimes it is hard, all right? #00:50:31-1#

Luise: Yeah. #00:50:31-8#

Russel: You know? #00:50:32-9#

Luise: Yeah. ... Cool. Thank you, thank you so much for your, for your time. #00:50:38-1#