

TRAVEL REPORTS - ASIA, PACIFIC

Kyrgyzstan

In a SI news we read a enthusiastic article about Servas Kyrgyzstan, which was making good advertisement for the country. Pim visited Uzbekistan in 2002 and in the meantime studied the Russian language for 2 years, so what could stop us from visiting this country ? Nothing actually. We found a Dutch travel agency who advertised for a spectacular trekking (www.snp.nl), and off we went. The trip looked all the more promising because we had e-mail contract with Devendra Pal Singh, the initiator from Bishkek. Devendra originally comes from Agra ('Taj Mahal'), but lives in the Kyrgyz capital. The day we arrived, we met him at our hotel and we had a nice meeting. He very much liked our visit and we had to meet with the other hosts, Ludmilla and Dinara. We had a wonderful dinner at Ludmilla's place, all Kyrgyz food, course after course. The 14 day trekking in the mountains where terrific, what a beautiful environment with horses, cows, sheep everywhere even on 3.500 metres high. And then you see the famous 'yurta' (mobile homes where shepherds families live) scattered around you.

Because Pim could speak (some) Russian, contact was easy to make with the children and their parents. They invite you into their home, and you get some 'qimiz/airag'. You have to be careful though when you are not used to the taste! With our dictaphone we taped all sort of sounds/voices etc. This makes every trip really wonderful: when you come home and you listen to the voices, you are immediately back on 'holiday'.

After the trip, we had another visit with Devendra. He told us he had a conversation with Servas International about starting up a 'Central Asia Servas centre'. We really hope he will achieve this, he is such a dynamic, inspiring person and Central Asia is fantastic for travelling and meeting all sorts of interesting people.

Pim Veeger/Marijke, Zeekant, Holland

A Peace trip to Pakistan

(This is not a Servas article but was submitted as being of the Servas spirit. It is quite long. This is the final paragraph. The rest will go on the website.)

To all, I would recommend coming over to Pakistan, meeting people, talking to them interacting and getting to know this place better. We carry a lot of myths about Pakistan as Indians, and it is only when we interact more, talk more at the people level that we can have a brighter, less bitter and friendly future. Be upfront about the fact that you are Indian, be courteous, and you would experience a sea of affection and hospitality, an experience that would forever be unforgettable.

Deepak Sapra, India

Japan - a mix

These notes are taken from a Travel Report.

1. Nice interesting family, very pleasant, expressive interests such as classical guitar, a good Japanese family experience.
2. Musicians really more than farmers, highly recommended, very delightful hosts.
3. Railway engineer doing his own house building, still unfurnished. Very nice family, very helpful. Unfortunately I was too embarrassed to mention our British railways! (*Derek works with the railways*)
4. Rather bizarre. I did not meet the family but was booked into a hotel after agreeing that I would be hosted.
5. A music teacher but with difficult home circumstances.
6. Hosted at very short notice. Very pleasant area to live in. Very interesting helpful hosts.

I would advise anyone going to Japan to phone hosts rather than send emails, contrary to the guidance in the host list. I only received one reply to the many mails that I sent. I found the response very positive when phoning. In spite of the couple of problems encountered this in no way spoiled my trip to Japan. The other hosts whom I met/stayed with more than compensated for this. I would recommend using Servas Japan.

Derek White, Ipswich, England

New Zealand

- Marvellous as a first Servas experience - a super host, very hospitable, helpful friendly etc, etc. Living in a multicultural area.
- A pleasant lady living in an attractive suburb.

New Zealand is a very friendly and beautiful country. Public transport is good, especially shuttles, though not so many trains as in the past. B & Bs and hotels also helpful and friendly. Plenty of internet cafés. Generally cheaper than UK. Similar problems re Maoris as Indians in US i.e. some resentment among 'whites' at privileges for them. Sadly unemployment in smaller towns as industry moves out and centralises.

Rosemary Jones, Portchester, England