

Starter Kit for National Group Establishers

1. What is Servas:

... an Esperanto word, meaning 'serve'.

... an international, non-governmental organization

... based on understanding, tolerance and world peace.

... an organization of hosts and travellers.

... based on volunteer work.

... founded in 1949.

... non-profit.

Through SERVAS, travellers have opportunities to meet hosts, their families and friends in their everyday life. In this way they can understand better the country they are visiting.

2. Structure of Servas

- National Servas groups are independent organizations of Hosts and Travelers committed to promoting peace through person to person encounters and/or home visits. Each group is run by an elected team.
- Servas International (SI) is the organization of national Servas groups and is recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council

3. Hosts

Offer hospitality to approved travellers of every race, religion and nationality.

Provide a bed for two nights and usually invite the traveller to share the evening meal.

Hosts who are not able to provide overnight accommodation can join as Day Hosts.

Names and addresses of hosts, their interests etc. appear in lists, available to approved travellers (travellers officially accepted as a result of an interview).

3. Travellers

All travellers are interviewed to make sure they are responsible, open minded and likely to be a good member of SERVAS. When approved, the traveller receives a Letter of Introduction (LOI) which is signed, stamped and dated and is the traveller's "passport" in Servas. It is valid one year after the date of issue.

A scan of the Letter of Introduction is usually attached to the first e-mail from a traveller to a host and later shown on arrival in a host's home.

The traveller receives a host list of the country/countries he's going to visit.

Each country fixes its own travel fee (the fee that a traveller has to pay to receive the LOI).

4. The team

Each Servas group is run by an elected team. The number of people in the team is an independent decision of each Servas group. The leading person is called National Secretary.

How to establish a new national Servas group.

A mentor will be assigned to each newly forming national Servas group. A mentor is familiar with all aspects of Servas nationally and internationally and is there to guide and help.

If you are a peace loving, open and honest person interested in learning about other cultures and meeting people, have quality of leading a team, you can start Servas group in your country. Please note that Servas can't be used to make money or for political purposes.

Get in touch with Servas Development Committee development@servas.or and ask who could be your mentor. You will then be interviewed by your mentor or a SI distant interviewer.

Identify a group of open and kind people willing to share and interested in learning about other people and their cultures.

Organize a meeting with the people who want to become hosts. It's good to have more than 10 active members to get the national group going but you can start with a smaller number as well.

If you are re-establishing a Servas group try to contact old hosts to determine if they are willing to renew as Servas hosts and invite them to the meeting.

At the meeting elect the team who will run Servas in your country.

Make a list of hosts.

Get in touch with the Dolphin team in order to download your host list.

dolphin.team@servas.org

Let Exco (Servas International Executive Board) know that a new Servas group has been formed. If possible, send the minutes (a written record of what was said and decided at the meeting) of the establishing meeting to Exco.

More information

When the group grows it is important that the duties listed below are equally shared by the team.

Establisher/National Secretary

Must have a steady access to the internet.

Updates the host list regularly.

Provides a Letter of Introduction and host lists to approved travellers.

Informs the members about the new edition of SINews. It can be found on

www.servas.org

Sends back the unused stamps to the SI Treasurer and asks for new ones. Each Letter of Introduction has a stamp issued by Servas International. At the beginning of each year National Secretary of each country sends back the unused stamps, pays for the stamps that have been used and asks for new ones. The first 10 stamps are free.

The money that a Servas group may have comes from traveller's contribution (the money they pay for their LOI) – there is no standard fee for an LOI – or a membership fee (optional). If a country has a very few travellers, National Secretary can ask for little donation from Development Committee.

Host

Invites the traveller to join in their daily life and should, therefore, set aside some time to be with a traveller, shares his/her knowledge about the country – its history, culture etc.

Provides accommodation for two nights. He/she might be asked for an extra night or just one.

The host is not expected to provide transport.

A Day Host will find a convenient time to meet the traveller, may provide information or a guided tour, or a work-place visit or a meal, or just find time for a chat together.

Traveller

Travel with Servas is about sharing ideas and experiences you wouldn't have if you were on your own, getting to know another culture is an important aspect.

Traveller must be 18 years of age or over. Children can travel with parents.

Each adult must be a Servas member and have a letter of introduction (LOI). On this letter a Servas stamp of Servas International (SI) is fixed. It is valid one year after the date of issue.

Travellers plan their trip well beforehand. Always attach your LOI when you're writing to a host for the first time.

You have to join Servas in your own country, before travelling. Exceptionally people can become member abroad but not every country accepts this.

Travellers shouldn't e-mail to all the people saying: "who would like to host me?" When you send a mass-mail, some servers consider this as spam and these hosts won't receive it. As the message wasn't addressed to hosts personally, there is a big chance that the mail will not be answered.

Remember that there is no obligation for the hosts to accommodate travellers. Especially big cities and touristic places receive a lot of requests. Servas hosts are also likely to be involved in other organisations and activities and may not always be available.

Bring a small souvenir from your country; some hosts appreciate sharing cooking responsibilities.

Be considerate to your hosts in your approach and behaviour. Don't call them late in the evening.

Day hosts normally don't give accommodation but can meet you. Sometimes the day host prefers to meet the traveller(s) outside of his house e.g. in the city.

You can be both a host/day host and a traveller.

General information can be found on our public website: www.servas.org

Administrative site : www.siexco.org

Key persons have access to the Dolphin site <https://dolphin.servas.org>

Email: dolphin.team@servas.org

