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Free vacation lodging through home swapping

Posted: May 1, 2009 10:57 AM



Friday, May 1, 2009
Reported by: Carina Corral

It is the time of year when you may be thinking about taking your family on a summer vacation.

If money is holding you back, you're in luck. In this special report, Action News will introduce you to a program that allows vacationers to travel abroad without paying for lodging.

Think of it as a home away from home. For years, vacationers have been swapping houses using the program "Home Exchange."



Chris and Kathy Davis

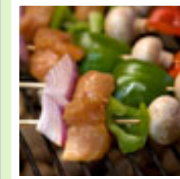
Your Family on KSBY.com



A San Luis Obispo couple we talked with would not travel any other way, and even the movie industry has taken notice. Home Exchange was featured in the movie "The Holiday" starring Cameron Diaz and Kate Winslet. And while these A-listers do

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not need to worry about spending money on vacations, the rest of us do. That's where Home Exchange comes in.



"You put your house on the Internet and then wait for someone to contact you or you can contact them," said Chris Davis sitting

along side his wife, Kathy.

These proud house swappers have exchanged homes with total strangers 14 times.

"We're working on number 15. In two weeks we're going to go to Mexico, and hopefully 16 will be to Rome in August," said Chris.

From England, to London, to a houseboat in the South of France, the Davis' have traveled the world without spending a dime on lodging.

"We've done two or three a year for the last few years. I don't think we'd be able to afford to do that if it weren't for the exchange program," answered Chris when asked about the savings he and his wife have incurred using Home Exchange.

In exchange, tourists come here and stay in the Davis' San Luis Obispo home to experience the Central Coast.

The immediate concerns come to mind: privacy, security and safety. The Davis' said there has never been a problem. "What has happened is people leave the house exactly the way they found it and we do the same thing," said Kathy.

Home swappers are responsible for the upkeep of the home and sometimes they are left in charge of caring for the family pet.

It seems like a small price to pay for what you get in return: a home away from home, anywhere in the world.

It does cost \$99 for a one-year Home Exchange membership. It comes with a guarantee that if you do not swap homes, the second year is free.

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