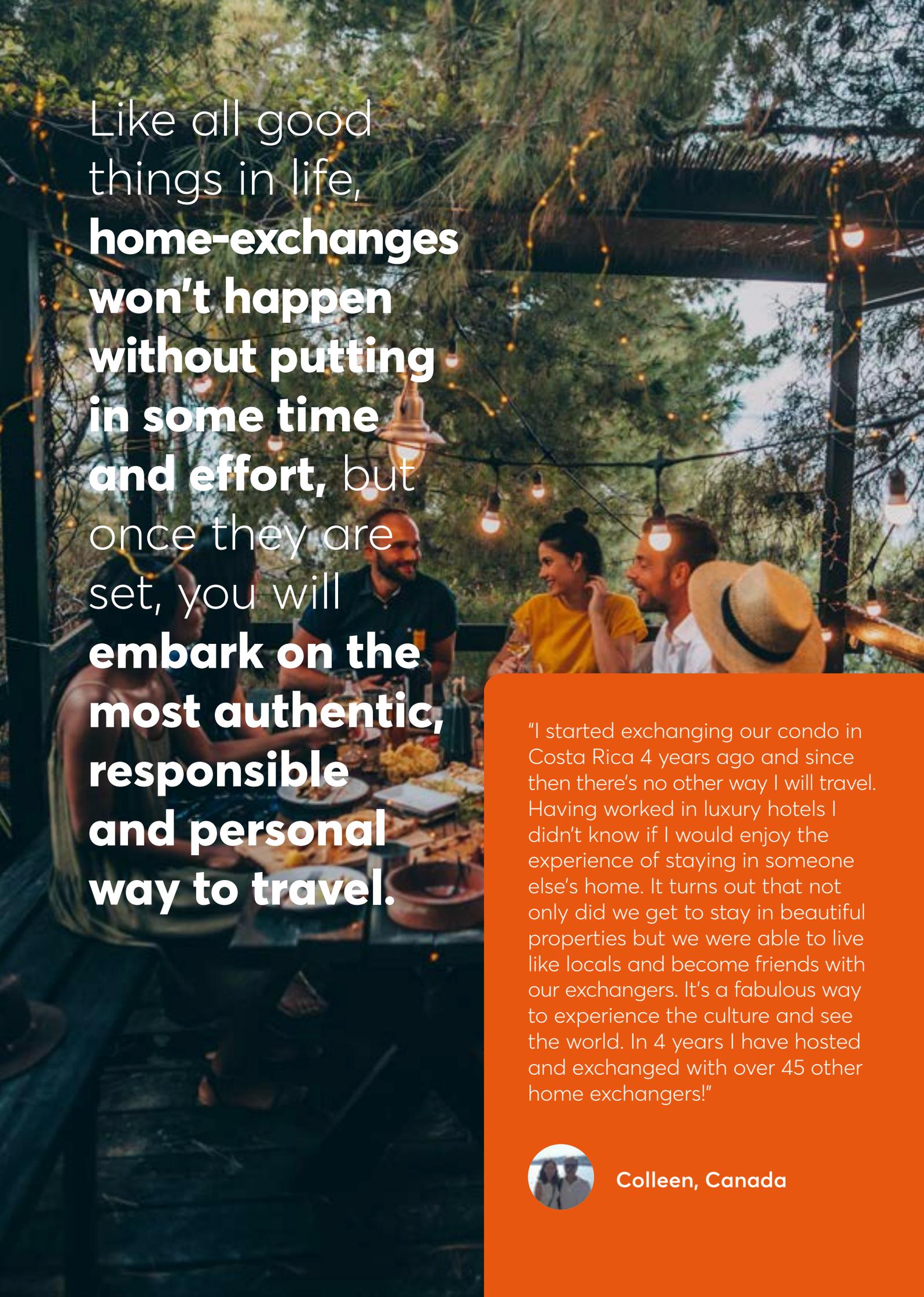




The guide to everything HomeExchange

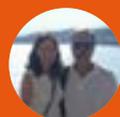
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Like all good things in life,
home-exchanges won't happen without putting in some time and effort, but once they are set, you will **embark on the most authentic, responsible and personal way to travel.**

"I started exchanging our condo in Costa Rica 4 years ago and since then there's no other way I will travel. Having worked in luxury hotels I didn't know if I would enjoy the experience of staying in someone else's home. It turns out that not only did we get to stay in beautiful properties but we were able to live like locals and become friends with our exchangers. It's a fabulous way to experience the culture and see the world. In 4 years I have hosted and exchanged with over 45 other home exchangers!"



Colleen, Canada

The ABC's of home- exchange

Home exchanges are older than the internet!

Keep in mind that home-exchanges started in the 50s, when some teachers were looking for ways to travel for several weeks during the summer without paying high season prices. The market for exchanges expanded, and in 1992 HomeExchange.com was born to facilitate exchanges via the Internet.

Why HomeExchange?

One of the reasons why Members get hooked on home exchanging is because with HomeExchange, you are able to **imagine and create your very own travel experience, and organize yourself. This preparation becomes an important and exciting part of the whole experience!**



HomeExchange also fights mass tourism by helping members travel like a local, encouraging support of local economies and minimizing environmental impact. [Learn more here.](#)

Here's a **"do-it-yourself" guide to help you find your first HomeExchange** and start living your dreams in a more affordable, human, and sustainable way. In it, you will find tips from some of our HomeExchange Ambassadors, who are very experienced HomeExchangers.

**"Happiness
HomeExchange
is a journey, not
a destination."**

Kinds of home exchange

The initial method of "I'll stay at your home and you'll stay at mine" was previously the only way to exchange, but we realized that sometimes it is very difficult to organize a simultaneous exchange because the other person may not be interested in coming to your city/region or they won't be traveling at the same time.

That is why the option of non-reciprocal exchanges was created: that is, someone from Barcelona goes to Paris and the person from Paris doesn't go to Barcelona, but goes to New York instead, and in turn, the one from New York decides to go to Hawaii.

There are currently 2 types of home exchanges



Traditional exchange

Two people exchange their respective homes on the same dates (simultaneous exchange) or on different dates (non-simultaneous exchange)



GuestPoints exchange

If the other person isn't interested in coming to your home, but their home is available, you can offer them GuestPoints to stay at their home.

"I began home-exchanging even before the internet existed, more than 35 years ago. I'd place an ad in the newspaper, and we'd exchange Polaroid snapshots. I became hooked. I've exchanged dozens and dozens of times over the years, enjoyed new pets, family photos on the walls, interesting art, and made new friends. I've saved thousands of dollars and had way more fun than I would have had staying in a little hotel room! Last summer, I exchanged my Maui home for a 52-foot sailboat in the Greek islands!"



Sharon, USA



Guestpoints

After signing up with HomeExchange, you will see that you have been credited points (GuestPoints) and that your home has also been assigned a certain points value per night.

At HomeExchange, we want to make it easy for you to find your first exchange, whether it's a traditional simultaneous exchange or a GuestPoints exchange. In fact, the reason we give you welcome GuestPoints is to help you organize a GuestPoints exchange.

Your home's value

Depending on the location, the number of available beds and the different amenities that you offer at your home (wifi, elevator, swimming pool...), your home will be assigned its GuestPoints value. Imagine that your house has a value of 100 GP and you get an exchange request for 7 days from a Member who lives in place you don't want to visit, but your home is available those 7 days and you want to travel. You can accept that exchange as a non-reciprocal GuestPoints exchange and host the other Member for 700 GP. You can then use these GuestPoints to travel to the destination of your choice.

Your GuestPoints Balance

If you stay at another Member's home, you use GuestPoints; on the other hand, when you host someone at your home, you receive GuestPoints.

"HomeExchange has opened up an even bigger range of homes to swap with and the GuestPoints allow more flexibility in terms of choosing where to go and for how long. Our goal will be for HomeExchange to continue encouraging strong mutual trust and loyalty between Members to welcome each other generously and look after each others' homes as carefully as we can."



Rachel, Ireland

Pro Tip

Fill out your Home's Profile to 100% and make sure all available amenities are checked to ensure that the GuestPoints value assigned to your home is correct. If you don't agree with the assigned value, you can increase it by an extra 30 GuestPoints or decrease it.

Simultaneous exchanges with GuestPoints?

Normally, simultaneous and non-simultaneous exchanges are done without GuestPoints - "I stay at your home and you stay at mine" - is the simple traditional way, but in some cases, Members also decide to use GuestPoints for this type of exchange.

Examples:

1. GuestPoints may be useful if the simultaneous exchange does not have the same duration. Member A is travelling for 10 days and will be staying 5 days in the house of Member B and 5 days at a friend's house. Member B will be travelling for 10 days, but will need to stay in the home of Member A for the entire duration of his trip.
2. The home of Member A has a higher nightly GuestPoints value than the home of Member B. Both Members agree to use GuestPoints for the extra amenities offered in the home of Member A.

You can always decide freely whether or not you would like to use GuestPoints in simultaneous exchanges, you just have to agree on it with your exchange partner in advance, before finalizing the exchange. You can activate or deactivate GuestPoints for simultaneous exchanges on the Home Edit page.

Number of GuestPoints Per Night

Based on your home's location, the amenities offered, and the number of beds, we will suggest an amount of GuestPoints per night. We recommend that you double-check that all of the required information has been correctly added, so that your home's GuestPoints value is correct.

Step-by-step guide to sign up and start exchanging

1. Sign up for free

Join the HomeExchange Community!

2. Create your home(s): Add descriptions

Tell the Community about the place you live in and why you love it so much

3. Add photos of your home

Best way to attract offers and make exchanges is high-quality, sun-filled photos

4. Update your calendar

Add your dates of availability

5. Create your profile

Introduce yourself to the Community

6. Select your preferred destinations

Where would you like to go on your first exchange?

You're all set, enjoy!

Travel as much as you want, the sky is the limit!

1. Sign up for free

HomeExchange is free to join. You can create your personal and home profiles, look for exchanges in as many destinations as you wish, see the homes you could stay in, contact Members to propose an exchange... You won't have to pay anything until you agree on and finalize an exchange. Only then will you be asked to activate your Membership.

This means that if you were hesitant about how many people would be interested in going to your home or how long it would take you to find an exchange, you can simply add your home and try to look for an exchange before having to pay.

2. Create your home(s): The descriptions

There are 3 fields to fill out:

Title

What would you call your home? For example: "Family house with garden in Valencia", "Large apartment, bright and central", "Studio for 2, very central". - Make it catchy! ;)

Your Home

Explain what your home is like, what you like about it, its special nooks and crannies...The photos will help viewers get to know the home, but words give you an opportunity to highlight those extra special things (i.e. lots of board games, a propane grill, or that the afternoon sunlight creates an extra special glow in your living room!).

The Neighborhood

This is where you can add context and explain what the neighborhood is like where you live (residential or very lively, with many shops...), how you can get downtown (on foot, via public transportation...) or what services you have close to home (pool, park, bakery...). Take advantage of this section to explain the nearby tourist attractions and larger cities there are close to your area, especially if you live in a little town.

3. Create your home(s): The photos

During the registration process, you will have to upload descriptions and photos of your home(s). You have to upload a minimum of 5 photographs per home, although we always say the more the merrier. Many Members choose their exchanges based on inspirational pictures and whether or not the images give a good vacation vibe.

Upload photos of all of the home's rooms, so that other Members have a good idea of the living space. Show off the uniqueness of each room. (i.e. include photos of your art and interior design, display all the books and movies on the shelves, show the children's playroom and all the toys, set dining room table or add a decorative flower vase...)

Many Members also post pictures of their neighborhood, city, or region (in addition to those of their home). This can be a good way to show off all tourist attractions in your area -especially if you live in a lesser-known city/region.

In short, if your ad has more than 15 photos of your home and at least 5 of your region/city, you're on the right track!

Pro Tip

Clean and organize the rooms before taking pictures; and take them during the day, preferably on a sunny day. If you want, you can take them directly on your cell phone and upload them with the [HomeExchange app](#). It's a piece of cake!

Pro Tip

It is important for you to show your home is it truly is, to be transparent, and to avoid misunderstandings or false expectations. Don't be ashamed to show your home; every home has something special; just think about what it is and make it work to your advantage in your photos and description. Do you have a very cozy room? Take more pictures of the room from different angles or show its details. Do you have a backyard? Many Members love a nice outdoor space...

4. Create your home(s): The calendar

It is very important for you to add your home's availability in the calendar so that your home will appear in the search when other Members are looking for an exchange.

Check your calendar and **use green** to mark the dates you would like to go on an exchange and you are open to any kind of exchange. If your home is available on other dates, but you're not looking to travel, **mark them in blue**. This means that you are open to hosting someone for GuestPoints, but you will not be travelling to their home. You can **use orange** to mark the dates you are looking for a reciprocal exchange either by going to their home on the same dates or on different dates.

When you finalize an exchange, it will **automatically appear in red** on your calendar so that other Members know that your home is not available on those dates.

5. Your profile

Once you have completed your home information, you must create your personal profile. The personal profile is important because it gives you a chance to introduce yourself and your entire family to other HomeExchange Members and potential exchange partners.

We recommend that you upload a picture of you and your family, or of you with the people you'll be traveling with. Introduce yourself and introduce the other Members of your household, including your pets if you have any. You can explain what each of you do, how old your children are (if you have any), your hobbies, or what you like to do most when you travel. Think about the kinds of things you would like to know about other Members, and include that in your profile. This way, the other Members can better decide whether you are a good match.

6. Select your preferred destinations

You surely have one must-see destination in mind, right? In your profile's Preferred Destinations section you can add up to 20 preferred destinations. Adding preferred destinations increases your chances of organizing an exchange with another Member from one of these areas.

You can also use the Reverse Search to see who is interested in coming to your area. The Reverse Search is very easy to use. All you need to do is click on Reverse Search, add your location, and click "Apply". The search will return all the homes from around the world looking to come to the location you entered in the Reverse Search. You can even widen the search area by adding a location that is close to your home (ex. larger city, county, state, etc...).

You not only have the option to save your favourite destinations, you can also save your favourite homes by clicking on the heart icon on each home. You can see who has favoured your home under the 'They love my home' tab on your account. Favouriting and checking who has favoured your home could lead to the start of a new reciprocal exchange!

Pro Tip

When you have completed your home and personal profile to 100%, verify your home address to boost your trust within the community. Verified profiles show up first in the search and have an 80% increased chance of finalizing an exchange. You will need to upload to our secure server an official photo ID (i.e. Passport, Driver License...) and a recent invoice (i.e. Internet bill, gas bill...) showing the same address of the home you have published on HomeExchange. Our team will check these documents and mark your profile as verified... for free!

[More information](#)

Pro Tip

Even if you have a preferred destination, you may receive proposals from other places. Don't just write off these HomeExchange proposals! You might just discover a place that you never thought of visiting. The more flexible you are in terms of destination and dates, the easier it is to find an exchange.



"While completing our listing, we worried so much about having nice photos, a beautiful description of our home and the surrounding area, but then we wondered why our amazing listing wasn't appearing in the search results. Turns out, it was because we forgot to update the calendar with our availability!"



Horacio, Argentina

"We started to travel to unexpected places in 2009 when we were offered an exchange in countries that we never thought about visiting. Our most memorable exchange was one in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and what a welcome we received! We hardly knew where this island was... and friends of our exchangers helped us out and gave us such a warm welcome!"



Alain, Canada

How to trust and exchange with peace of mind

How to trust others

Exchanging homes is based on **mutual respect and trust**.

We are all guests and hosts, and we are governed by the following motto: **treat their home how you would like yours to be treated**.

How to Trust

- Communication is key! Is it smooth? Do you like the answers you're getting? Do you think your host has a hospitable attitude?
- It is important for you to maintain communication with your exchange partners even when you've finalized the exchange and your trip is still months away. This will help create mutual trust.
- If their profile is verified, it means that our team has verified that that person exists and lives in that house.
- If they have already exchanged homes, read the reviews left by other Members on their personal and home profiles.
- Read the profile and descriptions carefully. Do you like what you see? Is it compatible with your take on life? Is it a profile similar to yours?
- Take a look at the pictures of the house: if the room is messy, that may give you some clues.

You are absolutely allowed to **say NO to an exchange as many times as you want**, until you find someone with whom you feel comfortable exchanging. **When you are comfortable, go ahead, launch and finalize the exchange so that it is registered and has all the guarantees of HomeExchange!**

Pro Tip

Share your travel plans with your exchange partners, they may be able to give you some good recommendations about the area. If you have to book airline tickets, let them know when you've made the purchase so they can see that you're still committed.

How to write a good exchange proposal

Your profile is now ready. You've started to search by destination and date, and you see several homes that fit your travel plans. The next step is to write a message to each Member to propose an exchange.

Although sometimes you'll get lucky and find an exchange within 24 hours after sending a few messages, experience tells us that it takes at least 15 messages to find an exchange. And, we are not going to lie to you, in some cases, you may even need to send 100 messages. But once you find one, the reward will be so great that it will have been worth the time spent searching.

Here are several tips to convince a Member that it is worth exchanging homes with you:

- Introduce yourself and those who will be traveling with you. Share with the host the number of people you are travelling with and their ages.
- Explain why you want to travel to that place, how many days, and at what time (are you flexible or do you have set dates?) ...
- Show that you have read their profile descriptions by explaining what you like about their home.
- Propose the type of exchange you want: simultaneous or with GuestPoints? Ideally, you are open to all kinds of exchanges and can see which option fits both of you best.
- If it's your first exchange, explain what attracted you to our community.
- Tell them what tourist attractions you have in your area and what you love about your home: what is there to do if they come spend a few days in your area?
- Personalize your proposal as much as possible: if it is a family with children, tell them about the kid-friendly activities in your area. If you see that they like hiking, tell them about a couple of excursions that they could go on...

Pro Tip

HomeExchange has a system that saves your last message and copies and pastes it into each new conversation. It will also automatically update the name of the Member. Once you have the basic text already written, you can send personalized messages a lot faster.

"My first home exchange was the most memorable. It was the first home exchange for both of us and we were both nervous about how to prepare and what to expect. With each other's help we figured out how to plan for hosting each other (such as making a home/ neighborhood guide and sharing it with each other) and what kind of questions we wanted answered as we were negotiating our exchange. I learned a lot during our first exchange and was overwhelmed by how great the experience was for my family and theirs."



Misty, Canada

"Even though it is not possible for me to accept every request I receive, I know that the Member took the time to send me a personalised request so I make the time to reply to each of them, even if it is to decline their request. I want to encourage every HomeExchanger to reply to every request even if the answer is negative or if they need to use the default reply. I'm sure that the person sending the request appreciates the little gesture."



Luis, Spain

Finalise your exchange with our annual Membership

Registering and searching for an exchange is free; we will only ask you to activate your Membership once you've agreed to an exchange with another Member.

Our Annual Membership

With a single payment of \$220 per year, you can go on as many exchanges as you want and in the event that you don't find one, no worries, the 2nd year is free ([read more about our HomeExchange guarantees](#)).

What if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong and one of the two parties has to cancel the exchange, the HomeExchange team is in charge of helping you find a solution. All Members with finalised exchanges are covered by our guarantees of finding you another exchange or you will be financially compensated.

[Learn more](#)

The Membership also gives you Member Support at your fingertips and protection against property damages. You can contact us via email or in the community chat, where our Ambassadors will answer your questions based on their exchange experiences.

A quick recap...

Remember, these six things to help you find more exchanges! Ready to start organizing your first exchange?

[3, 2, 1.... Exchange!](#)

Final Tips

- Fill out your personal and home profiles to 100%.
- Add your home's availability in the calendar.
- Include your preferred destinations.
- Get Verified!
- Try the Reverse search.
- Try and be flexible.