



Youth

Vol: 31, No: 1, 2024

NEWS BULLETIN

By Youth to Your inner Youth :)



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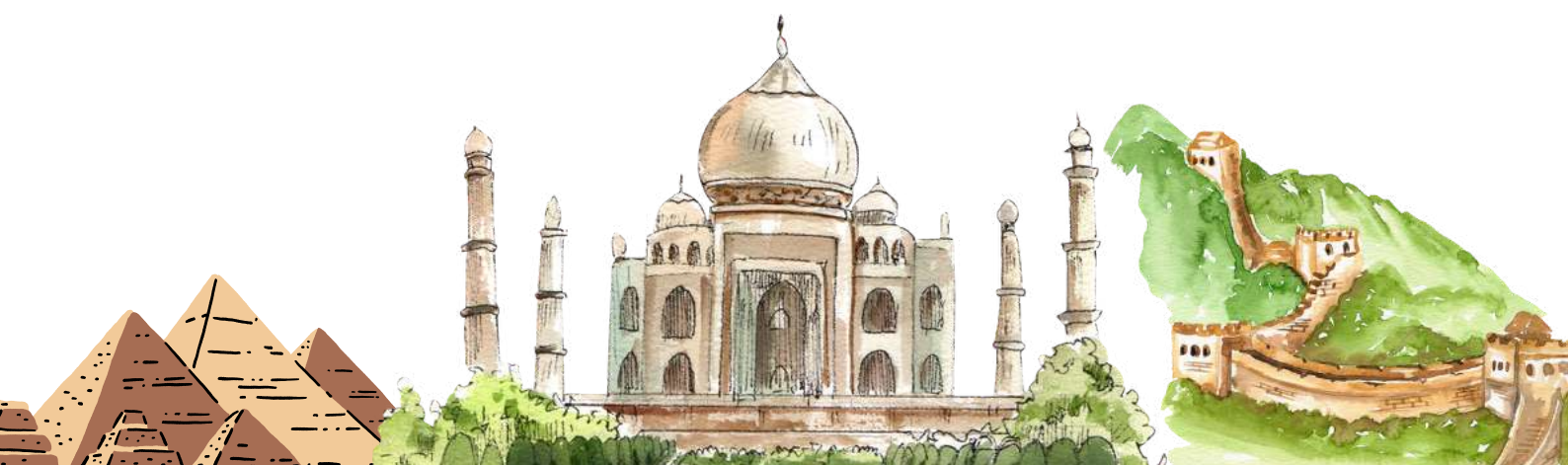
YEAR OF SERVAS

THE START OF THE
DIAMOND ERA

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**OUR THANKS TO ALL THE MEMBERS WHO
SHARED THEIR STORIES AND PHOTOS**



TEAM BEHIND SIYNB

None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.

- Mother Teresa



IGINA GABRIELA PEREIRA (BRAZIL)



SAYAN ROY (INDIA)



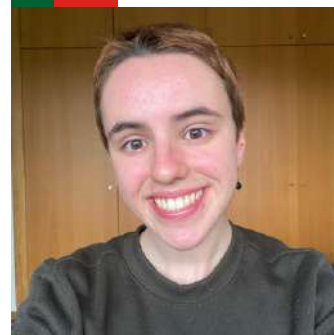
DIEGO NOVOA (PERU)



DAKSHIT CHHADWA (INDIA)



SEBASTIANO FORESTI (ITALY)



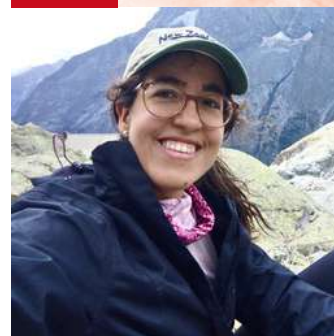
ANNA SELLANI (PORTUGAL)



MANDAR CHOBHARKAR (INDIA)



TAYEZZI BANDA (MALAWI)



ELENA OLIVERA BEGUÉ (SPAIN)

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

I hope you enjoy this special issue of SINB as much as I have – it has been produced entirely by our youth members. We asked the Youth and Families Team if they would like to take charge of this issue – the result, you will agree with me, is electric! Special thanks to (in alphabetical order of countries) Igina Gabriela Pereira (Brazil), Dakshit Chhadwa, Mandar Chobharkar, and Sayan Roy (India), Sebastiano Foresti (Italy), Tayezzi Banda (Malawi), Diego Novoa (Peru), Anna Sellani (Portugal) and Elena Begué (Spain) for their wonderful work in producing this issue.



Radha B. Radhakrishna,
President of Servas
International

In other news, 2024 is shaping up to be a very active year for Servas globally. We are promoting peace and environmental sustainability by having many events and get-togethers – in person and virtual – such as, regional meetings, peace meetings, youth camps and other local events in which our members can participate. Please participate in as many events as you can. I encourage you to [Click Here](#) to see if there are any events posted in which you would like to participate. There are always new events being posted there.



HISTORIC DIJON



I am delighted to announce that SI Exco has accepted the offer from Servas France to host the next SICOGA in 2025. SICOGA will be held in beautiful, historic Dijon, France, from October 3 to 9, 2025. We will provide more information in the upcoming bulletins. Please mark your calendars. We received offers from two Servas member groups for staging the SICOGA – Servas France and Servas Costa Rica. While accepting the offer from Servas France, SI Exco approved a motion that we will make every possible effort to hold the 2028 SICOGA in Costa Rica.





(Mei and Danny), members of UN team attending CSW

I hope some of you have been able to catch some of the action from CSW (Commission on the Status of Women). This meeting takes place in mid-March every year. Servas members from many countries participated this year – both in person and virtually. The SI UN team organized three informative and inspirational presentations – presenting stories about the plight and progress of women in the different parts of the world. This is a great example of the work we do to spread the message about important issues. I was able to meet many of the participants during a dinner. Since the event was held close to my house, I also hosted one participant.

Recently, I met with many members of Costa Rica during a brief holiday there. It was a special visit for my daughter who was traveling for the first time through Servas. Growing up, she has experienced travelers from all over the world coming to our house, but this was the first time she traveled herself to stay with a Servas host. It was definitely momentous for her – to experience the affection and care of Servas hosts. Thank you, Costa Rica, for teaching one more young person about the values of Servas! Special thanks to Doñas Ligia



Radha with Bill

and Carmen, and to Virginia, Larissa, Marc, Miguel Angel, Chuz and all others (apologies for not naming them individually) for making our visit special.

I am going to end by giving a shout out to my good friends Marie Spodek and Bill Magargal. Bill is a member of the US Servas board. I would visit them periodically since their house is on the way for me when I visit Cornell University – which I do once or twice a year. They are going to move shortly so I am going to miss them on my future trips. Bill presented me with a poster he had created (of me!). It did embarrass me a little, but I am also deeply touched. Thank you, Bill!

Till next time!

SHARING THE SERVAS SPIRIT

Servas is all about achieving peace through sharing, breaking down prejudices and respecting diversity in this world – the diversity of its people and its environments.

Recently SI Exco launched the challenge to a group of young Servas members to create our first SINB of 2024. We contacted some Servas youth and we were pleased that the challenge was accepted by them with great enthusiasm. Michael Johnson, the SINB chief editor, was also pleased with the idea and has been in contact with this youth team, advising them and providing his support.



CARLA KRISTENSEN
VICE PRESIDENT OF
SERVAS INTERNATIONAL



1985 trip with friends Amsterdam

I joined Servas in late 1980 as a young girl. I made a trip through Europe by train, with a group of friends. We had all recently joined Servas. On this trip, we had the best time of our lives meeting Servas members across Europe. At that time, my country, Portugal, had been a democracy for just over a decade. Before that Portugal was a “closed” country, and it was really difficult to travel abroad. So, my friends and I were eager to explore the world and learn how people lived in other countries. We started the trip full of expectations. That trip changed my life. I became a more self confident person, more open to the diversity of this world and better at understanding its problems. It also

made me aware of what makes us similar as human beings. A stranger is only a stranger before you meet him or her and become friends. Nowadays, I see that the world has changed and Servas has adapted and developed a lot too. However, the young people of today still have the same desire that I had, to travel the world and experience the rich diversity of people, cultures, environments. In Servas, we have always paid special attention to youth. We have programmes designed to fit young people’s needs, like SYLE (Servas Youth Language Experience), and Youth Camps. We fund youth to attend youth meetings and the SICOGAs. We have a WhatsApp group for Servas Youth under 30. When I look at our Youth of today, I see more connections, more involvement and more togetherness than what I had experienced 30 years ago. Our youth are leading the way in raising questions about issues that are of concern. In fact, the questions they raise affect us all: what kind of planet do we live on and what can we do to better our lives and that of future generations? What can we do to improve human and more specifically, women’s rights, and sustainability of the environment? How can we be responsible in the use of technology?

These are some of the topics that are being discussed by youth activists, including our young Servas members. We have to listen to them and support their demands!

We really hope you enjoy reading and exploring this **Servas International Youth News Bulletin**.



Africa Regional and Youth Meeting Uganda 2019

FROM THE DESK OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The third day of SICOGA 2022, the Servas International Conference and General Assembly in Panchgani (India) marked a significant moment for me. Mr. Abhay Shah, the then National Secretary of Servas India, approached me to contest the election for the Development Committee. I expressed doubts about my visibility within the organization, considering my relatively short tenure compared to



BHUDEB CHAKRAVARTI
 Convenor, Servas International Development Committee

seasoned members with over 25 years of involvement. Despite my contributions in designing use cases for Servas.org V2 and resolving technical issues for Servas members, I harboured uncertainty about my electability. However, to my astonishment, I emerged victorious in the election alongside my esteemed colleagues: Jamie Robertson (UK), Evren Ozkan (Turkey), Pamela Yang (Taiwan), and Neuma Dantas (Brazil). Following this unexpected turn of events, our inaugural meeting on January 8, 2023, saw me unanimously elected as the Convenor of the Development Committee, marking the beginning of my journey.

In my role as Convenor, my foremost objective was to foster unity among members through regular meetings, leading us to establish a monthly meeting schedule on the first Sunday of each month. Additionally, we expanded our committee by welcoming two Co-opted members: Marguerite Hills (USA) and Exton Mtande (Malawi), and appointed a youth coordinator, Sayan Roy (India), thereby ensuring global representation in our endeavours.



Bhudeb Chakravarti
 (India)
 Convenor



Jamie Robertson
 (UK)
 Member



Evren Ozken
 (Turkey)
 Member



Pamela Yang
 (Taiwan)
 Member



Neuma Dantas
 (Brazil)
 Member



Marguerite Hills
 (USA)
 Co-opted Member



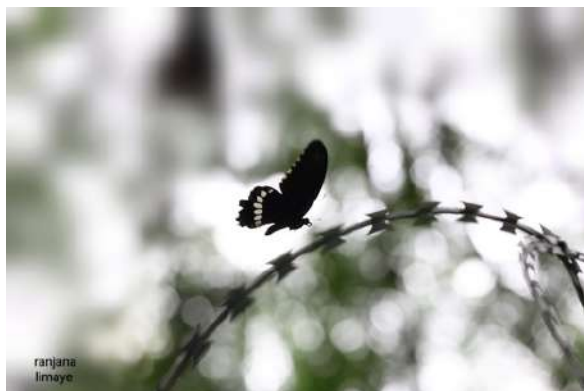
Exton Mtande
 (Malawi)
 Co-opted Member



Sayan Roy
 (India)
 Youth Co-ordinator

Recognizing our pivotal role in Servas's growth through member induction and support for under-represented countries, we sought to engage members in various activities. To achieve this, we proposed the formation of Special Interest Groups, encompassing themes such as World Peace, Social Justice, Environment & Climate, Cultural Exchange, Creative Arts, and Learning New Languages. Through a Google form, we solicited input from Servas members regarding their interests and preferred modes of participation.

In commemoration of the International Day of Peace, we orchestrated Servas Social Music Collective Songs under the guidance of DC Member Evren Ozkan. Additionally, we hosted the Servas Photography for Peace event in collaboration with the Project Paco Foundation. Numerous Servas members contributed their photographs for this occasion. The event featured a captivating presentation by esteemed photographer Mr. Prabal Basu, showcasing the submissions from members. Among them, two standout photographs were chosen as the Winner and Runners-up. Ranjana Limaye from India secured the winning position, while Giulia Nemeve from Italy emerged as the runners-up.



Winning Photograph:
Ranjana Limaye (India)



Runners-up Photograph:
Giulia Nemeve (Italy)

We extended assistance to other countries in hosting regional meetings and conferences, emphasizing the need for increased international collaboration. Our call-to-action urges countries to step forward and take the lead in organizing events on topics of mutual interest, while also inviting suggestions

for future initiatives aimed at Servas's growth. Additionally, we welcome suggestions from members for events that can foster the development of Servas. It's essential to involve our members in diverse programs, and the Development Committee stands ready to assist in organizing such initiatives.

Our overarching objective remains the promotion of world peace through travel, cultural understanding, and active participation in events showcasing the diversity of global societies.

A questionnaire is prepared by Servas International Development Committee (SIDC), in order to get your ideas on how to grow Servas locally and internationally. Additionally, there is an intention to initiate special interest groups among Servas members around the world in order to promote the development of Servas and SIDC would also like to get your opinion around this topic.

Your valuable inputs will help us to grow Servas. Please take 10 minutes of your time and share your answers with us (access the questionnaire by clicking the links: [English Version](#), [Spanish Version](#), [French Version](#)).

Regards,
Servas International Development Committee (SIDC)

Email: development@servas.org



DESIGN OF SERVAS 75 YEARS LOGO

By Sayan Roy



"Talk to yourself once in a day...Otherwise you may miss meeting an EXCELLENT person in this World" - Swami Vivekananda

Since childhood, I've had an innate passion for traveling, exploring new locales, meeting diverse people, and immersing myself in different cultures. Upon learning about Servas International from Bhudeb Chakravarti, the Convenor of the Development Committee, I was immediately captivated and joined without hesitation. Recognizing my enthusiasm and proficiency in crafting social media content, the DC convenor invited me to serve as the youth coordinator, a role I readily accepted.

Originally hailing from the quaint town of Kaliyaganj in eastern India, I later relocated to the vibrant city of Hyderabad for employment, where I was mesmerized by its charm. Joining Servas further expanded my horizons, facilitating interactions with individuals worldwide. I actively participated in Servas activities, assisting Bhudeb Chakravarti in organizing the Photography for Peace event and designing posters for DC-organized events.

To my delight, Carla, the International Vice President, extended an invitation for me to join the editorial team for a special Servas newsletter curated and published solely by youth members. This opportunity allowed me to collaborate with an exceptional team of youth from Brazil, Spain, Peru, and India, marking just the beginning of my journey.

When tasked with designing the logo for Servas' 75th anniversary celebration, I felt overwhelmed. Despite having expertise in logo design, I questioned whether I could do justice to such an important task. After careful consideration, I settled on a theme and crafted the logo, incorporating six shades of yellow and orange to symbolize the six continents to which we belong. I preserved the original Servas logo to maintain harmony and integration in my design.



SOME GREAT EXPERIENCES WITH SERVAS

By Ariel Farfan



Ariel with Tere and Helena

As a young Servas member, I had my first Servas travel experience alongside my family. We received a heartfelt invitation from one of the most cherished couples, Tere and Cezar. This unique opportunity emerged due to my involvement in mural painting, and my reputation within the member community. They admired my work and graciously invited me to embellish the water tank at their Vinhedos-SP residence, where I stayed with my brother. During our visit, they

introduced us to the city’s most cultural places and granted us the artistic freedom to create a mural inspired by the local landscape and their couple’s life as Servas members.



This experience held immense significance for me both professionally and socially. It provided me with the opportunity to delve into mural painting in an entirely new setting, allowing me to explore creative avenues. On the social front, I actively engaged with Tere and Cesar’s family—participating in morning walks, assisting with food preparation, exploring downtown São Paulo as one part of our itinerary and attending meetings with local members. This immersive experience taught me valuable lessons about gracious hospitality, leaving me thoroughly enchanted by the blend of professional and social encounters.



Ariel in front of one of her murals

Additionally, I had the privilege of introducing the couple to my hometown when they visited Alvany, a Servas member who initially connected me with the Servas Brazil group. Here in Petrolina, we embarked on a memorable trip along the São Francisco River, exploring Massangano Island—one of our region's most famous islands.



More recently, during a congress related to my field of study, I crossed paths with another Servas member in Fortaleza-CE. Together, we explored the city through walks and shared experiences. However, the pinnacle of my journey was the 2023 Servas Latin America **Youth** Eco-Camp. Similar to my mural work in Vinhedos, I created a mural at the camp's reception. This artistic endeavor served as an exchange for my family's accommodation, and it proved to be an enriching professional experience. Significantly, the workshop involved both foreign and Brazilian Servas members, fostering a dynamic and rewarding exchange where Servas participants could make lasting physical and social impressions.



**SERVAS
LATIN AMERICA
YOUTH ECO-CAMP**

AN UNEXPECTED TRIP OF A LIFETIME

By Abbey Ortner Ham



My story begins in September 2023 as I left Australia at 20 years old with a one-way flight to commence a completely unplanned solo Europe trip. After a week of drifting through the crowded streets of Amsterdam and Berlin, feeling lost among the throng of tourists, I began to doubt whether I'd find the community and sense of belonging I'd dreamt of being a part of.

On a whim, I met with an old friend of my parents for brunch, and it was over plates of pastries that she recommended I look into Servas. A recommendation that profoundly shaped the trajectory of my travels and my life.

I was immediately enthralled, yet I admit, slightly apprehensive of how such an incredible association could be so seemingly unknown.

After an online interview with Bartley, the Servas travel organizer of Victoria, Australia, I became well acquainted with the nature and intentions of Servas. I reached out to a few hosts, and the first doors opened to me in the suburbs of Paris. A kind family who shared a meal with me and many conversations. In awe of their generosity, I cried that night feeling as though I'd received a gift greater than I'd ever imagined. Now I know that I have.

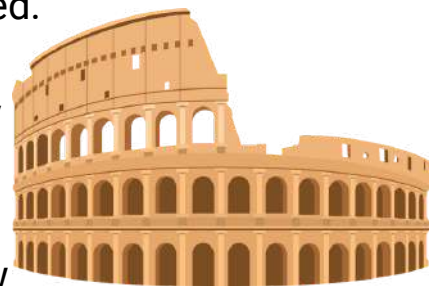


I traversed through **France, Italy and Spain** staying with 15 hosts.

I helped to work on a chalet in the French Alps, made traditional pizza in Italy and laughed until I was in stitches spending time with my host and now close friend in Seville. I'm sure if you ask any of the people I stayed with, they will remember me by the smell of spices as I cooked curries, an attempt at returning some of their hospitality.

After staying with Aurora, an incredible woman in Milan, I was introduced to the network of **Servas youth** and had the opportunity to stay with others similar in age to me. This was very unique, and I have hope that Servas will continue in future generations if more youth become involved.

Servas is a movement of human kindness and a community that has space for anyone aspiring to share and connect with others. The values prompt deep self-reflection, and by meeting people across the world, I was confronted with how the events of wars, political disruption and climate change are impacting people's daily lives. But above all, I discovered that the strength of the human spirit grows when united with others, and I have no doubt that with each Servas experience, seeds of positivity and peace are being planted across the globe.



Servas gave me a sense of direction and belonging at a time where I often felt overwhelmed by the vastness of our world and finding my place within it.

I thank all whom I met on my journey and encourage you, if you haven't already, to become a part of this ever expanding and a life-altering community.



Elena O Begue, one of Abby's hosts



BEING DAY HOST FOR THE FIRST TIME IN BRAZIL

By Igina Gabriela Pereira

I felt a surge of excitement when I learned that I would be a day host for the very first time. The prospect of introducing my city to someone who had never experienced Brazil before filled me

with anticipation. Despite my nervousness about language differences, I was relieved that I could speak English – after all, it would be my first time having conversations with a native English speaker in person. My guest, by the way, was coming from the USA and stayed in Petrolina (my hometown) for five days. In Petrolina, I showed him most of the main cultural attractions and made sure he sampled some local delicacies along the way. We kicked off our city tour with a visit to an açai shop, where he tried açai for the first time and absolutely loved it. In his own words, 'açai was his newfound passion.' From there, we took a boat across the São Francisco River to the neighboring city of Juazeiro. Here, we enjoyed an amazing view of Petrolina bathed in the glow of a beautiful sunset. Still in Juazeiro, Zachary had the chance to savor the most famous Brazilian drink: the caipirinha. We also visited a statue of João Gilberto, one of our most renowned songwriters and singers, the father of Bossa Nova, who was born there. Back in Petrolina, we enjoyed dinner and some pleasant conversations about ourselves at a trendy gastronomic center constructed entirely from shipping containers – a hotspot beloved by the city's youth.



delicacies along the way. visit to an açai shop, time and absolutely was his newfound boat across the São



The following day, we went to a park for a picnic and a chat with some of my friends who were learning English and wanted to practice their conversation skills. It turned into a delightful exchange, where we swapped local expressions from both Brazil and the USA. Zachary also got to taste some more local treats such as coxinhas, bolo de rolo, and guaraná. After that, we played Uno, which turned



Igina and her friends with Zachary

hilarious. We didn't realize that some Americans play Uno strictly by the standard rules without adding any new ones to make the game more challenging and exciting. That's when we introduced him to the 'Brazilian way' of playing Uno.



On the third day, we embarked on a riverboat tour along the São Francisco River, where we had contact with regional singers and music genres such as forró, xaxado and MPB (Brazilian popular music). We also indulged in some local culinary delights and during one of our stops, we saw one of the most important hydroelectric plants in

Brazil. However, the highlight was yet to come: a visit to a stunning island nestled in the heart of the river. Almost untouched by human hands, this island revealed a warm, sandy beach with gentle waves—a place where the São Francisco River's magnificence unfolded right before our eyes.

After that magical experience, we ventured to a local winery, eager to explore the intricate processes behind their renowned sparkling wines, going through the grape plantation until the moment of shipping the wines to other countries. As the day drew to a close, Zachary invited us to have dinner that he had prepared—a heartfelt gesture of gratitude for our hospitality.





The next day, we seized the opportunity to visit a university and speak to some students about Servas and the many possibilities and opportunities for connection that we have as members, along with upcoming events in Brazil. Afterwards, we took Zach to try some local ice cream flavors such as cupuaçu, ciriguela, buriti, babaçu, pequi, and many others. There, amidst scoops of

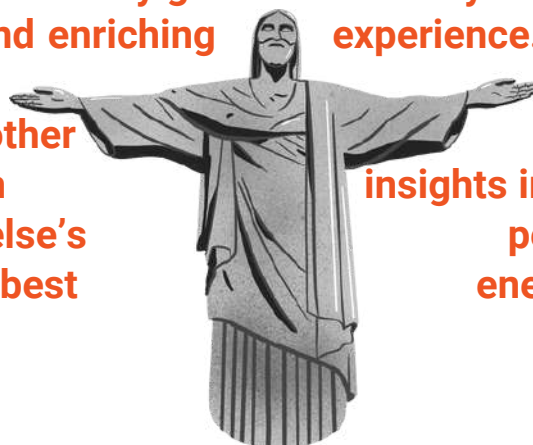
frozen delight, we had some nice talks about the art and history of Brazil.

As a sad moment but not a boring day, we had his last day in Petrolina, which began with a tour in a big grape farm, where we learned about some of the varieties grown in Petrolina and shipped worldwide. In the afternoon, we visited a local artisan workshop to take a look at Petrolina's most imposing sculptures and some of our unique masterpieces crafted from wood, stones, and cement. After leaving the "Oficina do Artesão," we headed to the Juazeiro riverfront, where he took capoeira lessons (one of the things he was most interested in when coming to Brazil). Upon returning to Petrolina, he also participated in a jiu-jitsu training at my friend's house before embarking on his next destination in Brazil.



Igina and Zachary in Grape farm (Petrolina)

To finalize, I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone who made it possible, as it was a wonderful and enriching experience. During this time, I not only formed new friendships but also learned more about another culture and language. Moreover, I gained fresh insights into my own culture and perspective. The Servas energy and vibe ever!



SYLE TOTALLY CHANGED ME FOR LIFE!

By Santiago Heusser

Hey, I'm Santiago Heusser, a 16-year-old volleyball player from Chile and I'm going to share my awesome month-long trip to the **USA** with SYLE.



So, it all kicked off when I was 14. I really wanted to do a semester exchange in the US, but it was way too pricey, so that dream fizzled out. But then my grandpa, who's the president at Chilean Servas, hooked me up with this cool opportunity to explore the US, stay with awesome people, and soak up the culture. My dad and grandpa set me up with four amazing hosts, and off I went to North America.

First stop: New York City with Radhakrishna. NYC was a whirlwind of sights and experiences! From checking out the Statue of Liberty to trying every food there was to try, I got to see a lot of what Manhattan has to offer in the week I had (I'm really proud of myself for that one); it was all non-stop excitement.



(Radha and I walked across New York to get to Columbia University and on the way there I saw a school bus for the first time, it was cool because in Chile we don't really have those, we do have something like those, but they are way smaller and different, and I had only seen those school buses in movies, a lot of movies.)

Next up, Boston with Heidi Gorton. Her place was super chill, and we hit the beach a couple of times for some volleyball action. Plus, we celebrated Chile's National Day with homemade completos. Talk about feeling at home!. It was 18 of September, I decided to make completos, (Chilean hotdogs) for Heidi's friends and family.



(From when Meg invited me to watch a Red Sox game!)

Then I was off to Newton, Boston, with Meg Holland. We checked out Berklee College, Harvard, and MIT. I got to play tons of volleyball there and even caught a Red Sox game. Plus, I got to meet some Chilean friends of Meg from church.

The grand finale? A road trip with Kelly Sackheim. We cruised through Massachusetts and Vermont, feeding deer, hiking mountains, and doing all sorts of awesome stuff. It was the perfect ending to my US adventure.




Finally, I wrapped things up at the US Servas conference, where everyone was super welcoming and curious about my trip.

This whole experience was mind-blowing. I made memories and friends that'll stick with me 'for life'. SYLE totally changed me 'for life'.



FROM USA TO BRAZIL

By Hannah McKenzie



My SYLE experience began in São Paulo, Brazil, before moving to Rio de Janeiro, where I'm currently based. I completed a four-week intensive course in Brazilian Portuguese at a language school located by Ipanema Beach. My experience with SYLE was perhaps a bit unusual: it was not a stand-alone month of travel, but rather the beginning of my longer stay in Brazil.

Elaine graciously welcomed me in São Paulo. As a Portuguese literature teacher, we had fascinating conversations about politics, Brazilian culture, and linguistic nuances. I remember her discussing the profound nature of the difference between the verbs *estar* (to be, temporarily) and *ser* (to be, permanently); this prompted intentions for my time here, how I want to create a life in which I can say not only that “*estou feliz*” (*estar*) – enjoying Rio's beauty, finding my comforts here – but also that “*sou feliz*” (*ser*) – putting the necessary energy for my deeper satisfaction, connection, and inspiration.

Her warm and curious spirit is something special. I enjoyed sitting, chatting in her living room, which at the time was covered with beautiful animations adorns. During a big storm on my second night, we ate the Brazilian jaboticaba, a sweet grape-shaped fruit that grows straight on tree trunks.



Transitioning to Rio, I've met several other Servas hosts, both those I lived with and others whom I met as day hosts. I was welcomed by Salvador and Zula, along with their sons Alvaro and Alexandre. They introduced me to crepioca, a breakfast crepe made from eggs, milk, and tapioca. I loved seeing Zula's beautiful embroidery art and am grateful to the whole family for their patience with my Portuguese. I've been learning the language much more quickly thanks to the generosity of people like them.

Deolinda, another host, welcomed me in her home full of her vibrant art – paintings brimming with life and color just like she is. Deo is a precious person; she moves through the world with total energy and inspiration. She's quick to laugh, has a kind heart, and I consider her a dear friend of mine in Rio. She has been sharing language tips with me too, having worked for many years as a Portuguese teacher for foreigners. I've gotten to know her extended family, as she has continued to include me in her family events – including Christmas celebrations – ever since I've moved out. I'm grateful for this kind of inclusion, like being invited to Andre's (another Servas host) birthday party. In this way, SYLE has already provided me with something special beyond the month-long program itself. It not only offered a language immersion structure aiding my Portuguese learning but also introduced me to a wonderful community and network of support.

I've met other young Servas travelers passing through Rio, and now I feel part of this bigger project of cultural sharing and understanding. I'm so grateful to

all my wonderful Servas hosts who have made me feel so welcome in Brazil. I'm endlessly appreciative of Dennis Mogerman for the scholarship, which enabled me to have this immersive language experience and begin my new chapter in Brazil with such warmth and support



IT WAS OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH SERVAS

By Alban Girard

My girlfriend Elise and I took a sabbatical and traveled around the world for 4 months last year. We are both French and 32, and it was our first experience with Servas. Our destinations were Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, New Zealand, Chile and Peru.

Vietnam is a dense, highly populated country of 90 million people. The traffic is crazy and loud. The food, as everyone knows, is savory, diverse and sometimes excellent, although highly meat-oriented. We were impressed by the refinement of the temples. The mountains in the north are worth a visit, but our favorite place was Hoi An, a gastronomic hotspot with a charming historical city center.

Cambodia is among our favorite countries. I had spent a whole week in the Angkor temples a few years ago, and spent another week this time. Completely worth it - it is one of the most amazing concentrations of architectural greatness one can encounter. I found that the country changed a lot in the last few years.

Laos is more laid back - for the time being. It is our favorite country among the 6 we visited this time. The nature is spectacular and temples are beautiful and underrated. Most of all, the people are incredibly chill, smiling, helpful and kind. "No worries" is a national



In Vang Vieng, Laos



Riding a bus in Laos

motto, alongside one of my favorite sayings, "too much thinking hurts the head". Luang Prabang, a beautiful city in the north, is among the most special places we stayed at. The Elephant Conservation Center is a must: in Laos, for every 10 elephants that die, there is only one birth.





With Shirley in Rotorua, New Zealand

New Zealand is our second-favorite destination. The Servas people that hosted us there were incredible, some of them among the most inspiring people we met. The country is vast and empty, and there are true efforts to preserve the incredible nature. The Maori, Samoa and other Pacific cultures are fascinating. What makes New Zealand truly unique, though, is the mix of cultures, and the relationship most people have with nature. It is, however, very expensive - European prices, really. Without Servas, we simply could not have traveled there. Thank you Servas!

Chile boasts an underrated capital, Santiago (nice street art), the vibrant city of Valparaiso (very nice street art), and the incredible Atacama Desert. The Moon and Mars valleys are astounding. San Pedro de Atacama is a tourist hotspot, but it is not too unpleasant. We met very nice Servas people in Santiago.

Our trip was great: we saw amazing panoramas, met great people, learnt a lot about fascinating cultures, and had a lot of fun. However, everywhere we went, we saw the effects of climate change and the impact of human life

Except in New Zealand, we saw garbage everywhere. All the rivers and lakes seemed polluted. Very little fish survive. The cities are huge and full of cars or motorbikes - high levels of noise and air pollution. All the glaciers we saw are receding and melting; most will have disappeared soon. The people we talked to had little to no climate-change awareness. We decided it was probably our last trip by plane. France and Europe have so much to offer by train! We have truly become aware that globalization is standardizing cities, and feel rather sad that tourism has often become to travel what McDonald is to food. Nevertheless, meeting and getting to know so many different people and cultures has been an extremely enriching experience that we would not have had by staying in our western world.



With Marianella in Santiago, Chile.

MY EXPERIENCE OF THE SERVAS YOUTH MEETING IN BRAZIL – PAIOL GRANDE CAMP

By Diego Oblitas Novoa



My name is Diego Oblitas, I am Peruvian and I am 25 years old. Servas for me has become a very special organization over time. 20 years have passed since my first meeting with Servas. I was only 5 years old and some young Servas from Canada stayed at my house. Since then, my family has not stopped receiving incredible people from around the world throughout time, always being able to exchange experiences and values, as well as an incredible perspective on life.

“We are people who belong to all parts of planet Earth, wherever our adventurous heart directs us,” is one of the most important messages that Servas has left me, together with always sharing and building love and respect with others. At the end of the day, we are all human beings.

My Servas youth meeting in Brazil was one of the most incredible experiences I have been able to take part in throughout my short life. I met many young people who were interested in getting out of the monotony and meeting other human beings, guided by curiosity. We exchanged words, knowledge, hugs, experiences, laughter and, above all, we found a great family.

The objective of this Latin American meeting was to establish relationships between young SERVAS from the same continent with the aim of promoting peace. There were young Servas from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and also one from the USA and France. Although not all of us spoke Spanish, this was not an obstacle to connect. In fact, it strengthened us through a continuous and prolific exchange.

At the Paiol Grande camp, which was one of the most beautiful places I have visited in my life, surrounded by beautiful nature and people with big hearts, we carried out several activities where we could get to know each other better and generate a closer connection. Without much technology, we spent the entire day doing activities with each other. Even though if they were simple talks, they became very special ones.

The camp promoted peace through friendship and allowed many young Servas to experience what it is like to know other cultures and know that, in the end, we are all equal. Everyone of us has thoughts and desires to live and experience, always starting from a base of peace, love and respect for the environment and for others.

This meeting of young people in Sao Paulo - I greatly thank the organization of Servas Brazil for making it possible - has sown ties of friendship that will take root increasingly stronger and will achieve the goal of uniting us young Servas under the same purpose, continue promoting love and respect for others and the world.

These are the fruits of Servas: to make ourselves better people every day and to understand that the current conflicts in the world are due to the lack of connection and empathy. In a world that is increasingly distant from the values that we try to promote, let us change this and continue spreading a more positive consciousness.



CONNECTING ACROSS CONTINENTS: A GERMAN & INDIAN SERVAS FRIENDSHIP

By Vishakha Khetrapal & Briga

Vishakha from Servas India and Briga from Servas Germany initially connected on the Servas Youth group, seeking a language exchange to practice German. What began as a linguistic endeavor evolved into a rich cultural exploration. Through regular online interactions, they immersed themselves in each other's customs, traditions, and viewpoints. In this interview, they delve into their experiences, sharing the rewards and hurdles of their unique cross-cultural exchange and the unexpected bond that flourished.

Briga: Why did you seek a Servas friend?

Vishakha: I wanted to improve my German by conversing with a native speaker, so I posted a request on the Servas youth group. Your prompt response was greatly appreciated!

Vishakha: What intrigued you about helping me practice German?

Briga: Your initiative to enhance your German skills independently through Servas impressed me. Learning from a native speaker is invaluable, as I experienced with English during my travels. I aimed to facilitate a similar learning opportunity for you.

Briga: What do you value about our Servas friendship?

Vishakha: Our initial video call for language exchange evolved into much more. Our conversations extended beyond language, encompassing cultural insights, social perspectives, and personal anecdotes. Such open dialogue fosters understanding and promotes peace.

Vishakha: What aspect of Indian culture surprised you the most?

Briga: Initially unfamiliar with India, I discovered its rich tapestry of contrasts through our exchanges. India's blend of modernity and tradition, spirituality and commerce, wealth and poverty intrigued me. Your insights broadened my perspective and sparked a growing interest in visiting.



Vishaka (Servas India)

Briga: What resonated with you during our conversations?

Vishakha: Despite not meeting in person, our virtual interactions instilled a profound sense of connection and purpose. I relished learning about German dialects, holiday traditions, and cultural nuances through our discussions.

Vishakha: What were some memorable moments from our exchange?

Briga: Your sharing of an Indian newspaper article on German farmer demonstrations struck me. It illustrated the global relevance of local events and reaffirmed the interconnectedness of our world.

Briga: What are your future travel aspirations?

Vishakha: I aspire to backpack across Germany, engaging in authentic conversations with locals. Exploring South America and Africa at a leisurely pace to immerse myself in diverse cultures and cuisines also beckons. Hosting Servas friends in my home completes my travel goals, offering fresh perspectives on my country.

Vishakha: Any personal travel dreams or places you wish to visit in India?

Briga: My travel wishlist includes Canada, South America, Namibia, Mongolia, Nepal, and India. Fascinated by India's national parks and the Himalayas, I also seek authentic experiences in monasteries and yoga retreats, away from tourist hubs.

Briga: What do you cherish most about Servas membership?

Vishakha: Servas introduced me to incredible individuals worldwide, fostering a sense of global kinship. It underscores the Sanskrit adage "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" - the world is one family. The diverse cultural encounters within India and abroad enrich my Servas journey.

Vishakha: How has Servas contributed to your personal growth?

Briga: Servas bolstered my self-assurance, encouraging interactions in foreign languages and fostering a sense of belonging. Revisiting hosts, like in New Zealand, evoked a feeling of homecoming, reinforcing my belief in finding connections worldwide.



Briga (Servas Germany)

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

By Bhudeb Chakravarti

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it embodies the cultural identity, heritage, and history of communities worldwide. Mother languages, in particular, hold a special place in individuals' hearts, as they are the first languages learned from birth, carrying with them the nuances, idioms, and expressions unique to each culture. Unfortunately, many mother languages face the risk of extinction due to various factors such as globalization, urbanization, and government policies favouring dominant languages. This loss not only erodes cultural diversity but also diminishes the wealth of knowledge embedded within these languages.

Efforts to preserve mother languages are crucial in maintaining cultural diversity and promoting social cohesion. UNESCO actively supports initiatives aimed at safeguarding endangered languages, including language revitalization programs, documentation projects, and the promotion of multilingual education. However, preserving mother languages presents numerous challenges. Economic pressures, political conflicts, and societal attitudes often marginalize minority languages, leading to their neglect and eventual decline. Additionally, the rapid advancement of technology can either aid in language preservation through digital archives and language-learning apps or accelerate language loss by promoting dominant languages on global platforms.

Every year on the 21st of February, the world comes together to celebrate the International Mother Language Day. This date is closely tied to a significant event in the cultural and linguistic heritage of Bangladesh, known as the Language Movement. The Language Movement traces back to the early 20th century when the Indian subcontinent was under British colonial rule. After the partition of British India in 1947, Bangladesh became part of Pakistan, known as East Pakistan, while West Pakistan comprised the present-day Pakistan. However, linguistic and cultural differences between the two regions led to tensions. On February 21st, 1952, students and activists in East Pakistan protested against the imposition of Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan, disregarding the Bengali language spoken by the majority in East Pakistan. The movement gained momentum as protesters demanded recognition for their mother tongue, Bengali, as one of the official languages.

**THE
YOUNG
LEADERS**



Tragically, the peaceful protests turned violent when police opened fire on the demonstrators in Dhaka, the capital of East Pakistan, resulting in the deaths of several protesters. The sacrifices made by those who gave their lives for the preservation of their mother language sparked widespread outrage and solidarity across East Pakistan. The Language Movement continued to grow, culminating in the recognition of Bengali as one of the official languages of Pakistan in 1956. This victory not only affirmed the linguistic identity of the Bengali-speaking population but also served as a catalyst for the broader struggle for autonomy and eventually independence from Pakistan.



Participants with Quiz Master

In recognition of the Language Movement and its significance in promoting linguistic diversity and cultural rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared February 21st as International Mother Language Day in 1999. This designation aims to honour the memory of those who sacrificed their lives for their mother language and to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism worldwide. International Mother Language Day provides an opportunity to celebrate linguistic diversity and raise awareness about the importance of preserving mother languages. Across the globe, communities organize events such as language festivals, poetry readings, and cultural performances to honour their linguistic heritage. In a bid to highlight the significance of mother languages and foster a sense of cultural pride among school children, Servas International Development Committee joined hands with Rotary Club to organize a vibrant program. The event, featuring a quiz program and leadership games, aimed to engage and educate youngsters on the importance of linguistic diversity and the preservation of mother tongues.

The quiz program served as the centrepiece of the event, offering students a platform to showcase their knowledge of various languages, cultures, and traditions. Participants were challenged with questions ranging from the origins of different languages to famous literary works and cultural practices associated with them. Through friendly competition, the quiz program not only tested students' linguistic prowess but also encouraged them to explore and appreciate the rich tapestry of global languages.

In addition to the quiz program, the event featured a series of leadership games designed to instill valuable skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving among the participants. Through interactive activities and group challenges, students had the opportunity to hone their leadership abilities while learning to respect and embrace diversity. These games not only promoted a spirit of inclusivity but also empowered students to become advocates for cultural understanding and social cohesion in their communities.

EXPERIENCE IN BRAZIL

By Claire Taillardat

Lucilene hosted me at her apartment in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2023. When we met, we found out we were the same age, and both work as social innovation project managers on gender issues in Latin America. After my first stay there, I went to São Paulo a second time for a research project, and I stayed at Luci's apartment again. She has been a great help for me in preparing my documents in Portuguese and obtaining good contacts there. She showed me around her city and her culture. She is planning to visit Europe soon, and I am looking forward to welcoming her to my home to continue our cultural exchange and international friendship.



Claire (France) with Lucilene (Brazil)





SERVAS PEACE SCHOOL IN TURKEY

By Mehmet Ates

Servas Peace School is an alternative school that has been organized in Ekinci village of Antakya, Hatay, Turkey since 2009, during the month of July and invites volunteers from all over the world who dream of a more peaceful world. Servas volunteers stay with families in the village and share their culture and experience with the hosting families.

During their stay, volunteers come together with the children of the village and do activities focusing mainly on peace and sharing their skills with the children (foreign languages, arts,

handicrafts, cinema, astronomy, science, chess, mathematics...). We aim to increase children’s horizons and world awareness by providing information about the volunteers’ countries and cultures. We try to help children grow with universal and Servas values.

After the February earthquake that deeply affected Turkey and Syria, this project, which has been carried out only in the summer months for 15 years, has spread throughout the year to combat the cultural loss, lack of socio-cultural activity and decreasing motivation caused by the catastrophe.

Every person has something to teach, so we invite every peaceful person to come and live with us and share with us. Let’s build peace in children, before others build hatred.

SERVAS PEACE SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD IN 2024

By Carla Kristensen

Thanks to all the wonderful work done by Mehmet and all the volunteers of the Servas Turkey Peace School, this project will be replicated in other places around the world. In 2024 we will have a Servas Peace School in Georgia (June 22-29), in Bangladesh (July 18-23) and in Uganda (August 25-30). There will be also a Servas Peace School in Argentina at the end of the year.

A big thank you to all the organizers and volunteers who care about education for peace, understanding and sustainability, while dreaming of a world free from wars and conflicts.

To know more about these Servas Peace Schools, please go to: [Events and meetings | Servas Online](#)



Peace School in Turkey



Peace School in Georgia



Peace School in Uganda



Peace School in Bangladesh

Calling All Servas Artists

We know you are out there and that there's so many of us. Who and where are we? What type of art are we doing? How do we get in contact with each other?

The work that Gizella Börcsök (Servas Hungary) and JeanLuc Turlure (Servas France) have done with the Servas Artists group for so many years is such a great way to see what we are up to.

We, Lilly Kerekes and Cynthia Granados (Servas Mexico) want to put together a directory of Servas Artists that all Servas members can access, with the aim of making it easier for us to catch up when we travel, share opportunities and invitations for events and exhibitions.

To be included, please [CLICK HERE](#) to fill out the form before May 31st, 2024.

We hope to hear from you soon!

If you have comments or questions, feel free to contact us at

youthservasmx@gmail.com

We look forward to hearing back from you!

Cynthia and Lilly

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN

Please send your stories and articles for inclusion in the Servas International News Bulletin to: newsletter@servas.org. We encourage Servas leaders worldwide to distribute this bulletin to all members. You are welcome to quote us, but kindly attribute the information to its source.

SI EXCO 2022 - 2025

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INTERNATIONAL SERVAS EVENTS

Servas connects people for a more peaceful and sustainable world. More and more Servas groups are arranging international activities, from peace schools, to hiking in nature, bike riding or Youth camps, from Britain & Ireland to Bangladesh, from Uganda to Australia, the choice is yours. Check the international Events page and start today making plans to meet other Servas members from around the world. We promise you won't regret it, You can also take the initiative and organize an event with your local Servas group.

Click Here

Visit Our Web Site



Servas International represents an international, non-profit, non-governmental federation comprising national Servas groups, fostering an international network of hosts and travelers. Our network endeavors to contribute to global peace, goodwill, and mutual understanding by facilitating personal interactions among individuals from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and nationalities.

Keep Smiling !!



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