

A tough nut to crack my little two and a half year old. Delightfully opinionated, beautifully bossy and preciously picky, but what a good judge of character. "I like her" came the reply when I asked her what she thought about her first encounter with Luna.

Now she freely says "I love Luna" and so does my eldest girl too. In fact they see Luna as their big sister. Accolade indeed for a girl who, just 10 months ago, was a stranger to our family.

Inexperienced at finding an au pair, Luna stood out from other applicants right from the start. With good childcare experience, a good grasp of English and lovely references we were comfortable to add her to our short list, but having spoken to her on the telephone she soon made it to the top of the list.

What a good match on so many levels: Spanish – great as my parents have retired to Spain and as a family we are keen to learn the language. A love of art – perfect as I have an art studio and run art groups for toddlers. Keen on keep fit and healthy living – great as so are we. Sensitive by nature – lovely as my eldest is very sensitive too

But how do you convey to others just how special the match was? The day she joined our family it was like an angel had joined us. Beautiful inside and out, Luna is a natural with children. But it was more than that. I had actually found something in Luna that I had never dreamt possible with an au pair. I had found someone who played with the children in the same way that I would play with them. She spoke to the girls how I would speak to the girls. She disciplined them just how I would discipline them. She encouraged them just as I would do. This wasn't something learnt over time, it was just instinctive. This makes you feel amazingly comfortable and totally reassured that the most precious beings in your life will be well cared for. She truly felt a part of the family.

But what tangible evidence is there that Luna should be nominated for Au Pair of the Year Award? There are so many beautiful anecdotes of her time spent with us. I share but a few.

For example, there was the time we took our family to a local farm park. We had a lovely day with the animals, happy looking at them from a distance with the occasional stroke when allowed. But not Luna, who is as natural with animals as she is with children. I turned round after petting a friendly goat to find her with a ferret sitting on her head, playing with her hair. She had just leant over the rail to say hello and it had jumped onto her and had made friends with her very quickly. Just like we had I guess.

Then we took Luna on holiday with us to Wales. Desperate to see as much British wildlife as possible she would spend hours looking out of the window for squirrels. Content to leave her to her pastime, we suddenly heard a loud "it's a pig" in a very strong Spanish accent. Rushing to the window to see what she meant, we quickly realised that Luna had spotted a badger sitting on top of the picnic bench outside of our villa. What an amazing treat to see such a gorgeous creature in the wild on our doorstep. The badger stayed for some time,

making the most amazing memories for us all. As for Luna, she learnt a new English word that day too!

The day that Spain won the football World Cup will also live with us forever. As huge football fans, we had followed the world cup, and with England well and truly out of the running we were backing Spain to win. After a very tense game in which Luna could barely sit down she was so excited, the celebration in our house that followed the final whistle was second to none. Whilst most of England was disappointed in the football, the screams of joy from our house could be heard for miles around.

There is no doubt that Luna embraces life with positivity. But it was her dedication and commitment to one particular project that I shall always remember. In celebration of our village festival I had embarked on the huge task of making a mile long paper chain. 16000 individually designed paper links made by local residents. This was a huge project taking over three months to complete. Luna single-handedly made over 3000 links and put her heart and soul into making the project a huge success.

There really is no better au pair experience than the one our family had with Luna. We were so very blessed. We have the most amazing memories of Luna's stay with us and a family friend for life.