

Servas Canada

Newsletter 5 - July 2001

IN THIS ISSUE

- [From the Editor](#)
 - [Your Servas Team: Key Contacts](#)
 - [News from Canada](#)
 - [News from the World](#)
 - [Notes from the National Secretary](#)
 - [Notes from the North America Area Coordinator](#)
 - [Worth pondering...](#)
 - [Pictures and background news](#)
-

From the Editor

Summer has arrived at last here in the foothills of the Rockies, and your newsletter editor finally has time to sift through the many comments, ideas, and submissions that have been received since newsletter #4. That issue was sent by email in December 2000 and a few months later via regular mail to those hosts for whom we did not have email addresses. Keeping addresses organized and updating them regularly is an ongoing task, primarily handled by Jim Leask. If you are receiving this newsletter in the wrong language or would prefer to have it arrive by regular mail, he is the one to contact (see '[Key Contacts](#)' below).

This July issue has a selection of ideas and reports and information that I hope you will find useful and entertaining. To see pictures, or to read more extensive travel descriptions, visit the Servas Canada website <http://canada.servas.org>. Our webmaster Alvaro Barba is assembling an archive of 'memorable visits' and would be happy to hear your stories! The website also has links to Servas International, including the international newsletter.

To all hosts and travellers--have a safe and rewarding summer!

Jamie Syer

YOUR SERVAS TEAM: KEY CONTACTS

Gerry Staring, National Secretary

Benny Beattie, Assistant National Secretary (Youth Involvement)

Elizabeth Sebestyen, Treasurer

Lesley Regnier, Peace Secretary

Sandy Yudin, Foreign Host Lists

Penny Pattison

Michael Johnson, Past National Secretary, North America Area Coordinator

Sylvia Krogh, Past Assistant National Secretary

Jim Leask

Jamie Syer, Newsletter Editor

NEWS FROM CANADA

Reed Early, Kelowna, British Columbia, writes:

A couple of years ago we received a form letter from some hosts in Quebec asking if there were any western Canadian Servas hosts looking to visit there. We had been contemplating a trip to France, which was out of our price range, so we replied that we might be interested. They turned out to be a family similar to ours (two kids, university employed, liberal types) and were hoping to exchange houses. Kelowna sounded fine to them and Baie Comeau was OK with us. We spoke on the phone a few times to arrange dates, times, key transfer etc. We bought tickets not knowing how all this would work out. Would they feed our cat, water our lawn, maintain our pool? Could this really be true?

In the end it was a most successful trip. We met at the Vancouver airport, went to a hotel, had a meal together, gave them our car and house keys and directions to our house. Their car was at the Quebec City airport when we arrived, complete with gifts for our kids! Not only that, we exchanged camping gear so we could camp while we drove to Baie Comeau. Their neighbors welcomed us like we were old friends and our kids got to play with their toys, games, bicycles while we were there. We went on an extended camping trip around the Gaspé with their minivan while they took a trip through southern Alberta with our car. It was mutually beneficial.

If you are ever looking for a good vacation--where you get to live in a real house, try Homex. Just add "Homex" to your host listing and see what offers come your way.

Ruth Scoullar writes:

I was particularly interested in the feature article in Newsletter #4 by James Kim about The Big European Get Together in England last summer, and the responses from young people in regard to Servas. As a host and traveller I know the importance of letting hosts know

when you will be arriving. One difficulty in making definite plans was that, when flying standby, we didn't know exactly what flight we would be on. We have been fortunate in not having to wait until another flight but we travelled when more seats were available. What a thrill it is to receive messages from our host in Buenos Aires, Argentina, who calls us her Canadian grandparents; or when a couple of travellers from France called us Christmas Day just as they would their own family!

Beverly Corbett, St. Catharines, Ontario, writes:

A few years ago we had a University student from Japan living with us. One day the phone rang and a Servas member from Germany, also a University student, wished to stay with us. He was returning to Germany and had not yet seen Niagara Falls. When he arrived we asked our Japanese student if she would like to join us on our trip to The Falls. She did. As we were travelling along the highway, I could not help but think this is what Servas is all about: my husband a pilot in the RCAF during WW2 driving our car with one Japanese and one German in the back seat.

Eve Alexander, Vancouver, writes:

There are about 50 Servas host families in the greater Vancouver area. How do members who belong to the same organization that really has no formal meeting times and no definite agenda meet to socialize and discuss Servas concerns?

We solve the problem beautifully with pot-luck suppers in host family homes, one in the spring and one in the fall. We follow a similar format no matter who is the host. We all bring whatever food we individually decide we would like to bring. I don't know how it happens but it always seems to work with a good balance of main courses and desserts without any other instructions! After the meal we all take turns telling the group about our Servas experiences and discussing any problems we may have. There is lots of time to chat informally with other hosts. Often hosts bring travellers who happen to be with them that weekend.

We also exchange visits with Seattle hosts. Last spring they came here and this spring we are to go there. We have often looked longingly at the host lists for the interior of BC and Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands and have thought how wonderful it would be to exchange visits with them, but none of us has ever followed through on trying to plan such visits. Then there are members in the far north of Canada. Is there anyone out there who would like to visit us? Or to be visited?

And don't forget those Servas mugs!

Servas Canada mugs are still available. They are white, with a blue SERVAS logo in French and English on each side. Although the mug design is a little different, you can see a version of our new logo on the Servas Canada website.

The cost is \$7.00 per mug (including shipping), if purchased in groups of 6 to a single mailing address. For any order that is not a multiple of 6 to one address, there is an additional \$5.00 'odd quantity' charge. If anyone is planning a Servas gathering, it might be a fine idea to phone around beforehand and pull together a group order to save the extra charge!

Orders indicating the number of mugs and the address to which they should be sent, with a cheque made out to Servas Canada, should be mailed to:

Penny Pattison
1442 Brooke St.
Victoria, BC V8S 1M3
canada@servas.org

Please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery. If you have any questions, Penny can also be reached at (250) 382-9190.

NEWS FROM THE WORLD

Carl and Roseann Branston write:

SERVAS PERU: A MUST TO DO!

We are in Peru for an extended period of time, volunteering in a small pueblo on the north coast. We have had the wonderful opportunity to visit with Servas hosts during our time away from volunteering.

Elizabeth, our first host, was a real inspiration. She faces life's challenges from a wheelchair due to childhood polio. In addition to her profession as a social worker, she is actively involved with the Lions Club as well as many other community outreach projects. Although only Elizabeth's name appears in the host book, her mother, sister and brother also participate. We enjoyed the time in their house in Piura and their beach home in Colan. Among other delicacies, they prepared two typical dishes for us: Ceviche (fresh raw fish marinated in lime juice) and tomares verde (green corn dumplings wrapped & cooked in corn leaves). The family has deep roots in Peru and shared their love of their country with us.

Another terrific Servas host was a family in Cusco. Their home is situated on a hill with a beautiful vista of the Andes and Cusco. Besides their professional careers, they run a bakery from a building attached to their home. We were able to watch the production of the typical flat bread of the area made in a stone, wood-fired oven. They are also involved in a project to preserve an ancient Inca city near Cusco. They have prepared a proposal to present to the local government and UNESCO to make the site an International Heritage area and protect it from deterioration. We are impressed with their determination & energy towards this project. Our host was born on a farm in the sacred valley and shared his vast knowledge of the Inca culture and Quechua language with us. We look forward to future visits with hosts in the Arequipa and Iquitos area.

Well in advance to leaving Canada we wrote letters to the hosts and received warm welcoming responses. Upon arriving in Peru we followed up with phone calls and emails confirming hosting dates. Peru has an impressive number of hosts considering that they are

required to pay US\$20 per year to be members, in a country where wages of some professionals are US\$200 per month. Servas in Peru is a highlight for us .We would encourage others to experience Peruvian culture in this way.

The SERVAS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CAMP PROGRAM is an annual event offering unforgettable experiences to participants 18 and over.

Italy July 1-8, 2001
 August 12-19, 2001
Contact Luca Milanese

France July 7- 29, 2001
 August 4-26, 2001
Contact Bertrand Bailleul

Japan July, TBA
Contact Bertrand Bailleul

Nepal September, TBA
Contact Bibendra Pradhanga

Are you travelling and 'out of touch'?

Sign up with www.hotmail.com or www.yahoo.com (or other web mail servers) before you leave home, then catch up with the 'real world' at an internet café. See a world-wide list at: www.netcafes.com.

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL SECRETARY

INTERVIEWERS: The Gatekeepers of Servas

Since Servas began in 1948, it has spread to 134 countries. Furthering peace through meeting people of other cultures has universal appeal but the volunteer aspect of Servas is

special. To maintain this status, the role of the volunteer interviewer is key.

To be part of Servas, either as a traveller or a host, everyone must go through an interview. The Servas principles are based on the "Golden Rule". The interviewer seeks to ensure the applicant agrees to and will abide by these principles. For travellers, a primary objective is to have consideration for their hosts. Hosts are welcoming new Servas friends into their home under the terms of Servas. No hosts should have their hospitality abused.

Direct expenses of a prospective Servas traveller include a passport-sized photo and \$50. for each adult (over 18) if travelling out of the country or \$25. if travelling only in Canada. If a traveller applicant has been a host for over one year, the costs are reduced to \$25. and \$15. respectively. A deposit is required for the host list of each country to be visited which is fully refunded when it is returned in good condition. These payments are made in cash. The interviewer may accept a cheque but it will be payable to the interviewer so that it can be cleared before the finished Letter of Introduction is issued. An application at least six weeks before the departure date enables the interviewer to finalize the Letter of Introduction and the traveller to contact hosts in the country they will visit.

When travelling in a less fortunate country, travellers can help their hosts by contributing food, or funds to purchase food. Anywhere of course, flowers and taking your host(s) out for dinner are always appreciated.

Detailed information about the responsibilities of the Servas traveller and the Servas host are available from any interviewer.

Interviewers should have trained backups to assist during vacations. Besides the screening process, the interviewer collects the fees and deposits from the traveller. These funds are the main revenue for meeting Servas administration costs in Canada.

Most interviewers have many years of Servas experience both as hosts and travellers. As Servas expands in Canada and the number of travellers grows, more interviewers will be required. Our hats are off to these intrepid volunteers who are the front line in maintaining the integrity of Servas.

Gerry Staring, National Secretary

NOTES FROM THE NORTH AMERICA AREA COORDINATOR

The role of Area Coordinator is primarily a link between North America Servas and the rest of the Servas world. Often Area Coordinators exchange ideas among themselves. I keep in touch with executive committee members and the US and Canada National Secretaries almost weekly.

I try to look at Servas as a family with limited resources. I think it is only fair to share what we have and I have encouraged others to do the same. Specifically I have facilitated the funding by Servas Canada of some projects such as: printing and mailing the Central America host list; maintaining the Mexico host list; funding a meeting of Area Coordinators on July 14th in Bangkok, including full conference funding of a few delegates from other countries.

I believe it is important not just to connect people, but that each of us has a responsibility to help Servas thrive, which often requires money. To that end, I have advocated that we reflect on the fairness of the following regarding Servas countries:

1. Some have no computers or email, others have the very best.
2. Some have no newsletter and can't afford to mail the Servas International News, others have four a year.
3. Some keep a lot of money from host list deposits, (lists that are sent to them free).
4. Some fund several members from their country to attend conferences, others can't send even one.
5. Some in wealthy countries charge fees so low that they haven't enough money to pay their own costs and need to ask SI for funds.

To improve Servas I suggest that:

1. we elect an ombudsman to oversee any irregularities or complaints world-wide;
2. the executive committee consult more with National Secretaries between conferences, taking a vote on major decisions by mail and email. (Including the site and time of year of the international conference);
3. all countries be required to personally interview new members and hold elections for National Secretary;
4. all Area Coordinators be elected by the country he or she represents, approved by all at the international conference;
5. at all important meetings, a neutral minute-taker be present, and perhaps a neutral or rotating chairperson.

I invite all members, especially those in North America, to send me their ideas and comments. I will do my best to represent this continent and make your views known to the rest of the world.

Michael Johnson, North America Area Coordinator

WORTH PONDERING...

To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for travelling souls.
--'Song of the Open Road', by Walt Whitman

If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them.
--Francis Bacon

Travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.

--Miriam Beard

Visit the Servas Canada website for supplementary PICTURES, BACKGROUND NEWS, and MORE TRAVELLERS' REPORTS, in particular, part of a fascinating diary by Pierre Mercille about **his bicycle trip from Portugal to Sicily**-- coming soon!

Submissions are welcome for the next issue of this newsletter.

Please send your news, letters, comments and photos (.jpg format) to

Jamie Syer, R.R. 2, Sundre, AB T0M 1X0

Copyright © 2000 - 2003 Servas Canada