



COUCH SURFING

CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER WORLD, ONE COUCH AT A TIME!

Contrary to general opinion, Couchsurfing is NOT just about free sleeping space. But it is possibly the most efficient way to instantly learn about another culture when you've just landed in unfamiliar territory. While popular social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook allow you to generate thousands of friends at the click of a mouse, Couchsurfing, which began in 2003, brings networking to the next level: shared experiences and actual face-to-face relationships. Deepening their travels as they journey across the globe, "Couchsurfers" stay with hosts they have located on the site, (www.couchsurfing.com) rather than checking into a hotel. The opportunity to explore comes from meeting people (both locals and foreigners) who are culturally aware and open to teaching others, regardless of race, differences, and backgrounds.

Of course, this mode of traveling—and more specifically, trusting complete strangers—requires common sense. Safety

is always a factor while on the road, so members help each other by referring or verifying others on the site, leaving reviews and comments on those with whom they have surfed or hosted. If traveling is all about seeing the world from a bigger perspective, then Couchsurfing does just that, and lets you not only see other folks, but interact with them on the home level.

At the heart of Couchsurfing is its mission: "To Create Inspiring Experiences." So, in exchange for a couch, you give your time, laughter, thoughts, conversation, insights, and...we hope you wash some dishes.

(Note: Our special thanks to Couchsurfers and hosts Steven Wiig and Adam Schofield in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, for hosting the MANGO team while we were researching for this article. Read more about Adam's unique global CS experience at couchsurfingtheworld.com.)

COUCHSURFERS SHARE:

"I've been able to meet people from all over the world -- many of whom are still my closest friends. The travelers I've come to know have not only taught me about their culture but have also inspired and moved me with their stories and intrepid spirits." --Mica



"Browsing through the CS forums is a gold mine for adventurers and wanderers like me! I get to know about exotic places where no tourists has ever think of; have an inside look at different cultures; be able to join volunteer works on far-flung places which gives me the fulfillment of helping the community and enjoying unique travel destinations at the same time. I'm new to the site but it's refreshing and offers a whole new concept in travel." --Sam

"Couchsurfing for me has become more than just about traveling; it is cultural exchange, a way to understand the world even without leaving our shores. Just by attending a CS meet-up and conversing with people from other lands, I have gained insights on how unique yet similar

we all are. The environment we grew up in may be different, yet we all are human beings trekking the earth amazed by its beauty and touched by the kindness and open-mindedness of its people--especially Couchsurfers who are willing to open their homes to strangers and show them around their city. There seems to be an unwritten rule among Couchsurfers, that when you meet one you can expect them to be culturally sensitive, laid-back, game to try new things or sleep on the floor, fun to be with, insightful and progressive in thinking. All these have made me more positive about the world and braver to go out there, travel and see what lies beyond my doorstep." --Socs

"Couchsurfing is not for everybody. It takes a certain personality, a nomadic one, to appreciate it; a totally different experience which I would gladly do, again and again, and again for as long as I travel." --Rey



Men wear the traditional headdress, called the *gutra*, as they look out into the Arabian desert.
(Top photo by yosoynuts on Flickr)
For a good gold bargain, try to visit the Eastern province, which has a cheaper gold district.
(Middle photo by joi on Flickr)



COUCH SURFING STATISTICS



Couch Surfers:
1,913,371

Successful Experiences:
2,067,284

Friendships Created:
2,217,271

Positive Experiences:
3,526,888

Countries Represented:
238

Cities Represented:
73,018