

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Homestays

Global Works Custom Group Travel

1) How does Global Works choose the homestay community and host families?

Global Works has been committed to providing secure and meaningful homestay experiences for the past 22 years. One area of excitement and anxiety for many students and families is the homestay portion of the trip. Homestay families are carefully selected through a standardized process of interviews, home visits, contractual agreements, and careful consideration. Safety is our primary consideration when selecting communities and families. In addition, we search for families who have the desire to partner with our groups in service work and cultural exchange. Most families live in humble, but sanitary homes and are committed to providing a caring, secure environment for our students. Our communities are typically rural and feature a strong community spirit.

2) Are the families screened?

Yes. All of our families are carefully screened by a Global Works representative prior to allowing any participant to stay in a home. Both the family and living space are evaluated based on criteria designed to select the most appropriate homes and families for both a safe and meaningful experience. Families sign a contract with Global Works stating they have a clear understanding of our rules, guidelines, and expectations. We carefully consider and match students based on age, gender, and preferences to the extent it is possible.

3) What are the communities and homes like?

Like any community in the United States, all of our communities are different from one another. The same goes for the families we choose. Typically, our communities, and subsequently the families, are in rustic settings where participants and chaperones should expect conditions significantly different than their own back home. The presence of a variety of animals and some insects IS NOT out of the ordinary. All participants should consider, and must disclose, sensitivities to allergies, foods, and less sanitary conditions that are commonly present on our programs.

4) When will I find out who my host family is?

Our Global Works leaders will determine which participant will stay with which family once he or she has met and spent a day or two with the group. Through this process we are better able to appropriately pair students with one another and with the most appropriate homestay family. We find that this greatly increases the possibility of excellent matches. For this reason, participants will find out about their family while on their trip.

5) How am I placed with my homestay family?

There are a number of factors that go into deciding who goes where and the chaperone(s) and Global Works leader determine the best match possible. The information we use includes (but is not limited to): allergies, diet, age, language proficiency, and personal preference. We do consider students wishes as far as having kids in the home, other teenagers, etc., but cannot always guarantee this will be available. Our first priority is to place each participant with a reputable, responsible, and warm family with an authentic interest in cultural exchange

6) What do we do during a typical day in the homestay?

You will be with your group during most days to work on projects and participate in other activities. Local community members and children will be working and playing alongside you. More specifically, in the morning, after having breakfast with our host families, we will have a brief language lesson and then begin working on community projects or engaging in a variety of activities. We return home for lunch with the families. In the afternoon we may work for an hour or two and then join in a soccer game or other activities in the community. Some evenings, we will get together with the group and our families for dances, game nights, festivals, and/or potluck dinners.

7) Will my host family speak English?

No. Some of the children may have basic English at school, but the majority do not speak English. Remember, we have told each family that you are there to practice Spanish or French. Before arriving to the homestay, we will practice some key phrases in the target language as well as some other useful communication skills. Charades, anyone?!

8) What experience do I need to do a homestay?

We encourage students to have at least two years of Spanish or French in order to participate in a homestay. Other than that, you do not need to have done a homestay previously. The most important thing you can bring to your homestay experience is willingness to try and a desire to learn.

9) Will I be placed in a homestay by myself, or with another student?

We work with your chaperones to determine whether students will have individual or paired homestays. Oftentimes we encourage younger students (i.e. middle schoolers) to have paired homestays.

10) What if there is an emergency?

Participants will know where their chaperone(s) and Global Works leader are at all times and vice versa. Participants will carry an Emergency Contact Card that has their leader's beeper and cell phone number. If there is a problem in any home that warrants switching host families, we will organize a move. In addition, Global Works always has evacuation plans for each location that we visit. Your Global Works leader will know where the closest medical facility is and the fastest way to reach it.

10) Should I bring a homestay gift?

You may want to consider bringing a small "host" gift for your family. You will not find out the make-up of your host family a couple days into the trip, so plan on one "host" gift for the entire family or anticipate a host mom, dad and kids. If the makeup of your family is different than anticipated you will find other members of the community for your gift. We recommend that you bring something that represents your hometown or something that you like to do. For example, a book or calendar of photos, a card game, Frisbee, team t-shirts, or arts and crafts supplies. Consider your first night in the homestay and how the gift may help you "break the ice" with your host family.

11) Will I be able to keep in touch with my homestay family after the trip?

Definitely! We encourage participants to write letters and emails and send photos to their homestay families after the trip. This is a wonderful way to stay connected to the host community. We will help you with this by emailing you homestay contact information once your trip is complete. Our homestay families especially love to receive mail from their "American son/daughter" during holiday times and birthdays!