



Our old friends are also our very best friends

Es gibt alte, neue, gute, beste, echte und falsche Freunde. Aber was genau unterscheidet eine tiefe, lebenslange Freundschaft von ihren alltäglicheren Formen?

medium US plus

I have a little book on my desk with the simple title *Friends*. It's a collection of quotations about friendship — some beautiful, some sentimental, some humorous. Sometimes I pick up the book and read a few of the quotations. Each one reminds me of how special my friends are — each in his or her own way. Take Sally, for example: "There are some friends you know you will have for the rest of your life. You're welded together by love, trust, respect or loss — or simple embarrassment."

In the early 1970s, Sally and I were young, carefree, and working in Washington, DC. One evening — most likely under the influence of the cheap wine we used to drink — we decided we should give up our jobs and go to Europe. Surprisingly, when we awoke the next day, we still liked the idea. So we told our bosses the news and bought rucksacks, hiking boots, and plane tickets for early September.

To make our money go as far as possible, we would hitchhike, stay in cheap hotels, and buy food in grocery stores instead of eating out. Europe on \$5 a day was our goal. We hitched our first ride with a couple of American soldiers on motorcycles. They wanted to show us the sights, including a wine festival on the Moselle. The evening didn't end well for our soldier friends, who had their drivers' licenses taken away by the local police. We decided we would choose our transportation more carefully from then on.

For seven months, we hitchhiked through Europe: north to Scandinavia and south to Turkey. We met some wonderful people, like Nicholas, who invited us to stay in his home on the Greek island of Kalymnos for as long as we wanted. We met some real characters, too, like the two Bulgarian truck drivers who invited us to live

with them in their truck — forever. Or those nice men in Istanbul who... But those are stories for another day.

When our money ran out in the spring, Sally returned to Washington, and I settled in Munich. Staying in touch wasn't easy in the days long before e-mail and cheap phone connections. But we managed. Today we live on opposite coasts of the U.S.

We rarely get together, but when we do, it's like we're — well, you know — old friends. There's nothing better than a friend who's known you through so many stages of your life: someone who knows what makes you laugh, and who or what has made you cry. It's the best kind of comfort zone.

Recently, Sally and I decided to celebrate our birthdays together. We agreed that it didn't matter where we went. We also agreed there'd be no cheap hotels and no hitchhiking. We decided on Santa Fe, New Mexico, where we rented a sweet little adobe

with heated floors and lots of fireplaces. We spent a day at a spa, complete with a massage and a good long soak in the outdoor hot tub. Speaking of spending, I'm sure this one week cost us as much as our seven months in Europe — but it was worth every penny. We took day trips to pueblo ruins, visited art galleries, and tried New Mexican cooking. But we also spent a lot of time talking about past adventures and those yet to come.

"I have learned that to be with friends is enough," poet Walt Whitman said. I would add that we need to be with them more often. ●



"A good friend knows what makes you laugh and who has made you cry"

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adobe [ə'doʊbi]	Haus aus Lehmziegeln
carefree ['kerfri:]	sorglos
comfort zone ['kʌmfərt ,zoun]	Sich-miteinander-wohlfühlen
driver's license ['draɪvərz ,lajsnz] N. Am.	Führerschein
embarrassment [ɪm'bærəsmənt]	peinliche Situation
fireplace ['faɪəplɛs]	offener Kamin
grocery ['grəʊsəri]	Lebensmittel-
hiking boots ['haɪkɪŋ ,bu:ts]	Wanderstiefel
hitch a ride [ˌhɪtʃ ə 'raɪd]	mitgenommen werden
hitchhike ['hɪtʃhaɪk]	trampen, per Anhalter fahren
hot tub ['hɔ:t tʌb]	beheiztes Badebecken
quotation [kwəʊ'teɪʃən]	Zitat
run out [ˌrʌn 'aʊt]	ausgehen
soak [soʊk]	Einweichen; hier: Bad
spa [spɑ:]	Kurort; hier: Wellness-Einrichtung
weld sth. together [ˌweld tə'geðər]	etw. zusammenschweißen