

COUNTRY REPORTS - AMERICAS

Brazil - Happy Hour in Sao Paulo

The Servas group from São Paulo met on Aug 21st at a bar, for a Saturday Happy Hour. The place was charming, cosy, simple, rustic and relaxing. We reserved a table at the back of the bar. 18 people showed up: 9 hosts from São Paulo city, 2 hosts from the countryside of the state, 1 host from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul and 6 friends. The following sentences were being written by the participants on a paper napkin, as they were leaving the bar. They reflect the atmosphere of the gathering:

- If someone's absence is felt, then it is like the person were present.
- People are always surprising! It is always nice to get to know cool people. This is Servas.
- I can't stand eating any more "polenta"!
- Yes, you can! We love it! We loved the evening!
- Those that do not give up are the indispensable ones!
- How wonderful it is to meet people, to meet them again and to get to know special people!
- To meet friends, to make new friendships, this is Servas!
- What a wonderful gathering!
- How wonderful it is to cohabit!
- A dozen unknown people at the back table. Suddenly, 12 friends at the front door!
- It is amazing how the exchange of energy among nice people can modify somebody's day.
- Unity makes the group.
- A meeting among braziduches, iraquisraelians, germirish, argentenglish, japobelgian and paulistas...the whole world in this bar!
- To make friends, to get to know different cultures...this is Servas!
- It's already 1 am? Who said this Happy Hour would end around 9 pm?

Roberto Borenstein, Brazil

Servas Peru celebrates the 55th Year



In aviation every take off is voluntary, every landing is compulsory. Applies to life as well.

Peru - Communication Methods

The need to develop, publish and practice the ideals of friendship and hospitality, guided us to create a National Net of Simultaneous Communication, an open forum for the Peruvian host members.

The idea came from Servasnet. We decided to create a similar way for our group. The beginning is simple and brings great results. It is just necessary to collect the names and addresses, in our case Yahoo Groups, use an efficient and simultaneous mean of communication. Taking our experience I can say:

- Keep the host members informed of the administration of the Board of Directives.
- Inform the members about the travellers that will visit our country in the following weeks.
- Exchange experiences with the travellers visiting our homes.
- Publish rules and recommendations for a good host or traveller.
- Increase our knowledge of new tourist places.

In this way we started National Net of Simultaneous Communication: servasperu@yahogroups.com

These fulfilled objectives allow us to recommend it to other national groups in order to be applied at a local or national level. The objective and responsibility of every National Secretary is to give more and better service to their hosts and travellers. We are at the end the big family of Servas.

Pedro Puente, Peru

Some words from Cuba!

I was asked to organize a Cuban list. I immediately said yes, thinking it was going to be an easy job but it turned out not to be so easy for many reasons.

1. A problem in Cuba is having foreigners staying at your place if you don't have a renting permit or a good excuse. The people who have chosen to full time host have no problem if they have agreed to host you. Still, I believe this reason will produce more day than fulltime hosts but that's ok since we can help you find cheaper places to stay.
2. How to get to the places from the airport: the only way possible is someone picking you up (most people have no car so this will be rare) or take a taxi. Transport is a big problem so don't expect to get a bus from the airport.
3. My advice is that before coming you make sure to ask your host where he /she wants you to be at the airport.
4. Travellers should try not to bring US\$ into Cuba since there's a penalty on the dollar, you have to change it to Cuban convertible pesos, loosing 10%. Bring Euros.
5. People agree to contact through phone or letter. My advice is to use the phone as Cuban mail may take ages.
6. Travellers should talk to the host about the food issue, asking for advice. (My personal opinion, many do not see this way, is not to eat out, the food can be expensive and not so good, instead, buy food or give the host some money to get it and you might arrange to cook indoors) But if you are eating in places that charge in Cuban convertible pesos, my advice is to stick to sandwiches.

Ileana Rodríguez, Cuba