

Servas Canada

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1. Canada – US Servas Vancouver Conference

The first-ever Servas Canada, and the first-ever joint US Servas and Servas Canada, conference will be held this coming August 5 – 7, 2005 in Vancouver, BC. Attached you will find a preliminary brochure and the conference registration form in 'pdf' format. To open the 'pdf' files you will need Adobe Reader. Go to <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html> to download your free copy.

A conference web page on www.canada.servas.org is currently being built. It will contain the attached information, and will be updated as more details are defined. The registration fee is C\$185 until May 15, 2005 and C\$230 thereafter. Registration covers the program and all meals from Friday supper through Sunday lunch (including salmon barbecue and celebration on Saturday night). Some optional activities will have additional modest cost.

Housing is handled separately, with a range of options on the UBC campus at special rates ranging from C\$25 per night for a single room with shared bath to suites capable of accommodating two couples or a family. To book your accommodation, call 604-822-1000. An on-line accommodation registration link will be set up on the web site, as well as a form that can be completed and faxed.

Connect with us in Vancouver! Vancouver-area hosts are already gearing up for the event. Sign up early and save \$45! Please send any questions to Penny Pattison at 250-382-9190 or via email at canada@servas.org. Make your plans to attend today!!

2. Travelling in Canada

If you are traveling on business in Canada (or anywhere in the world, for that matter), then Servas is not really the way to do it.

The purpose of our organization is to share our way of life, our values and ideas. This takes time and commitment. As anyone in business knows, work-related trips are not usually undertaken for leisure and pleasure but tend to call for full concentration and dedication and can therefore be exhausting.

In addition, business meetings often start early and end late! To think of going to a family, even one near your business venue, after a grueling day's work implies a false conception of the mission of Servas. How can anyone spend an evening in meaningful conversation with a Servas family after a long day of meetings? The short time spans available and required energy levels make it next to impossible to experience visits of value and meaning.

As hosts, we know so well that the host may go to a good deal of trouble planning for a Servas visitor, and so deserves your enthusiasm.

So please, when on traveling on business, use appropriate accommodation and keep Servas for the times when you have more time and energy.

3. Managing Email expectations

Servas Canada is run completely by volunteers, and has no physical office. With the advent of widespread email use, we have created a generic email address that is always monitored (in French and English). However, monitoring does not guarantee a response within 24 or even 48 hours. All work is done on a 'best efforts' basis. So please try to plan ahead, and be patient when you contact us!

4. An outstanding member of Servas International

(extract from founder Bob Luitweiler's historical account of Servas International)

Antonie Fried, a teacher of English, devoted her whole life to SI. Judging by the length of the letters she wrote all over the world for Servas, she must have spent every waking hour on Servas.

Building was one of her strengths. She was able to start secret Servas hospitality networks in Eastern Europe at a time when the Communists would have stopped them instantly. In fact the Polish group became so successful they decided to become official. Besides speaking perfect English, Antonie also spoke Spanish and developed many contacts in South America. She also started groups in Africa.

She was the hardest worker in SI and encouraged all branches to be democratic. Her hard work expanded the international program into many parts of the world.

5. Servas Host Experiences

"A surprise" from Elizabeth Shefrin, a Vancouver member of Servas Canada

I was recently flying from Montreal to my home in Vancouver and was seated on the plane next to a woman and her small daughter. We started chatting and it turned out that her husband and older daughter were also on the plane. They were an Australian family on one of those several month world tours Australians love to take. Further conversation brought out that they were Servas members.

The next day they would be on their way to Victoria BC to stay with friends but had not yet found a place to stay that night in Vancouver. So of course I brought them home with me, and was delighted to have them.

I thought of this story when I read the statistics about 6000 Servas travelers worldwide. What are the odds of meeting up in this way?

Another coincidence from Lesley Régnier, Montreal coordinator

I was helping out a friend who does Bed and Breakfast for a living. Last summer, she overbooked and asked me if I could help out. It was a charming young couple from Toronto and, in view of their plans to really explore Québec and spend time getting to know it as a province, I talked to them about Servas.

"Well," they admitted, "we are actually members and plan to travel with Servas in part, but we thought that in Montreal we would stay in other accommodation and go out to see the life and nightlife of the city without having any obligations to hosts." Then they agreed to come back and stay with me as Servas travelers on the way back – which they DID!

What a small world is Servas!

Do YOU have similar Servas stories to tell? Please let us know and we will be glad to publish them in future newsletters.

6. Servas Traveler Feedback

Here are two letters received by Servas Canada. These are the reasons why we continue to volunteer our time for Servas.

Dear Penny:

We have heard back from several of our hosts in NZ, and some are planning to come here and some have invited us back for another visit. How lucky we are to have found Servas!! I have always maintained that if there were more of this kind of exchange, especially among those who form governments and the military, there would be no war. But this is a beginning; some of these exchanges in a small way will make a difference in the future.

Thank you for all the work you do to make this possible for people like ourselves.

*Cheers,
Donnie*

Hi Penny,

Thanks for your letter re the Servas donation. I am glad you received it. I stayed with 3 Servas hosts in Rome and it was a great experience. One of the Servas hosts was Maria Carla Claudi. She attended the international conference in Spain, and while there, took 10 days to walk 328 km on the pilgrims' way to Santiago. I saw her slides and they were excellent.

*Yes, we in Canada are very fortunate. That is one thing that travel teaches us! I am very grateful for the Servas experience when I travel. It is so wonderful being able to talk to the local people and see how they live and what they think about things.
Thank you for your work within the Servas Organization!*

*Best wishes,
Joan*