

Our first Servas experience

Thank you Servas France

My name is Stefania, I am quite a new Servas member with my family. We live in Sicily in a town called Misterbianco, close to Catania. Somebody asked me to share our first experience with Servas and here I am happy to do it, even if a bit late.

First of all, I would like to thank with all my heart some Servas members that were crucial during our first steps into the Servas world.

- 1) Giovanni, Patrizia and Lucia: the friends from whom we came to know about Servas;
- 2) Elisabeth, Franck and their kids Amélie, Camille, Benjamin and Aurélien for their amazing repeated hospitality in Cintrè and their open heart;
- 3) Gwénola and René, for the time spent together visiting Rennes during the Brittany adventure;
- 4) Guy et Marie-Francoise for treating Rishi as part of their family in Nantes;
- 5) France, Helene e Pierre, for sharing with Rishi a bit of their time and introducing him to the Breton culture, traditions and legendary places;
- 6) All the other Servas living close to Rennes and Nantes who replied at our emails with tips and availability to host or meet us.

Here it's the story: It was the beginning of the year 2019, my elder son Rishi (who was 16 years old at the time) wanted to study one year abroad in order to open up to the world and to come in contact with different cultures. He actually had some preferences but it was ready to go almost anywhere... The "Intercultura" association was our first attempt but it didn't work out.

We then searched for another solution almost by contacting all of our friends spread around the world. Finally, a faraway friend of us (years before, we hosted her in our house for approx. 10 days to attend a holiday camp for our kids and their friends), gave her availability to take care of Rishi for his year abroad. She is Mexican, but she's been living in France for the past few years, and at that time she was going to move from Paris to Rennes.

Another friend of us found the right school for our son in Rennes and the Servas people living in that area did the rest, either by responding at our emails in the beginning or by giving concrete support and friendliness during our short visit in September 2019 and during Rishi's study experience in Brittany, which ended on May 2020.

It was the first time my son was going to live alone far away from us. I was happy but at the same time worried and a bit anxious... but then, when I opened the page with the contacts of Servas in Brittany, I was relieved: I knew I had unknown friends also there.

Few more things I would like to share with you:

- 1- I realised that even before knowing the Servas association we hardly made a trip without having a contact of some friend or a friend of a friend living in that place, because only by meeting people living in that country, the trip really makes sense to us.
- 2- I realised also that already before becoming officially a Servas members, we were already Servas without knowing. In fact, our family has hosted friends coming from almost all over the world: Korea, Japan, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, France, Spain, England, India, Russia, Germany, United States, Canada, Greece, Argentina, Australia, etc... That's because any person coming in our house is an enormous enrichment and an opportunity to grow.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that we were living in a “servas” way decades before coming to know about the existence of this association and I guess this feeling is common to all the associated, because you cannot really be part of such a community if you don't feel in your blood that between you and the others there isn't any intrinsic difference: just a variety of colours and fragrances worth to be known.



Our family visiting Brittany





Our wonderful Servas host's kids in Cintrè



A special day in Nantes with very special servas freinds