

PRIVATE HOME-STAYS AND EXCHANGE STUDENT VISITS TO FRANCE

Preamble

Over the years Annie & David Bancroft of Cpederf have helped a good number of students of French find home-stay accommodation in France, usually for relatively short periods, but in some exceptional cases for periods of up to six months. In many cases these initial stays have led to long-term friendships and frequent re-visiting and exchange holidays.

Many teachers certainly, but perhaps also parents and students, are aware that it is often more difficult to arrange home-stay accommodation and longer-term exchange visits with France than with other European countries, where such visits and exchanges are seen as being very much a part of the educational scene where foreign-language learning is concerned.

These difficulties have a variety of explanations, the most obvious being the rigidity of the French educational system, the reluctance of parents (and teachers!) to interrupt in any way the smooth running of the school year which would, they fear, prejudice the chances of success of their offspring, the relatively formal structure of family routine during the school year.

There is also the problem of accommodation : living-space in French apartments and houses tends, in general, to be much less generous than that in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US...

Our main concern is to ensure that any student requesting a home-stay can be “matched” as closely as possible to a family in France. This is why we request that as the first stage in the process you complete a “Student Information Form” which we will email you as soon as you officially register your interest.

Accommodation

Living-space will inevitably limit the number of families able to offer a suitable home-stay welcome.

We insist that students being welcomed into families will have their own bedroom, even if they share family bathroom facilities.

It is understood that they are taken in by the host families on a full-board basis, even if some meals are taken in schools!

Attendance at schools

If it is relatively easy to arrange for a home-stay student to make occasional visits to the school with his/her correspondent member of the family, **it is less easy** to organize regular attendance at classes unless the level of French is adequate. This is readily explained by the fact that the French educational programme is extremely punishing, the rhythm of academic activities are tightly controlled by the teachers (claiming, with considerable justification, that there is insufficient time in the school year to cover the full syllabus), the progressive assessment and examination procedures are highly rigorous, and that the whole system in general is one of the most competitive secondary school systems in the world!

It should also be remembered that sporting and cultural activities do not generally feature as part of the school education process: these are arranged by families outside school time.

As a general guide it would be true to say that cooperation is easier with private schools than with state schools, but bear in mind also that “private schools” (mostly functioning within the catholic educational framework) are very much closer to “state schools” than in the anglo-saxon context. Teachers are paid by the state, and school fees are minimal by comparison with private schools in other countries. Nevertheless, for attendance at a private school on a relatively regular basis, a small contribution to fees should be anticipated. You do not have to be a member of the catholic church to be made welcome into a French private school!!

Where?

Experience has taught us that Paris is not the ideal place for family-stay arrangements. We prefer to be associated with the smaller towns and cities, where the pace of life is less extreme, and the welcome tends to be much more human, generous, and sincere. Our principal criterion has always been to liaise with families for whom the whole idea of home-stay or exchange visits appeals because of what the experience has to offer on the human and cultural levels : they will take in a student from time to time, but not as a permanent element of their activities (ie they are not in it for the money!).

This is why in the first instance we do not make any specific promises, but rather try to find the most appropriate family given your profile, no matter where in France. Whenever possible, we will try and propose alternative suggestions so that you do have a choice, but we believe it is the nature of the family situation we can offer you, and not the geographical location, which should be the essential criterion. We can always make arrangements for you to visit other places in France before leaving!

When?

Although in theory it is possible for us to find you a suitable family at any period of the year, **we recommend that you consider coming** in the first instance between September and May. ie. Outside the French summer school holiday period and before the examination season starts.

Our role

Before you arrive, we will ensure that regular and close email contact is established between you and your host family in France, so that you do not arrive as a stranger in the family! We will be ready at all times to facilitate contact between you and your host family, and you can contact us at any time by email or phone. While in France, you will be able to get in touch with us at any time for help, information, advice, or for any emergency action you wish us to take on your behalf.

Helping you with all your arrangements in France

Our services are available to make all the arrangements for your stay in France, both before and after your home-stay. Meeting you at the airport, making arrangements for hostel or hotel accommodation in Paris before going on to meet your host family, providing travel passes for getting around Paris, pre-booking anything you might want to visit, making your train reservations, showing you where to eat well but inexpensively, introducing you to the great Paris department stores (most of them are classed historical monuments so worth a visit anyway!)....You name it, we can certainly help you organize it!

Costs

These will obviously be determined according to the requirements of individuals depending on the length of stay, travel arrangements within France which need to be made, any school or sports association fees for example which may be necessary, but as a general guide :

Official registration costs (on submission of our Registration Form) : 50 euros

Home-stay arrangements participation (in cases where no exchange visit is contemplated) :
210 euros per week

Exchange visits : a single fee of 200 euros will be charged when an offer is accepted

Other incidental costs – to be charged according to what you ask us to organize!

Teachers or Parents

If you are a French teacher and would like to make enquiries and explore possibilities on behalf of one (or more!) of your students, please do not hesitate to contact us by email and we will do our best to help you! **The same applies to parents** of a son or daughter whom you think might benefit from such a visit or exchange.

Registration

If you feel you would like to take advantage of the home-stay and exchange services we provide, we invite you make contact us by email to register your interest and to outline what you have in mind. We will send you by return our initial reaction to your proposal as well as the official Registration and Student Information Forms should you wish proceed :

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