

AMISH TEENAGERS SET FREE!

Who are the Amish?

The Amish are a very close knit community who live largely in Pennsylvania, America. However, they have not always lived here. In 1845, due to unfair treatment, the Amish emigrated from Germany and Switzerland and settled together in America. They continue to live together closely, only marrying other Amish people to keep traditions alive, by their own unusual rules.

The Amish way of life is very different. They have many rules and guidelines that they live by; mostly about things they choose not to do. The Amish are very strict Christians (Anabaptist) and follow the Bible to the letter. The Amish live a simple lifestyle with no technology and very little input from the outside world. This means no cars, T.V, modern clothing, no school or typical way of life as we know it.

What happens at Rumspringa?

There is a time in Amish life when they experience all that non-Amish people know as every day. This time is called Rumspringa. In this time you leave your Amish community and live in the 'English' world (this is how the Amish refer to the rest of the world). It is a rite of passage that every Amish person experiences. It happens during the teenage years and its goal is to help you decide whether to continue within the Amish lifestyle and become baptised or to leave.

What happens on Rumspringa?

While on Rumspringa you can live the life that you may typically have had were you not Amish. You can have pastimes, wear what you like, drive a car, attend schools/ courses, mix with non-Amish people, have a phone and so on. It's a completely different lifestyle. It's very important for the young Amish person to experience this as once they are baptised into the Amish community they are turning their back on that lifestyle forever.

What decision do they have to make?

If you choose not to return and become baptised you will be shunned from the only community you have ever really known. Shunned refers to the community turning their back on you. From this point there will be little or no contact with your old life. This makes the decision very difficult! It is a big decision for someone in their teens but every Amish person goes through Rumspringa so they will be prepared to make the decision.

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But what happens if they aren't happy in the non-Amish world? What happens if it seems great at first but the fast pace becomes too much? The Amish person will return to the Amish and be baptised. It is an adult baptism so it involves the person being submerged under water and washing away your old life. From this point the person is Amish. They will live the Amish lifestyle and keep Amish traditions alive. Interestingly more than 80% of Amish young people return.