

COUNTRY REPORTS - PACIFIC

Samoa from Marco Kappenburger

Talofa! When Servas travellers arrive in Samoa - usually one or two per month, 'Talofa!' is the greeting they receive when landing on these tropical islands of extreme beauty where the hospitable villagers live their ancestral culture in a botanical-garden-like setting, between the coral reefs and the rainforest, below the dark blue crater lakes of the volcanoes that created these young islands. Although some Servas hosts live around the capital Apia, like any Samoan, they are likely to invite visitors to meet and stay with the families of their relatives in the villages. Also in the big and less populated island of Savaii, the larger island that gave its name to the 50th state of the USA, where polynesian culture is purest, and from where thousands of Polynesia's islands - in the big triangle including Easter Island/Rapa-Nui, Hawaii and New Zealand - was first settled. Hosts in Samoa open their home to travellers and receive visitors who are ready to make a sincere effort to adapt to their way of life and are eager to learn, listen, talk, share and remain in contact. Travellers who visit a family are expected to be satisfied with whatever little and in so many ways different the hosts have to offer. In order to fulfil the requirements of the polynesian culture, especially in the villages. In addition to whatever small typical gift from one's home country, which the traveller wishes to share with the host on arrival. When leaving, travellers are expected to insist to offer to the host a symbolic sum of money in proportion to the expenses the host had for the traveller: It is a tradition to offer this, and usually a tradition to refuse it. Thus this gift should be offered as a 'Meaalofa' (a token of friendship).

Travellers should know that Samoa is still a LDC (Least Developed Country), where only about 20% of the population have a job earning money, these earn 1US\$ only for each two hours of work. This is why only one Samoan traveller has been able to afford to travel overseas, when he went to Berlin to attend a conference of the World Council of Churches, enjoyed the Servas hospitality there, and has since hosted in Samoa his Berlin/German hosts. While he is the Secretary of the National Council of Churches, other founding members of Servas Samoa are the High Chief from the island of Savaii, Ms Moelagi Jackson, the head of the journalists' association Lance Polu, the Senior Lecturer of the National University of Samoa, Unasa Leulu Felise Vaa.

Samoa is in the West of American Samoa, a USA Territory where salaries are lots higher and prices lots lower, but this is the price for Independence.

Servas Samoa thus encourages those Servas travellers who can adapt to the above and really wish to experience Samoa's living culture to consider travelling to Samoa. They will receive up to 30 days' visa on arrival at the airport, and Samoans will share their paradise with them, and they will enjoy their 'home away from home'. 'Afio Mai!' (Welcome)

A Report of Far East Asia ~ August, 2001 to June, 2004

FEA - Far East Asia
SEA - South East Asia.

I had been Area Coordinator (AC), FEA till March 2003, when I took over the role of National Secretary (NS), Japan. Right now no AC exists for our area, but let me make a report of FEA as far as I know.

Servas FEA is composed of Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mongolia, and Japan, though Mongolia has no member yet. The present enrollment of each country is as follows: Korea (220), China (18), Hong Kong (22), Taiwan (7), and Japan (314).

On March 30 and 31, 2002, I called the third area conference to be held in Kyushu, Japan. It saw 17 members from Korea, 1 from Hong Kong, 38 from Japan, while we had several observers from overseas, such as 1 from Nepal, 1 from Malaysia, 1 from Estonia, and 1 from the US. We discussed how to develop our mutual exchange, the integration of FEA and SEA, and some other topics like where to hold the 4th area meeting. We also decided to help the Peace Wave Nepal and make an appeal to nations with nuclear weapons.

March 19 to 24, 2003, I went to Ulan Bator, Mongolia, with Mr. Eum Jay Ryang, NS for Korea, and several members of Korea and Japan, invited by a Mongolian gentleman interested in Servas. We made three presentations about Servas. Most of the attendants showed interest in it but seemed not to dare to establish Servas Mongolia. We will have to wait for several years till Servas Mongolia is founded.

August 3 to 10, 2003, I attended the area conference of Servas SEA, because on the agenda was the merger of FEA and SEA. Vice President Bibendra, Nepal, was also present. Our conclusion was the idea was proposed too abruptly to accept and that we should discuss it more profoundly.

2003 saw more than 100 people joined Servas Korea, because a high school teacher published a book featuring his Servas traveling in Israel, to NS's great delight!

We'll have the 4th area conference in Hong Kong in April 2005. Julian Kwong and other members are making preparations for it. We hope to invite several SEA members for our meeting.

Masahiro Nishiyama, Japan
(This report was given at the General Assembly in Barcelona, July 2004)

