

# YOUTH VIEWS

## **Why travel, Why Servas?**

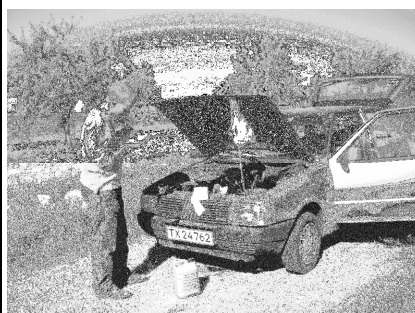
Hello. I'm Danish boy from Copenhagen. Not that it's unusual. And like so many other young people I wanted to go travelling after high school. I joined forces with a good friend, like so many others did. And just like everybody else I spent a year making money for the trip. So what I did was most normal. 'After end high school, go travel, then further education' is a normal way in Denmark. Some people do others things, but everybody seems to have a desire to learn something, something you can't learn in a school. To learn to know themselves better, and the world around them. The only way is the school of life. Where you are on your own, making your own judgements and are free to choose. There several ways to do it, but I decided to go travelling. Not to the Far East or America, not by agency or charter. That's where I chose differently.

Why's that different? Normally young Danes go far away, with a backpack, Lonely Planet, and an idea about getting close to the nature and the native. But end up meeting only other travellers (Europeans or Americans mostly) and all the nature you can see from a car or train window. If you ask them if it was a good trip, if they saw some beautiful nature and met interesting people, they would say 'yes of course'. That's expected; it's always exciting meeting someone so different from yourself. For all the pictures I have seen of my (two) older brothers trips, the nature is beautiful. It's all very different, maybe too different.

My philosophy is "You learn a lot about you self, by being with others". Everywhere we go we reflect on what we see. "Do his trousers look good on me? Am I also that fat?" By meeting other people you can relate with, you learn about yourself. I don't think I have much in common with a fisher salesman in Vietnam. The only way I could possibly get know him, is to stay and talk with him. I don't think you can get really close to people that far away, it takes something more when you are so different from each other. You need something in common, like Servas. I think it is very difficult when you are travelling on your own. It's the way (or lack) of meeting people, as with backpackers. I find the way of backpack travelling very well told in the book "Are you experienced?" by William Sutcliffe from 1999. It shall be no secret that I'm very fond of the Servas way to meet people.

My friend and I decided to go round Western Europe in an (very) old car, visiting Servas hosts. That called for a lot of questions. "Why not Asia? Visiting what? What car?" etc. I guess there is no point telling about Servas here. We chose Europe partly because of the price of a trip to America or Asia and we wanted to meet people with whom we had something in common. Europe is more and more homogenized. Laws and rules in Denmark are under influence of the rest EU and Denmark does also mark the rest of EU. These laws don't come out of nowhere, so to understand the EU we chose to see it for ourselves.

It's not like I don't care about the rest of the world, but that doesn't affect my daily life in the same way. At that particular time in my life I needed to see Europe and some other time I would like to see the rest of your world.



**Greetings  
from a Danish  
boy from  
Copenhagen.  
Tejs Knudsen.**

## **...and as a Servas host, Scotland**

For me, Servas is an extremely good way of meeting new people. Through Servas, many people have entered my home and fitted into our way of life. I have learnt to accept different cultures, different languages and a wide range of different personalities. My confidence has been built up over the years as I have participated in hosting our guests, and it has let me discover ways of communicating, other than verbal. One night when a teenager from France, who spoke little English, was staying with us, instead of talking to him, we played instruments. This was a very special night.

Spending two nights, three days with a variety of guests has given me stories and news from foreign countries which have added to my awareness of the rest of the world. As we have a big house, I am glad it is put to good use by welcoming travelers into our home. I enjoy spending time with people that find it interesting to learn about our family and way of life and I am very pleased that we are part of Servas. I have become much more confident communicating to, and accepting, a spectrum of ages, races and cultures.

*Iona Morrison, Scotland*

*(Ed: Sorry, a picture of Iona's father - Joe - playing the bagpipes as a delightful breakfast wake up call got lost from my camera)*

## **... a young person from Tunisia**

In discovering Servas in my travels in Scandinavia, I discovered different cultures and different natural environments which were far from mine; a different cuisine; a nordic way of life, astonishing for someone coming from Africa and used to the Magreb traditions.

In our discussions we learnt how strangers accepted us and created in us an acceptance of strangers. We learnt about different religions and their styles such as a prayer before a meal.; about different foods such as the dark rye bread in Denmark and unusual cheeses in Sweden; about the history and development of cultures. We learnt about how both adults and young people live and enjoy themselves. We appreciated a barbeque with Danish young people where my elderly (56!) aunt was accepted as just one of the company. We then delighted in the tour of the local very Danish village getting the feel of its history.

In Servas I was starting to learn other languages. But even if there was very little common language we could still find solutions for communication. That is how Servas works.

*Sheherazade Laribi, Tunisia*

