

WANNA BE A COUCHSURFER?



It has happened to almost every, mostly young, tourist - you get to a destination just wanting to put your head on a pillow for the night without having to fork out much needed wads of cash. The cash is needed for enjoying the foreign city and exploring a number of cultural possibilities.

These were the precise sentiments of a traveller called Fenton who travelled from Boston to Iceland in 2000. Instead of sacrificing money on a hotel rooms, he simply emailed around 1500 Icelandic students in the hope of arousing their hospitality and staying for free. This was the start of today's project called Couchsurfing.

Contrary to popular belief, Couchsurfing is not strictly American as the world's largest hospitality network has over 7000.000 members in 232 countries, including Antarctica. Couch Surfing is a free internet-based hospitality service, which unites people all over the planet for their hospitality. An example of the way it works would be that, for example, a Londoner wishing to show a Spaniard around London would let the Spaniard stay at his/her place during the trip. Money is generally not an issue although refunds for food bills are often made. The Spaniard may choose to reciprocate at some stage, meaning both of them have saved money whilst fully enjoying the cultural aspects of the respective countries.

The site is not only about accommodation, yet a large degree of stress has been placed on the cultural aspects. Naturally, when one allows a virtual stranger to stay in ones house, questions must be raised about safety and verification. The site deals with this problem through a system of verification for security reasons. Members end up belonging to certain categories depending on their level of verification. An optional credit card verification system is available for the same reasons.

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