



Fukushima to Hiroshima





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Would <u>you</u> like to join our wonderful team of caring volunteers?

Servas International needs several good people. Please read about the <u>Nominations</u> <u>Procedure</u>. Or please contact: <u>nominations@servas.org</u>.

Don't delay: *Delegates will vote during SICOGA* in just a few weeks. <u>Candidate Form</u> / <u>Job Descriptions</u> / <u>List of</u> <u>Servas International Positions</u>.

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You Can Join a Servas First

Dear Servas members worldwide,

At the Servas International Conference and General Assembly (SICOGA 2022), for the first time, Servas members can participate in our global conference – without leaving home.

All individual members of Servas around the world were invited to participate, either

virtually or in person in India at SICOGA 2022 November 22–28. Around 130 members will be physically present at the venue in Panchgani in India and in addition, so far, we have had 87 registered to attend virtually. All the 210+ participants have been given Servas International Microsoft 365 (SI M365)* accounts which let them participate in the event and give them access to important documents, livestreamed discussions and other resources before and during the conference. The SI Member Groups' voting delegates will be using SI M365 for discussions and voting about motions and to elect SI officers during the business meeting SI General Assembly November 25–26 (SIGA 2022).

*SI can offer M365 accounts without cost thanks to Microsoft's pro bono program for up to 300 users in non-profit organizations.



Jonny Sågänger Paul Nielsen





The members who have not registered to participate in SICOGA 2022 in person or virtually will be able to watch the opening ceremony, presentations, workshops and other exciting happenings during the event via a dedicated webpage on servas.org and on different social

media platforms like Servas groups on Facebook or Instagram.

We will also post news about the conference in a daily SICOGA 2022 newsletter and in our communications channels.

Make sure to keep up-to-date with how the program develops, and who is running for which positions in the upcoming elections. Names of candidates for officer positions and other important information about the event is constantly being updated on the dedicated website "SICOGA 2022 Conference Information" — <u>https://</u> <u>servas.org/en/sicoga2022</u>

Stay tuned with new SICOGA 2022 information!

Questions about SICOGA 2022? Send an email to: president@servas.org.

All the best Jonny Sågänger, President, Servas International

Paul Nielsen, SI Co-Membership & Technology Secretary (SI MTS)





By Danielle Serres, SI Representative at UN in Geneva

Photos: Danielle (left) and Tomoeko, a Hiroshima survivor, at Peace Memorial: Genbaku Dome.

[Editor's Note: About this article's title: The 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdown, which released radioactive material was still fresh in the minds of residents of, and visitors to, Japan in 2015.]

In September 2015, I was travelling with a friend and hosted by Servas members.

In Hiroshima, we visited the Peace Museum with our Servas host, Tomoeko Hayashi. She was three years old on August 6, 1945.

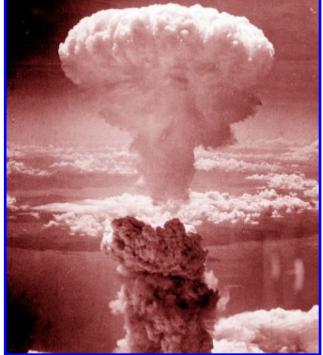


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She remembered the blinding light in the sky and the terrifying sound. Her father's remains have never been found. She had no hatred, but the firm belief that nuclear weapons should be eradicated.

On August 6th 2022, the commemoration of the terrible first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, World leaders are meeting at the United Nations in New York to begin their first review of the UN Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) since nuclear weapons became prohibited under international law in 2021.

"At a time where tensions between nuclear-armed states are increasing, hiding behind vague affirmations and empty promises is not enough. It is time for all states to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as the pathway to save the NPT," ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn said. ICAN is the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.





Photos from top:

- Hiroshima nuclear bomb blast, 1945
- Fukushima nuclear disaster, 2011
- Beatrice Fihn, 2016.

As an official ICAN partner, Servas International supports all initiatives to ban nuclear weapons. Two of our representatives at UN NY will be attending parts of the conference on the NPT in August in New York, and others will attend sessions virtually.

Editor's Note: For more on ICAN, see... https://vienna.icanw.org/live





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Is Peace Possible?

By Alison Telsey, SI Representative to the UN in New York

Geneva Peace Week (31 October – 4 November 2022) is quickly approaching. It is a time for organizations both in Geneva and internationally to come together to share knowledge and practice on a range of

topics related to the promotion of peace. The theme of this year's conference is "Peace is Possible". The optimism expressed by the title is intriguing and it raised the question: Can we eliminate war and violence in a world in which warfare has always been a significant part of human history?

To understand whether peace is possible, it is important to question whether the world is getting better or worse. For many of us, it appears that the world has become more violent and we feel more vulnerable. Everyday the media shares information about disasters, shootings, inequality, war, and the





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spread of nuclear weapons. The news capitalizes on our morbid interests. Ironically, when one looks at the data of the key variables that impede peace over time, a different conclusion emerges.

Analysis of recent data on homicide, war, poverty, pollution and more reveals that we're making progress now in every one of them. We have made positive gains in health, wealth, safety, knowledge and leisure. (For example, there has been a significant decline in battle deaths and major wars throughout the 20th century, 90% of people under 25 of the world's population can read and write, 2/3 of the world is living as a democracy). (Pinker, 2018)

There is room for optimism but we know that problems on the road to peace are inevitable. Progress does



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not mean that everything gets better for everyone all the time. However, the problems that emerge are problems that can be solved. There is really no limit to the betterments we can attain if we hold onto the conviction that we can apply knowledge to reduce human suffering.

If the global community can continue to develop our understanding of the causes of peace and continue to develop systems that support peace, perhaps a world without war is more possible than one would think.

In conclusion in support of Geneva Peace week: "All we are saying is Give Peace A Chance". Geneva Peace week will take place both in person and also online. SERVAS members are encouraged to participate in workshops and/or digital series at no cost. Participants will have the opportunity to share peacebuilding skills to apply in their daily life and work. For more information regarding Geneva Peace Week, enter the following link: https://eu.eventscloud.com/ website/3030/

*Pinker, Steven: *Is the world getting better or worse? A look at the numbers?* (Ted Talk), April 30, 2018.

SINB Editor's Note: While looking up Steven Pinker's photo, I found this excerpt by him ...



The odds that an American will die in a terrorist incident is about 1 in 3.3 million. Things more likely to kill Americans include a flight of stairs to bees. (Bees kill more Americans every year than do ISIS, sharks, scorpions, alligators, bears, and airplanes combined.)

Here is Steven's TED Talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCm9Ng0bbEQ

The book "The Survivor's Club" states that airplane accidents have a 95.7% survivability rate. What you do after the plane hits land or water is more important. Google it before your next flight.



Servas Sailing in Brazil

By Alvany Santiago

Sailing the São Francisco River

was a Servas trip organized by Brazilian members from Petrolina, Pernambuco and Juazeiro, Bahia (Northeast of Brazil) from June 16 to 19, 2022.

The São Francisco River crosses five Brazilian states until it empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

Check out participant's testimonials:

Servas is always in harmony and fraternity. Thank you for the welcome, and especially for the affection and respect you dedicate to each one who enters your home. I loved being with you. —Eliane, Verdejantes, Pernambuco State, Brazil









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This was my second Servas experience and it was an amazing shared trip. The beauty of the two cities Juazeiro/Bahia and Petrolina/ Pernambuco, separated by the waters of the São Francisco River, we watched a beautiful sunset on a catamaran, got to know the Terra Nova winery and then boarded the ship Vapor do Vinho*, in the waters of the Sobradinho Dam**. I was very grateful for the

opportunity.

—Glória Gonçalves, Fortaleza, Ceará.

Photo 1: Vapor do Vinho.

Photo 2: Alvany and friends.

Photo 3: The body of water created by the dam for the Sobradinho hydro-electric plant in Bahia, Brazil, which now also has a 1 MWp floating photovoltaic (solar) system. Two energy sources to meet the region's electricity needs.





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Visiting by Train

By Conni Geisendorf

You can travel much further than Europe by rail as Mark Smith's lifelong project shows. Mark comes from Great Britain and he used to be a rail manager. He does all he can to promote travel by train.

In 2001 he started developing a website that helps people plan train journeys worldwide. His website has won several awards.



On his website, Mark Smith gives detailed descriptions of routes and timetables around the world, explains how to book tickets and shows photos of train compartments. Most of what he writes is based on his own experiences. Mark's website <u>www.seat61.com</u> is an "online bible" for train passengers.



There's detailed information on how to find accommodation if you're en route to faraway destinations with tips on accommodation near stations. If you decide to break your journey, you could always combine it with a Servas visit because international rail tickets are normally valid for 48 hours.

ServasOnline (SOL) has made it possible for hosts to show that they will be happy to host travellers who can only stay one night. This means that many more Servas members can meet.

[*SINB Editor's Note:* At a SICOGA some years ago, members agreed that travellers could ask to stay 1, 2, or 3+ nights. Hosts could say "no".]

Best ecological wishes, Conni Geisendorf, National Secretary, Servas Germany





A Journey of Warm Hearts

Hamburg to საქართველოს

By Daniela Papenberg, Hamburg, Germany, June 2022

From February to April 2022 a journey alone by train and coach from Hamburg to აქართველოს ("Sakartvelos" which means Georgia, in Georgian).

I began learning Georgian in October 2021. I renewed my profile on Workaway (https:// www.workaway.info/) without any concrete travel plans. In this network I got to know Teona, a young Georgian who was working in Italy. We met on Zoom for language exchange, and after a couple of weeks she invited me to the home of her parents and her six siblings in Tbilisi. Since her family was always happy to have quests, she said I could stay in her room for as long as I wanted. That sounded great! But would I dare to go 3,000 kilometers over land-I don't fly.

With Servas and my heart pounding: I said yes. Conni, National Secretary of Servas Germany, gave me more encouragement. On February 2, 2022 I set off, and according to the motto, "the journey is part of the trip", I decided to enjoy the journey as much as possible.



From Munich to Istanbul, the route followed the tracks of the former *Orient Express* train.

On the first evening of my trip, Servas host Judit and her daughter welcomed

me at the Georgian restaurant in downtown Budapest. A nice idea! Photo: The Turkish-Georgian border – Happily arrived on the Georgian side: after 14 days, and 35 extra hours!





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Photo: *Tbilisi:* View from the cable car to Turtle Lake down to Vake Park, with the Soviet World War II Memorial (1980-85).

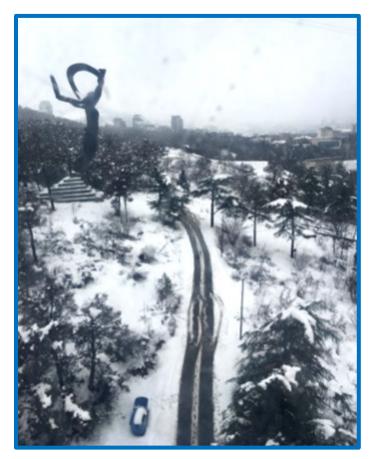
In Bucharest I experienced much kindness too. Servas host Simona showed me her town and the lovely village museum with traditional wooden houses, and even some churches, from different regions of Romania.

Since trains from Bucharest to Istanbul only run from April to October, if at all, I covered the remaining distance to Tbilisi by bus which is very reliable, unrivalled in terms of climate-friendliness, possible without advance reservation and inexpensive: for example, the 1,900 kilometres from Bucharest to Batumi (Georgia) cost under €80.

In the Istanbul spring sunshine, I cycled along the seafront promenade of Caddebostan with host Nazife and her friend Arzu!

A few days later I carried on over snow-covered passes to Ankara, which is almost 1,000 metres above sea level. There at 4 a.m. I took the bus to Tbilisi, which goes along the southern coast of the Black Sea for almost a day.

At the Georgian-Turkish border, passengers had to leave the bus to have their luggage checked and walk across the border. To my surprise I wasn't allowed to enter Georgia. Standing alone at the border, holding my suitcase, I met



Art from Belarus and his girlfriend Tonka from Ukraine, who turned out to be my guardian angels. They were fleeing the war in Ukraine by car, going to Tbilisi too. Like me, they needed a PCR Covid test to cross the border. A Turkish taxi driver explained that the closest test centre was a 20-kilometre drive back to Hopa, Turkey!

Thirty-five hours later, with the negative test results in our pockets, we finally reached Tbilisi on the night of March 9, 2022. Teona (a Georgian girl I met on **Workaway***) had been absolutely right. Her parents and her siblings were very welcoming, caring hosts. I stayed with them in Tbilisi for almost three weeks, enjoying every day.

*Workaway website: <u>Meet the</u> Workaway Community.



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Photo: On the Galata Tower, April 3 in Istanbul on my way back from Georgia, with my dear Servas day host Özlem. I had not taken off the Svaneti felt hat since Melita gave it to me in Tbilisi, but the spring wind almost blew it away.

I met Servas day host Nino and her friends. We attended folk dance classes given by fabulous dancer Melita Lomadze, accompanied Tina to Orthodox Church services, climbed snow-covered Mount Mtatsminda, which means Holy Mountain, and enjoyed Tina's incredibly delicious vegan dishes. Some people eat vegan in Georgia during the 40-day period of Lent prior to Easter. My favorite food was badrijani, eggplant rolls with walnut filling and pomegranate seeds.

I felt the famous Georgian warmheartedness through March, the coldest March with the heaviest snowfall that the country had experienced in the last 140 years.



In autumn 2023, I would like to go back to Georgia to see everybody again and get to know more of the country, go hiking, grape harvesting, and continue learning Georgian. I would like to meet some new Servas friends there and along my route. I hope the Bosphorus Express from Bucharest to Istanbul (which is suspended this summer) will run again, on a renovated track, so that part of the journey will become even more comfortable.

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Photo: Bosphorus Express train

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Making Connections

Connect with members for a month or more

Making Connections is a Servas cultural programme for an extended stay proposed by several Servas countries. Some have Making Connections Coordinators to help both travellers and hosts. If interested, check www.servas.org and click the tab "Identity & Goals", then "Making Connections" for a full list of ways to have some quality time with other members beyond a two-day stay:

https://servas.org/sites/default/files/uploads/activities/2017/ si_making_connections_directory_2019_updated.pdf

You'll find many possible opportunities:

- in music, art, dancing, the environment
- helping with a community event
- · hosts willing to share skills in their field
- a language experience as we learn from each other.

Spain, for example, has five hosts offering:

1. a language exchange, some sport activities and a tour of local sites.

- 2. painting in my studio during your stay.
- 3. Practice your Spanish with three members.

To contact any Servas National Group you may email them by using the standard format of their National Group name and then @servas.org: example: <u>spain@servas.org</u>.

Photos: *Members from three continents making connections in previous years.*





Joyful Life in a Turkish Village

By Francesco Stoduto

Ekinci is an ordinary village, near Antakya (ancient Antioch), Turkey.

From 2009, aside from a forced break during the pandemic, **Ekinci** has experienced **an explosion of life, games, meetings, parties**.

All this is thanks to Mehmet Ates, a young English-language teacher. On returning to his village after a vacation, he decid-

ed to involve the children of the town in a whirlwind of activities for a couple of weeks, to help them live together, to develop their knowledge of English, to learn about, appreciate and love diversity, locally and internationally.



Little by little the group has grown; young people and adults. Then Servas guests from all over the world arrived, and the **Peace School** has become something unique and wonderful that has been going on for many years!



And it happened that an old Servas member from southern Italy, having heard of it, wanted to participate, but, blocked by the pandemic, took part only in the online activities that Mehmet quickly managed to organize in place of physical meetings.

Then when the pandemic had slowed down, the *Peace School* resumed normally and the magic was reborn!

So then that old man decided to travel, arrived at 4 am, was greeted with a big hug by the girl he had only met online two years earlier. He was hosted like a brother ... sorry, like a **grandfather**!

And then he had *full immersion* in the whirlwind of days full of children, young people, adults, activities of all kinds. Then the final party, on the evening of July 13, with the large courtyard full of people, was alive with joyful music, songs, dances!

Everything was unforgettable: the children, the animators/interpreters, the Servas friends from India, Pakistan, Mexico, Italy, Russia, and the host families, indeed very hospitable! And all the other friends who contributed to wonderful days, in southwestern Turkey.

A huge THANK YOU to Mehmet and all the staff. We remember some words he gave us in closing:

Peace and friendship are not a dream, they are possible, indeed they are real, if we want it!

The little ones teach us more than we can teach them!



Connecting Again

Zoom Meeting hosted by Servas Israel September 4, 2022

By Claudia Sagie, National Secretary, Servas Israel

Photo: Claudia (right) with her husband Shlomi (left) and Servas friend Dafi, Israel, 2021.

It has been such a long time since we could meet face-to-face, due to the pandemic, and we all felt like something was missing in our Servas lives.

Servas Israel hosted six international events in 2013 (2), 2014, 2016, 2017, 2019 and we missed everyone who had participated.

So, we thought – why not meet online, renew friendships, get to know what's new?

Other friends, who hadn't attended any of these events, asked to join also.

How exciting.

The Zoom meeting was held on September 4, 2022, with old and new friends from nearly 30 countries.

We shared memories from the events, then discussed ways of making connections, in six groups (according to the events' participation).

Many ideas were put forward, as you can read in the summary, in the link at the end of the next page.

Many expressed the wish to continue the discussion (by WhatsApp and/or online meetings) and how to put these ideas into practice, maybe by interest groups:



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- Servas for the Environment concerning water and the environment, which will discuss global warming and possible solutions.
- Interest groups music, psychology, language learning/ practicing, hobbies, art, yoga, meditation, travel, books, virtual workshops, archeology.
- **3. Travel** sharing information and recommendations about countries that are interesting to visit.
- Exchange group travel go as a common-interest group to one hosting country, then host the other group in your country.
- **5. Youth activities** SYLE, SLE, summer camps, volunteering.

In the meantime, please see the presentations and ideas in the Zoom meeting, and please be welcome to share your ideas and tell us which group you would like to join.

Write to <u>israel@servas.org</u>.

Link to the summary of the Zoom meeting on September 4, 2022: (for Servas members only).

https://drive.google.com/drive/ folders/1_DjN2F49Rnmy-IgoM4I-G0TcN97ak5u7?usp=sharing

-Shalom, Claudia

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By Michael Johnson, SINB editor

We took a delightful Portuguese Servas family to a friend's pool during their stay at our home in Cambridge, Canada.

We asked to stay with hosts in Michigan, USA, with whom we stayed years ago. "Sorry, we are away then, but our neighbours who live on a lake can host you." They were very kind and welcomed us.

Later in Michigan we stayed with a great host living on a river.







We spent two nights with terrific Toronto hosts who made us a healthy sorbet.

We regularly dine with our regional coordinators Art and Danette, our good friends for 30 years.

Please send your stories to <u>newsletter@servas.org</u>.





International Day of Peace

Brazil

By Neuma Dantas, Brazil National Secretary

Servas Brazil celebrated the Day with: videos and readings about Peace, an excerpt from the movie *Gandhi* and



members' comments, testimonies of three Russians plus a Ukrainian. Members from Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay participated. Some regional members also met in person.

Guatemala

By Adela Segura, Guatemala National Secretary

Our celebration of Day of Peace was in a restaurant with good friends, good food and everyone took home a plant.







Ireland

By Dot Fine, Dublin, Ireland

Day of Peace.

While in Derry, Northern Ireland, UK, I saw these moving peace-building murals. From the top down:

John Hume, from
Northern Ireland a
Nobel Laureate in
Peace.

 mural of Hume and three other recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize: Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela. The Brooklyn Bridge is a metaphor for building bridges for peace that they all endeavoured to do.

The Dove and Oak
Peace Mural

• Dot Fine on the Peace Bridge across the Foyle River, in Derry (Londonderry), Northern Ireland.

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Day of Peace continued...

Editor's Note: I included these Servas members' activities for the Day of Peace. I apologize for the low quality Whatsapp images.

Britain

By Alison Newbery, National Secretary Britain

I was on the Servas International Zoom meeting about non-violent communication. Later that day I met some Servas members in London at the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park by the Thames River.

Malawi

By Demelza Benbow, Founder and National Secretary, Servas Malawi

On 21 September 2022, just before World Day of Peace, we hiked up Nyambadwe Hill. We celebrated with a refreshing soft drink. Servas Malawi has an extensive Long Stay, *Making Connections* program.







My stay in Panchgani The SICOGA venue

By Marie-Paule Letourneux, Servas France



In 1981, I decided to try the adventure of a three-month trip to India.

I had been informed, before my departure, that a conference was being organized at the MRA Centre, Asia Plateau in Panchgani. This beautiful venue will be where the 2022 SICOGA takes place.

Since 1975, I had been a sympathizing member of the MRA, the international movement of "Moral Re-Armament" whose objectives and actions I knew: to transform society by adopting individual behavior based on brotherhood, justice, honesty and compassion. Thus, in January 1982, I went to the International Conference the MRA was organizing on Economics and Leadership and met extremely diverse participants from several countries including India. There were high-level decision-makers, political and trade union leaders, company directors, professors, journalists, students, workers, etc.



Forty years ago Rajmohan Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson, founded the Asia Plateau Meeting Centre, where the 2022 SICOGA will be.

[**Editor's note**: In 1938, when Europe was re-arming militarily, Frank Buchman, of London, said: "The nations must re-arm morally." The phrase caught on. Soon after that British tennis star H.W. Austin edited the book *Moral Rearmament (The Battle for Peace),* and about the same time the Mayor of New York City declared 7–14 May "MRA week."]

Following the speakers' interventions, there were discussions with the audience. As the place had a restaurant and a hotel, the exchanges continued during the meals or walks in the garden.

It was, for me, a rich experience, full of unexpected encounters, including that of Rajmohan Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson, who founded (with a group of Indians) the Asia Plateau Meeting Centre in 1968, installed on a 28-hectare estate. One of their motivations was to promote reconciliation between conflicting religious communities and to create an exemplary democracy in India. In 2001, the Moral Re-Armament movement lost its religious character and was renamed "Initiatives of Change", with the idea of becoming an incubator of initiatives.

The Honourable Rajmohan Gandhi



I had the chance to meet Rajmohan Gandhi again in Paris in 2011 during the presentation of the biography on his grandfather. Influenced by the Mahatma's philosophy, Rajmohan admirably summed up the spirit of the international movement "Initiatives of Change" with these words borrowed from his grandfather: "**Be the change you want to see in the world".** Isn't this the spirit of Servas as well?



Key People















Key People of Pakistan

We are pleased to announce and welcome new and returning key people of Servas Pakistan. Peace and Love! Naseem

Photos, from top to bottom: National Secretary: Muhammad Naseem National Deputy: Abid Hussain National Treasurer: Shoaib Muhammad Khan National Host List Coordinator: Nauman Naseem Youth and Family Contact: Afifa Maryam National Coordinator Sindh: Mirza Noreen National Coordinator Punjab: Chahdhary Waheed

Plan Ahead for Hosts

By Michael Johnson, SINB editor

In September my wife and I looked for a host in Toronto, Canada's largest city of 3 million. Online 19 Servas hosts were listed. However...

Two were listed twice, a few were up to 80 km. out of the city. One said she was now a day host. A few could only take one person and others were unable to host because of: major renovations, listing their house on AirBnB, a roommate took over the guestroom, etc.

I continued to email, text, and phone the remaining six. Two were travelling, one had an injury, two were hosting other travellers.

In the end there was **one** host in Toronto who could take us. They were very hospitable.

Plan well ahead and hope you are lucky.

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ABOUT THE SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN

The SINB is a newsletter produced by and for the Servas community. Editor and Graphic Designer: Michael Johnson Proofreader: Picot Cassidy Translators: Isabelle Girard, Lilly Kerekes

Please send <u>your</u> news for the SI News Bulletin to: <u>newsletter@servas.org</u> We encourage Servas key people around the world to forward this bulletin to all members. Feel free to quote us but please mention the source.

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ABOUT SERVAS INTERNATIONAL

Servas International is an international, non-profit, non-governmental federation of national Servas groups, supporting an international network of hosts and travellers. Our network aims to help build world peace, goodwill and understanding by offering opportunities for personal contacts between people of different cultures, backgrounds and nationalities.

