



Servas Monthly News 38



September 2008

21 September 2008?

What were you thinking on 21 September 2008?

What did you do on 21 September 2008?

How did you react with people?

Where did you go?

Why?

Looking back over the years that Servas Monthly News has been produced I seem to be asking the same question each year at this time of the year?

How many people know what I am talking about?

This, my final year, I am not giving the answer. I am waiting for it from the Servas community. Everyone should know the importance of 21 September 2008.

And to add to that, what is important about 2 October? Again as Servas members everyone should know.

Next month I want to fill one particular page with the answers. Perhaps if I get no answers I will leave that page blank, to emphasise what people should know.

Editor query concerning finance

The **editor post** is still up for grabs as from next GA. One point to clarify is **finance**. An enquiry from one member seemed to think this was a paid post. The answer is **NO**. Like all SI posts this work is entirely **voluntary**. There are no payments for services. Costs have to be kept to a minimum to ensure that there is enough money for the printing, packaging and posting. I have managed to bring the packaging down to the cost of 8 to 10 rolls of packing tape. All other packing materials are re-used envelopes, boxes, bags. eg: a number of fairly cheap cereals boxes in Britain are just right for packing 40 A4 newsletters. So those are the cereals that I consume when packing!! Postage has been a business deal with Royal Mail, who provide the sacks for the larger items.

Contact

We welcome articles coming to Servas Monthly News. We do not guarantee any article, part of it will be published. This depends on the theme for the month along with other articles available for publication.

Preferred method of contact is email at:
newsletter@servas.org or jgiffould@aol.com

Please make sure that Servas: Monthly News is part of the subject heading. If the email address is not recognised it may get deleted before being read.

Pictures

I much appreciate the pictures sent. However when sending please consider the size and shape into which it should fit. Composite pictures are often lovely. However they usually do not fit the page and have to be split. Also consider the resolution of the pictures. If they are too high a resolution then they fill up a large amount of memory and make the newsletter hard to send. *JG, Editor*

Have you checked your emails?

Comments about emails come up regularly. About this time every year I seem to be writing about them.

A number of **travellers** round the world have been complaining that they send emails to hosts and get no reply. There are many reasons for this. Following are some of them:

- o the host is away with no access to internet (yes this is possible! I welcome 2 weeks away with no intention of accessing the internet, it is a holiday!)
- o the host's computer is broken
- o accessing internet is very expensive and is only done perhaps once a week - many people are on dial up
- o the only access is an internet cafe which is open at inconvenient hours
- o the email address has been given as emergency and NOT as the main contact
- o the email is not recognised by the server and is in the spam box.
- o it is an old email address no longer used
- o do not reply to bulk recipient emails
- o

So do not expect a reply, be glad when you get one.

And as Michael Johnson of Canada comments - use the telephone. However I disagree with him that that is the cheapest way of contact.

And **Hosts**: Please reply even if only to say 'No'.

Contents: 2008

1. Editorial
2. News - Youth in Istanbul
3. Youth in Istanbul continued
4. Meetings around the world
5. Travellers tales - Uganda to UK
6. Country tales - Belgium and Lux, Sentierinseme
7. Servas at UN, Final Goodbye to Bob Lutweiler
8. Syle, To Mexico from Poland
9. Peace, Blog, Google, Couchsurfing
10. Youth in Oz, detail
11. Youth in Oz, detail continued
12. Youth in Oz, registration
13. Youth in Oz, registration continued

Servas Youth Conference, Istanbul 19-26 July 2008

The youth conference in Istanbul was a most remarkable event. We enjoyed a variety of workshops on world issues as well as many cultural, sport and recreational activities, including two day trips to the old town of Istanbul and the Izmit Mountains.

Some of the issues discussed on the workshops were:

- **SYLE (Servas Youth Language Experience)**

The SYLE is a language exchange programme through which a Servas young member (18- 30+) is hosted by Servas families for approximately a month. The SYLE's goals are language skills development, cultural immersion and tourism discovery.

I had the opportunity to share my wonderful SYLE Brittany 07 experience on this workshop. You can read the full report at:

http://servasyouth.org/newsstuff/index.php?con=true&con_cod=00170

My experience served to clarify how the SYLE works and to highlight its potential. Many people in the audience showed motivation to become SYLE hosts and travellers. They also seemed keen on exploring new possibilities like a "SYLE Youth2" programme for middle aged/retired Servas travellers.

I hope Venezuela will eventually become a SYLE host country, in which case I am happy to be in charge of its coordination.

- **Practical Peace (International Volunteering)**

The term *practical peace* was introduced by Ann Greenhough, Youth Development Coordinator. It refers to practical ways in which hosts and travellers can use Servas network to promote peace in their communities. *Practical peace* encourages hosts not only to offer travellers hospitality, but also to provide volunteering opportunities in their local communities.

An example of a *practical peace* project is my volunteering with PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees & Asylum Seekers) in Leeds, United Kingdom. This project is possible thanks to the coordination and unconditional support of Ann Greenhough and David Asher, as well as other families, like Debra Pearlman and Steve Keevash.

PAFRAS is a charity legal, material and moral support to refugees and destitute asylum seekers. Hungry and homeless, far from family and friends, unable to communicate in English yet deprived of access to education, banned from working yet unable to claim social benefits, their every day is a struggle for survival. Having been victims of violence, persecution and poverty in their countries, they cannot go back either.

PAFRAS operates with a small number of employees and its budget relies entirely on donations, therefore the help of volunteers is invaluable. My contribution to PAFRAS is, thus, highly appreciated. Needless to say, the experience of befriending refugees and asylum seekers, and working with Christine Majid, PAFRAS Project Manager and her team, has transformed my life. It has made me more sensitive and aware of the reality of war-torn countries and the suffering of its people. It has enabled me to develop new operational skills and boosted my confidence and creativity. Working with PAFRAS has given me a deeper understanding on how the voluntary and charity sector work. (An article on my full experience Servas-PAFRAS coming soon).

- **Servas "Added Value"**

Servas population is ageing and it cannot rely on a young generation to take over. Is this a consequence of Servas *modus operandi*? Does Servas need to evolve and adapt to the actual times?

This issue raised the following questions (1) what *added value* does Servas offer in comparison to other hospitality networks? And (2) how can youth registration /participation be increased? (1) As for Servas *added value*, participants said that:

- Servas offers more than hospitality and tourism; it offers a family and a home anywhere in the world.
- Servas experience is not about where you travel, but rather about whom you meet and what you do.
- Servas enables like-minded people to network, exchange ideas and resources, and support causes related to World Peace.

(2) As for the question on how to *increase youth registration*, participants reflected primarily on what discouraged young people from joining Servas. It was concluded that the Servas process was slow, costly and complicated in comparison to other travel networks such as *Hospitality Club* or "Couch Surfing" where people can register on-line anywhere, anytime.

Examples of what puts young people off are:- making bank deposits or sending cheques to receive host lists, waiting for them to come through the post or having to go pick them up and -in developing countries- having to wait months for stamps and updated host lists.

Registration and host list cost was also perceived as a discouragement for young people.

It was also mentioned that young people tend to discover Servas when they are already travelling and cannot go back to their countries for an interview. Furthermore, asking them to be hosts, and not just travellers complicates the picture, as most young people live on student accommodation or with non-Servas families.

To face up to these challenges participants suggested:

- Computerising hosts lists and grant safe/confidential access to them over the Internet.
 - Allowing young people to be interviewed anywhere in the world, as long as they come recommended by an active Servas member.
- Enabling young people to join Servas as travellers and *day hosts* (re-affirming the value and importance of *day hosting*).

Musical Animation

Another activity I had the pleasure of joining in was the musical animation. In the evenings, we had joyful musical moments, including Turkish singing and dancing, led by Ozgue Karadenizli, Tugrul Nakiboglu, Oguz Karadenizli and Ozgur Nevres. We also sang songs from around the world led by an enthusiastic international team including Fabrizio Sforna (Italy) and Tugrul Nakiboglu (Turkey) on the guitars, Minna Aho on the flute (Finland), Oguz Karadenizli on the drums (Turkey) and I with the vocal leadership.

On the last evening of the conference an *All Stars Night* was held. All participants performed to the best of their artistic abilities. I was given the chance to sing Venezuelan music accompanied with my *Cuatro* (traditional Venezuelan instrument). Also, as a symbol of friendship between Venezuela and Turkey, Ozgue Karadenizli and I sang the emblematic "Yolanda" by Pablo Milanés. On my part, I joined the Turkish music group for a beautiful traditional Turkish song.

News - Youth in Istanbul - 2

Day trips

Thanks to the support of Servas Belgium and Luxembourg, in the person of Rita Dessauvage, I had the opportunity to join the two day trips held during the conference.

On our first day trip we set for the discovery of the old town of Istanbul. First, we went on a spectacular sail through the Bosphorus Sea. Second, we went on a magical journey through Istanbul's historical sites: the Saint Sophia Museum, the Blue Mosque and the Basilica's Cistern. Finally, we ventured into the Egyptian Bazaar, where we were embraced by the sight, flavour and aroma of Turkish spices, seeds, tapestry, jewellery and colourful traditional clothing.

On our second day trip we went on an adventurous hike on the mountains of Izmit, by the Aegean Sea. We daringly explored nature and even went for a refreshingly cold splash in the waterfall.

After hiking we went to Nicaea, a remarkable town for its Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman history, including having hosted the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, the first Ecumenical council of the Christian church. To finish the trip we went to a renowned restaurant for a delicious traditional Turkish meal.

Finally, thanks to the support of Servas Britain and the personal contribution of Dianne Peterson (Singapore/USA) I had the pleasure of joining a Servas group that, at the end of the conference, travelled in Cappadocia and Antioch.

In Cappadocia we discovered the most striking rock formations and visited the caves inhabited by the early Christians.

In Antioch we explored the ancient city and its wild surroundings, including the mountains and the Mediterranean Sea! We were warmly hosted by Mehmet Ates and his family. Their friendliness and hospitality, as well as the experience of sleeping in a traditional mud-house and eating 100% organic food, made our stay truly delightful. You can have a look at the Ates mud-house at <http://www.toprakev.com>

Lastly, I would like to give my heartfelt congratulations to Servas Turkey for hosting such a marvellous event, and to express my sincere gratefulness to those who made it possible for me to join the Istanbul Youth Conference and its related trips...

These people and national groups are:
 Ann Greenhough and Jean Seymour - *Servas Britain*
 Youth Committee - *Servas Turkey*
 Rita Dessauvage - *Servas Belgium and Luxembourg*
 Diane Peterson from *Servas Singapore/USA*

My heart goes out to them in gratitude and friendship.
Magiarí Díaz, Youth Contact Servas Venezuela

..... and a few activities



1. Magiari in Cappadocia with two lovely Turkish school girls
2. Magiari enjoying the wonderful Turkish hospitality...
3. Singing one evening by the lake
4. A Servas friend teaches Magiari how to wear the scarf in the proper Turkish way...
5. In the traditional Turkish "hen night" women paint their hands with henna. We experienced the full bridal henna ritual and this is what our hands looked like the following morning!
6. Our ice-breaker activity at the beginning of the Istanbul conference.
7. Janek from Poland and Sally from Malaysia enjoying a day trip in Cappadocia

Meetings, Get together, Seeing each other

International Announcements of Servas Events

The Servas Joomla website has a community calendar under the heading "Calendar"
http://joomla.servas.org/component/option,com_events/Itemid,87/

If you have any events you would like posted, please contact Gary Sealey
gary.sealey@gmail.com

Get together in London

The venue is **Pontefract Castle**.
This is in Wigmore Street, London W1.
The nearest Underground Station is Bond Street.
Date: First Monday in every month.
Time: 6.30 onwards.
Look forward to seeing you all there.

Monthly Meeting in Brussels

Venue: Le Cirio in the centre of Brussels, next to La Bourse/De Beurs
Date: Last Tuesday of the month
Time: 6 pm to 8 pm .
Info belgium@servas.org
You are welcome to join us

Belgium & Luxembourg 2009

February 07, 2009: Servas Anniversary Dinner in Brussels
In the afternoon a presentation around the European integration might be organised or a walk inside Brussels related to integration of people in Brussels
SERVAS hosts in Brussels will welcome guests to give the possibility to stay overnight
On Sunday morning there will be a second walk after breakfast, for the people who stayed overnight in Brussels.
All interesting exhibitions will be announced in Brussels

May 03, 2009 : Leuven for all

Last day of 5-city fraternization (Leuven, Basel, Frankfurt, Utrecht, Strasbourg) is open for all people. Joint activities will be announced in due time

June 07th 2009, Transborder cycling tour between Belgium and France

Cycling tour starting and finishing in Péruwelz (Belgium)

SERVAS Weekend - date/place to be announced

Various activities will be organized including
- joint music and singing
- some presentations of travel stories of SERVAS travellers

More details will be announced in due time of the internet site of SERVAS-BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG.

Still other local activities are under construction and will also be announced in due time when dates and places will be known.

Join with others in Lyon, France

The venue is: Grand Café de la Soierie
This is in: 1 place des Tapis, Lyon
Date: First Thursday of the month
Time: 8 pm

US SERVAS

is pleased to announce the

ANNUAL SUMMER POTLUCK*

(*Not to be confused with the monthly Dinner Gatherings)

WHEN Sunday, October 12, 2008

WHERE Edith Sommer's Eicher Home, Palo Alto

Short reports on Turkey Youth Meeting in July and US Servas Annual Hudson River Valley meetings in September

FEATURED SPEAKER: RANDY MONT REYNAUD

Palo Alto resident, implementer of a work/feed program in rural Haiti. The program is called "Pigs Can Fly" and you can visit the website: <http://movingmountains.stanford.edu>.

Randy is a dynamic woman with a wonderful sense of humor.

Pot Luck Logistics

Saturday, October 12, 2008

1:00 Start of Program

(Please, this is not a drop-in)

Please bring a dish for Six

RSVP by October 10, 2008 to Edith Sommer
chitwox@comcast.net

2009 - Youth in Oz

See pages 10 - 13

MORE INFO:

www.servasyouth.org

CONTACT:

pablochufeni@yahoo.com

Servas Britain

01 May - 04 May 2009

Dalesbridge revisited for

60th Anniversary Celebrations and AGM

Meeting place in Paris, France

The venue is: **Le Vieux Châtelet**
This is in: 1 place du Châtelet, 75001 Paris
The nearest metro is: Châtelet
Date: Second Tuesday of month
Time: 7 pm to 9 pm

'Seoul to London' (the Asia-Europe Inter-Continent) Expedition

* *Period:* March 1, 2010 - August 31, 2010 (for 6 months)
* *Route:* From Seoul through Asia and Europe to London
* *Team:* 20 Servas members (10 Koreans and 10 multinationals)
* *Invitation:* The international Servas members are now being invited to join this expedition.
* *Contact:* Mr. Jong Soo Kim N.S. Servas Korea
servas@korea.com skype: kingofasia2 Cell: 82-16-830-2623
See Servas Monthly News February 2008 for full details.

Travellers Tales - Uganda to UK Part 4

Moses Kigozi continues his tale:

After staying at Ann and David's home for five nights, they tried to make arrangements for me to visit other Servas hosts in Britain. When I told them I had never seen the Sea, Ann made several calls to different hosts who lived near the sea. Rachel and Steve, (a couple) in Lancashire accepted me to stay with them for a couple of nights. On Thursday 9th Ann drove me to Leeds train station where I was to take a train to Silverdale.

I enjoyed so much traveling by train because we do not have passenger trains in Uganda. While traveling, I enjoyed the nature, I saw the sea for the first time. When I reached Silverdale, Rachel and Steve were waiting for me at the station. They drove me to their home in a small car which I later learnt was a very economical car. When we reached home it was a beautiful large house with a nice compound, in an area of outstanding natural beauty, in a quiet place away from city noise. After showing me around the house, I was later served with a drink. I was asked if I was not very tired to go and do bird watching, and see the red deer. I replied, I wanted to see the deer for the first time. Before going, we had a walk in the village and along the sea shore. I again noticed that also houses in this area were also constructed using stones including finishing. Its rare to see this in Uganda since we use blocks.

I was very lucky to meet Steve, a field studies leader and Rachel an Ex-academic. This gave me a chance



to get practical experience in many real things I was taught at school in geography 13 years ago. We had a walk to Silverdale shore and he explained to me the history and gave a geology lesson about the area. There was

no sea as we had our walk on the shore, Steve explained to me more about tides, "a regular rise and fall in the level of the sea caused by the pull of the sun and moon". This was a great opportunity for me to experience in reality, what I was taught at school 13 years ago. After we went back home to pick Rachel so that we could go and see the birds and the deer.

When we reached the scene, guides briefly told us about the place and how best we could see the deer and birds.



"Making a lot of noise drives away deer", the guide told us that in the past many people missed the seeing deer. I was lucky I saw the deer and different kinds of bird species. Some birds come and go according to the season and others stay throughout the year.



We went back home and had a delicious dinner with mutton. While eating we planned about where to go the following day. St. Bees was the place chosen. Steve had been briefly Kenya (Africa) he told us about the Masai tribe, who believe that cattle in this world belong to them alone. I also told him about the Karamojong tribe in northern Uganda who believe like the Masai. It was really a nice time to talk about political, economic and social issues in England and Africa. After dinner these friends were so kind to drive me back to Silverdale sea shore to see the tide coming in. It was a great experience!

The next day I was taken to St. Bees by train, I saw the Irish sea. While on a rocky shore, I was able to view Scotland in the distance, and Sellafield nuclear power



station. Steve taught me another geology lesson. At the beach, I failed to swim since the water was cold. I tried to put my feet in the Irish Sea.

Some people were swimming, Rachel told us they had swimwear which brought warmth.

We had our lunch at the restaurant near the beach, I tried chicken Muyone. People here live a different life style. I wondered about the caravan park at St Bees. It is a kind of small village where people stay in caravans,

instead of houses. When I was above the beach, It was interesting to see the surf in St. Bees bay. In the evening we had to take train back to



Silverdale. I was used to timetables unlike in Uganda where taxis do not move on a schedule.

To be continued next month, Moses Kigozi

Country Reports

Servas Belgium & Luxemburg Walk & Picnic in Oudenaarde, 7th September 2008

This year we gathered in Oudenaarde, a small, pleasant town situated in the south of East-Flanders on the banks of a river and on the edge of the Flemish Ardennes. Its glorious past was due to the flourishing tapestry industry of international fame and is still reflected in the late Gothic town hall that we visited.



We welcomed about 100 participants at this meeting day. The bad weather was not what we expected... and one of the walks became a real adventure and survival tour but we made it!! One of the walkers told that the mud on the way has strengthened the ties of friendship...

Coming back from the walk a wonderful surprise was waiting for us... We enjoyed the original pancakes made on a barbecue and a large buffet of home made cakes and deserts, a real success!



We had time to meet, to chat and to know each other better. We were happy with the presence of our members and their friends, the many families with small children and the participants of France and the Netherlands.

Thanks to all of you who participated and to the Denise and Freddy our hosts from Oudenaarde who made this meeting possible.

Rita Dessauvage, NS Belgium & Luxemburg

Sentierinsieme – Pathway Together – Route de l’Amitié – Miteinander unterwegs

We were about sixty Servas members at this annual meeting. From 4 to 6 July, we stayed at the Marie Christine Fort in Aussois situated at the gate of The Vanoise National Park, in the French Alps. We were coming from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Istanbul, Reunion Island and France, and we discovered this beautiful area together.



Sentierinsieme
Pathway Together
Route de l’Amitié
Miteinander unterwegs
Juillet 2008 -Aussois - France

We were happy to see our old friends again or to meet new ones. Then most of us went trekking in the park for four days with one of the two groups. We went up to 3000 meters of altitude discovering on the way marmots, ibexes, chamois, which are protected animals inside the park, as well as sumptuous landscapes with lakes, glaciers and Vanoise summits.

All this time has been favourable to laughing, singing, talking and knowing each other better...

Many thanks to the French team that organised this meeting. We are looking forward to the next one in 2009 that will be organised by our Italian friends.

François Marseille

Servas at the UN, Comments

NGO Village, Paris, 30 08 08



A glorious hot sunny day in central Paris at l'Hôtel de Ville. The square, cordoned off, has 10 small marquees some with displays in them. Madame la Mairie has just finished her introductory speech and you appear with a Servas bag on your shoulder. What would you do?

My choice was to ask to use one of the spare tables.

The NGO (Non-Governmental Organisations) Village had been set up as a welcome to those who would be at the NGO conference at UNESCO in Paris. The idea was for people in Paris to learn something about the NGOs, what they do and how they help people with a special Peace and Humanity oriented theme. There were: 10 small marquees each to take 3 NGOs, a platform for speakers, chairs for participants and a large 'graffiti' board for people to paint comments on.

Servas had been late in booking for the conference and a place at the Village and had not been given a place. No, worries. I set up my stand using what was in my bag. A bit later I was joined by an Argentinean organisation. Several members of the public were surprised that Britain and Argentina could share a tent. I could see no problem and pointed out that we were both Peace organisations.

Although there were fewer attendees than we had hoped for we were still pleased to be able to share what we can offer with the public and with each other.



People in general were amazed that we could run an international organisation using volunteers and no head office. They were incredulous that our President was in Canada, our Secretary in India, the editor in England and the bank account in Switzerland.

For Servas I hope that this has raised our profile slightly in Paris so that more people are aware of us and we from some responses we may even get more members.

Next time? Yes please, but whoever does it must remember to take plenty of water to drink! Thank you for help from Security guards and Argentineans.

Final Goodbye to Bob Lutweiler

from Penny Pattison, Canada

Chris and I attended Bob's celebration at Boulevard Park in Bellingham yesterday, Sept 13, 2008. It was a joyous occasion, filled with laughter and serious discussion. I'd say that about 40 people attended at various times throughout the afternoon. The potluck food carried on for the duration. His daughters Sonja and Anita and their mother were there, and his grandchildren, as well as old friends and those Bob had met at the park. Servas was represented by several of us from Canada (Victoria and Vancouver) and Jay and Seishiro Tomioka from Tokyo, in addition to local members.

Around 4:00, we formed a circle and talked together about Bob, Servas and life. We felt that this is what he would have wanted! I loved hearing of childhood experiences from his daughters, recent interactions from his friends, his multitude of projects and also direct quotes of his initial vision of Servas.

Jay is making a documentary about the founding of Servas. He and his father talked about that process and also handed out DVDs with a sample of it. There is a Youtube site with more footage on it. Sonja mentioned a Yahoo group she set up to gather comments.

A recurring theme was Bob's direct and challenging questions. Related to Servas, Anita mentioned one time when she was at his house, and he received a call from a young man interested in becoming a traveller. Bob asked him why, and the young man answered about the benefits of meeting people and seeing the world and "it's free". She told us that Bob said "You've got some growing up to do" and hung up on him!

We were entertained by many other stories that demonstrated Bob's many-faceted lifestyle, character, talents, vision and idiosyncrasies. It was a real privilege to have had that chance to say goodbye to him, along with some wonderful folks who share our admiration of him.

and Gary Sealey, President

Your report brings back the real Bob. So very glad you did this.

We can say -- we are all Travelers, in a way; and we host and accommodate qualified servants, strangers and friends, cooperate with our neighbours, conform to our community, and generally tolerate humanity and other living things.

And yet, people like Bob are not only Travelers-- but doers. They don't just watch the Big Game of baseball or cricket, they get right in there, and throw the ball and strike the bat.

Not just spectators and reviewers, but players.

Not just toleration but appreciation, trying to bring out the best in the other.

This is why they are the most loved, most valued.

To Mexico from Poland

This Summer I took part in SYLE (Servas Youth Languages Experience) in Mexico. It is a programme for the youth of Servas which gives you the opportunity to spend a month in a different country, getting to know it's everyday life, culture, history and language 'from inside'.

I had wanted to go to Latin America for a long time. So I wrote to Pablo Chufeni from Argentina, who accepted my application for SYLE and gave it to Lilly Kerekes from Mexico. Already more than half a year before going, Lilly and I kept exchanging a lot of e-mails. She asked me what my preferences and interests were, so she could create an individual plan of SYLE for me. During my stay Lilly was taking care of the organisation and of myself. Luckily, she was open for any changes. It was very important that the organisers were open for my suggestions about the time of my SYLE so we could agree on the dates that best suited both and did not collide with my other duties.

For a long time I could not believe that, being only eighteen, I was going alone to Mexico, but it really was an unforgettable experience and, thanks to the help and interest of Servas members, not even one unpleasant or dangerous thing did happen to me.

During one month I stayed with eight Servas hosts and one family outside the organisation. I saw a lot in the centre of Mexico and went to the hot beach of Ixtapa. My journey started in Mexico City, then I went to Cuernavaca, Puebla, Tulancingo, Queretaro, San Miguel de Allende and Ixtapa and shorter trips to many different towns and cities. What I liked a lot about my SYLE was that even though there had already been a detailed plan, there was also a lot of space left for my suggestions and changes (which I used a few times).

During my SYLE I had the opportunity to get to know Mexico City, which has more than 22 million inhabitants and where I saw some of Diego Rivera's works, got on the top of the Torre Latinoamericana, where there is a great view over the city, visited the "town" of the UNAM university and Palacio de Bellas Artes.

During my stay with the family from Cuernavaca, I went to Tepoztlan and climbed the mountain, on top of which there is a pyramid called Tepozteco, which was built by the Tlahaica Indians. We also went to Xochicalco, where we visited the museum, saw many pyramids and pelota fields (pelota is a ball game ritually played by the Indians).

Apart from Puebla, I also saw Cholula – a city founded in the pre-Columbian time, where on the ruins of a pyramid a church was built later. During my stay in Tulancingo I not only saw interesting basaltic rocks but I also went with my host to have a photo session in opuntia fields. In Queretaro I was, among other things, in the Teatro de la Republica, where the Mexican constitution was signed and from there I went to San Miguel de Allende, a city that not even a whole week earlier was recognised as world's cultural heritage by UNESCO. I also had the opportunity to listen to real mariachis (Mexican musicians) and see an authentic Indian ceremony.

When I was in Ixtapa it was too hot to go sight-seeing, but I got to know the Ixtapa tourist attraction with its numerous beaches (near one of which there was a closed territory for crocodiles) and a town nearby – Zihuatanejo.

On the way back from a wedding, to which I was taken by my hosts, near Cuernavaca, I once again went to Tepoztlan, and during the last few days I saw a little bit more of Mexico City and went to the biggest centre of pre-Columbic America , Teotihuacan.

My hosts and their friends gladly showed me around the most important historical places in Mexico, guided me round museums and monuments but I also got to know a part of their everyday life, traditions and customs (I've even been to a Mexican wedding!) and their families and friends. Although most of the Servas families didn't have children of my age, they made me meet some youngsters and gave me the opportunity to go to some real Latin parties ☺

The food sometimes was a little bit of a problem; although I always told my hosts immediately that I was not used to eating spicy food, there sometimes was nothing to choose that didn't have chili! Never before had I tried so many new and interesting dishes in such a short time, which resulted in my being so full by the middle of my stay that I only felt like drinking water! It doesn't mean that I didn't like Mexican food though; I even have some new favourite dishes now.

The time when I was in Mexico – at the end of June and beginning of July – is a rainy season there but it didn't really affect my plans, as it was warm anyway and it was usually raining in the evenings only. But thanks to that, places that are usually very dry with a lot of cacti, were greener and more friendly.

At the end of my stay I made a presentation about Poland for students of the tourism faculty at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Turismo in Mexico City. What surprised me was that the students were really interested in Poland, Servas and other organisations I told them about and asked me a lot of questions.

What struck me a lot in Mexico was the openness and spontaneity of the people, their interest and willingness to help. Apart from the time, when I was travelling from one place to another, there was hardly any time when I was alone. Everywhere I felt as if my hosts, their family and friends had already been my friends for years and thanks to their spontaneity I could do and see more! They were very understanding concerning the language – even though with a lot of mistakes and some difficulties (especially at the beginning), we talked in Spanish almost all of the time. So apart from a great adventure, many new friends and some knowledge about Mexico, I also came back with a significant language progress. A proof for that is that after writing a test and having an oral exam in Instituto Cervantes I was qualified to join classes three semesters higher than before going to Mexico. The language benefit was that is to say enormous.

SYLE was a really interesting experience for me, an ideal way to spend my holidays and it made me want to go back to Mexico as soon as possible. I expect the first visit from there already in autumn!

Barbara Wasilewska

Interested in Syle?
*Like to learn another language in its own country?
 Learn local cultures at the same time.
 Contact: Pablo Chufeni
 email: pablochufeni@yahoo.com*

2nd October - Non-violence Day :



3rd INTERNATIONAL STUDENT'S PEACE FESTIVAL

THE PLANS; Around 250 Students from Pakistan and different states of India are invited to participate. And we're sure this Camp will provide a platform for increased cross-fertilization of ideas through greater interaction among the students. The students coming from outside will be staying with a local student of their age and sex for greater understanding, sharing of ideas and dreams. **Student Host-Student Guest.** Through out the day they all together will be involved in lots of activities, games, cultural programmes and educational excursions.

Student's Peace Festival is a time when people come together and have a party to celebrate peace! Anything fun that holds up the worth of persons, friendship, and harmony is appropriate at a Students Peace Festival. Some of the things planned for the programme are:



One Sky One World kite fly



Carnival games



Planting a Peace Garden



Face Painting



Make and take crafts



Magic Shows



Peace Mobile exhibits



Clowning



Multi-cultural performances



Documentary Film Shows



Resource fair where not-for-profit groups of the community set up displays to promote the services they offer as well as provide hands-on activities for children

THE OUTCOME; The benefits of Student's Peace Festivals are many. They are well-covered media events which focus the community's attention on non-violence issues. They are a catalyst for people to get involved in their community and make a difference. They energize those who are already engaged in good causes because the people recognize they are not alone in their endeavor. They bring families together. They promote positive life skills.

VENUE'S;

Day 5: October 2, 2008 (International Day of Nonviolence & Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi) at **Gandhi Smriti & Darshan Samiti**, New Delhi.

Blog Servas

[First Impressions of Cairo](#)

By Thom Wise(Thom Wise)

Through **Servas**, the traveler network I belong to, I contacted Dr. Taher in Cairo, seeing if we could meet at least. He not only asked me to come stay at his home, but he also sent his driver to pick me up at the airport! ...
[The Thom Travel Blog - http://wisethom.blogspot.com/](http://wisethom.blogspot.com/)

Google News Alert for: **Servas**

[CouchSurfing connections at home and abroad](#)

Turkish Daily News (subscription) - Ankara, Turkey
Similar cost-free travel networks include Hospitality Club, established in 2000, and the Swiss Web site **Servas**. Levent cites a better interface, ...
[See all stories on this topic](#)

[Casa to Rabat](#)

By Al-Rihaala(Al-Rihaala)

One of my **SERVAS** connections finally came through after really woking the "Moroccon" time. I caught a bus to his neighborhood which was really poor. And I found the bus by asking a guy on the street who was going that way. ...
[One Giant Step For Most...One... - http://tomsgiantsteps.blogspot.com/](http://tomsgiantsteps.blogspot.com/)

Couchsurfers are people as well as on the internet

Hi, I went to a fun Couchsurfing event last night.

...suggestions:

- you and each of us join CS to find out more (reasons below)
- let's consider how Servas may improve through joint work with CS
- help accelerate getting Servas on-line (see CS examples and Michael's comment, below)
- use CS mapping of interesting places to accelerate Intelligent Roadmap
- welcome Couchsurfers as Servas travelers, hosts -- interviewed, according to Servas policies, of course

Gary

(n.b. from editor - my only visitors so far this year were Hospitality Club members whom I encouraged to join Servas as well, to expand their possibilities)



SERVAS AUSTRALIA / SERVAS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MEETING

FITZROY FALLS – NEW SOUTH WALES - AUSTRALIA

24th to 30th JANUARY 2009

Servas Australia and Servas Youth invite you to the next Servas International Youth Meeting which is being held at Fitzroy Falls in New South Wales, Australia. This will be the 4th annual youth meeting following on from highly successful youth meetings previously held in Patagonia, England and Turkey.

This is your opportunity to celebrate and reinforce your “**Servas ideals**”. Never mind if you are 14, 21, 34, 62 or even 101 years of age. You are welcome if you are a young person at heart. Your age doesn't matter, it's your mind and spirit what we'll be expecting to see. The interaction of different generations and cultures is one of our goals.

The year 2009 also marks **60 years of Servas** - so c'mon down to Australia and help us be the first to celebrate this important Anniversary.

VENUE

The venue is **Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre** which is located on 40 acres of land in the scenic and beautiful area of the “Southern Highlands” of New South Wales and is just a two hours drive (142 km) south of Sydney. Onsite activities include Basketball, Mini Golf, Pool, Tennis and Volleyball. There is also a Swimming Pool. There are many other various 'outdoor' activities that will also be available.

Check them out at <http://www.fitzroyfallsconferencecentre.com.au>

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is in large air-conditioned dormitory style units each containing 13 beds with bathroom and toilet facilities. Covered walkways provide access to all rooms. There will also be some park cabins available for families.

MEALS

FULL BOARD (breakfast, lunch & dinner) is provided. Participants will take all meals together in the dining area.

RATES

ADULT **AUD\$290** **CHILD 13 to 17 years** **AUD\$260**

CHILD 6 to 12 years **AUD\$230** **CHILD 3 to 5 years** **AUD\$170**

Rates include 6 nights accommodation at Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre, all meals and coach transport from Sydney to Fitzroy Falls on Saturday 24th January and return transfers to Sydney on Friday 30th January 2009.

Rates do **not** include transport costs involved in any day excursions, entrance fees to National Parks, Museums or any places of historical interest.

***NOTE 1:** Participants under 18 years old are welcome if accompanied by an adult*

***NOTE 2:** There is no public transport into/ out of Fitzroy Falls. You can use your own transport. Servas Australia is providing participants with a free coach transfer from Sydney to Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre on Saturday 24th January and returning to Sydney on Friday 30th January 2009. Participants using the free Servas coach transfer from Sydney are asked to make their travel arrangements to be in Sydney no later than Friday 23rd January 2009. Details of departure time and coach pick-up on 24th January 2009 from Sydney will be given on confirmation of your Registration and payment received.*

The program at Fitzroy Falls will include workshops on Servas topics and Australian culture, fauna and flora. There will be time made available for you to take in the beautiful surroundings of the Southern Highlands of New South Wales.

Don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity to get together with members from many countries enjoying time together and developing the spirit of Servas in pleasant surroundings.

There are around 600 Servas host families in Australia waiting for **YOU** with 'open doors' and a good Aussie welcome.

REGISTRATION

Contact Geoff Maltby at geoffmaltby@gmail.com for your application form

PAYMENT

To confirm your registration, conference fees are to be paid in full and settlement made in **AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS.**

Account Name: G. E. Maltby Servas Australia account

Bank Name: SUNCORP

Account No: 00-317747-5

Bank BSB No. 484-799

SWIFT No: METWAU4B

Bank Address: Corner Turbot Street & Albert Street, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia 4000

Please check out the new Servas Australia website at <http://www.servasaustralia.org>

Info: Geoff Maltby / geoffmaltby@gmail.com

**SERVAS INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MEETING
FITZROY FALLS CONFERENCE CENTRE - AUSTRALIA
24th – 30th JANUARY 2009**

REGISTRATION FORM – One form to be completed for each participant

PERSONAL INFORMATION

First and Middle Names

Family Name (as shown on your Passport)

Date of birth

Gender

Nationality

Home Address

Home telephone number

Email

Emergency contact: (Name)

Telephone number

PASSPORT INFORMATION

Passport number

Passport expiry date

Country of issue

SERVAS INVOLVEMENT

Are you a Servas Host or Servas Traveller?

Have you attended a Servas International Youth meeting before?

Will you have a current authorised Servas Letter of Introduction?

Do you hold any position either in Servas or Servas Youth?

LANGUAGE

What is your first language?

Other languages you can speak or write?

WORK/STUDIES

Employment/Occupation?

If a student, please give details of current studies

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOURSELF

Interests

Qualifications

Skills

PROGRAM

Do you have a special topic that you would like to present?

Do you wish to make a short presentation on 'Where I Live'?

Any game or activity you would like to be included in the program?

Do you like to engage in outdoor activities i.e. sports, swimming, walking, climbing etc?

CATERING

Do you have any special dietary requests? (halal, kosher, vegetarian etc)

ACCOMMODATION RATES

ADULT AUD\$290

CHILD 13 TO 17 YEARS AUD\$260

CHILD 6 TO 12 YEARS AUD\$230

CHILD 3 TO 5 YEARS AUD\$170

Rates include 6 night's accommodation, all meals and coach transport from Sydney to Fitzroy Falls on 24th January and return to Sydney on 30th January 2009.

The above rates do not include:

Transport costs involved in any day excursions.

Entrance fees to National Parks, Museums or any place of Historical interest etc.

TRANSPORT

Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre is 142 km south of Sydney. Unless you have your own transport you will need to use the special Servas coach transport from Sydney to Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre on Saturday 24th January and returning to Sydney on 30th January 2009. Details of departure time and coach pick-up will be given to you on confirmation of your registration and payment received.

If you intend to travel on the special coach from Sydney on 24th January 2008, we ask that you please make your travel arrangements to be in Sydney no later than Friday 23rd January 2009.

Please indicate whether you intend to travel on the Servas coach.

*I will be travelling on the Servas coach from Sydney to Fitzroy Falls on 24th January **YES/NO***

Please return your completed form to Geoff Maltby at geoffmaltby@gmail.com