

HOMESTAY & HOUSING EXPECTATIONS

HOMESTAYS

As many Experiment alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program.

Family structures vary in every culture. The Experiment values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities and expectations.

The Experiment in-country partners work to match Experimenters with the best possible families, many of whom have worked with us for decades. The Experiment staff and our in-country partners facilitate an extensive recruitment and vetting process that includes home visits and, where permissible, background checks. The interests of both the Experimenter and the local host families are considered when identifying homestay placements. Host families attend orientation and pre-arrival sessions prior to meeting their homestay Experimenter.

All Experimenters from a program group, are placed with families in the same region or town, which allows for group get-togethers, meetings, and cultural activities and for Experimenters to be able to directly contact their group leaders at all times. The homestay experience lasts between one and three weeks, depending on the program.

The following are typical homestay expectations in an Experiment program:

1. Most often, Experimenters are placed one per household and in some programs, two Experimenters are placed per household.
2. Given the different family structures, we aim to place Experimenters in families who have teenage or school-aged children. However, we do also work with host families with children of any age or no children in the household. Experimenters may share a room with a host sibling.
3. Host families are in close contact with the group leaders, in-country partner, and Experimenter at all times.

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4. If the host family would like to travel with the Experimenter overnight, the Host Family will call both the partner office representative and the group leaders to make arrangements and allow the U.S. Experiment office to get their legal parent/guardian's prior approval. Overnights at another location are not allowed without legal parent/guardian and group leader permission in advance.
5. Host families are actively involved with the Experimenter during the homestay and integrate the Experiment participant into family life. Host family members are expected to use the host country's language as much as possible, instead of English, to promote immersive language learning. There are times when host parents have work arrangements, so another adult family member will be identified in advance to spend time with the Experimenter during their stay in the host family home.
6. All homes are expected to be clean, safe, and pest-free in the context of the local culture, both within the house and in the surrounding neighborhood. Experimenters will have access to safe drinking water. We expect Experimenters to discuss bathroom arrangements and instructions with their host families.
7. Host family locations are within commuting distance (i.e. 1 hour on public transit) of all program activities. Host families support Experimenters to get to and from all group activities. For some programs, Experimenters are expected to ride public transit independently to meet up with the group; the host family, or staff, will teach the Experimenter how to navigate the route prior to their riding independently.
8. Outside of group activities, host families provide three meals a day and account for food allergies and dietary restrictions. We encourage Experimenters to communicate directly with their host families regarding meals. Group leaders and in-country partners can support Experimenters in these conversations.
9. The Experiment provides experiential learning opportunities where participants become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets are accommodated.
10. Experimenters are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all Experiment programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally from the program experience.
11. To accommodate for the complex planning and arrangements, The Experiment will

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communicate host family information to Experimenters and their families after they have departed and prior to the homestay portion of the program.

12. Homestay families are expected to inform the in-country partner and group leaders of any behavior problems, illnesses, or other incidents or significant issues that arise during the homestay. Host families consult with group leaders and in-country partner if the Experimenter requires non-urgent medical support, and seek urgent care in the event of an emergency.

13. Experimenters are expected to respect other people's personal space and privacy.

**These criteria are for primary homestay placements and may differ for homestays during program excursions.*

HOUSING & OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

When not living with a homestay family, Experimenters stay in appropriate accommodations with their group and group leaders, including hotels, dormitories, temples, guest houses, hostels, and campgrounds. Refer to your program itinerary for program-specific details.

1. Experimenters are expected to respect other people's personal space and privacy.
2. It is Experiment policy for participants to stay in their assigned room. Experimenters are not allowed in any other participant's room. Common rooms/spaces are available for visiting.
3. In hostel accommodations, there may be 4 or more participants assigned to a room. Experimenters will be assigned to Experiment rooms only, and will not be roomed with additional guests outside of the program.
4. Each program will have a curfew established by group leaders. This curfew is set to ensure safety, accountability, and adequate rest for all participants. All participants must be in their assigned room by curfew until the program start time. Group leaders will communicate specific curfew times for each destination and conduct end-of-day check-ins with participants.
5. Many hostels and hotels lock their doors after certain hours for security reasons. Participants are expected to plan accordingly to avoid being locked out or disrupting others, and to check with their group leaders daily to confirm any accommodation-specific rules.

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6. Experiment groups are guests in their respective host communities. It is important that the group's presence reflects respect and cultural awareness. All participants are expected to:
 - a. Observe all quiet hours in hostels, hotels, and community spaces.
 - b. Be in their assigned rooms during quiet hours
 - c. Be mindful of noise levels in hallways and shared areas
7. We acknowledge that different cultural contexts have sleeping practices that vary from the typical U.S. American home, Experimenters should have their own bed throughout the program.
8. Experimenters are not to be housed in the same room with a group leader.
9. Peer-to-peer engagement is an important aspect of intercultural exchange. Some programs involve local youth and in-country participants, who may be housed in the same accommodations as the Experiment group. Experimenters are expected to only be roomed with other Experimenters.
10. Program days are active and full of exploration and learning. Adequate rest is essential to maintaining energy, health, and a positive group learning environment. Participants are encouraged to use evening downtime to relax and recharge. Prioritize sleep and self-care to fully enjoy the experience and support the well-being of the group. A culture of collective care means recognizing that staff also need time to rest. Whilst they are always available in urgent or emergent situations, for routine or logistical questions and issues, please respect their boundaries after curfew hours.

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