



Lions Clubs International

MD 201 Youth Exchange

Guidelines for Participating Youth

All participants should know and understand the purpose and the objectives of the Lions Club Youth Exchange Program

In 1962, the Lions International Board of Directors adopted the Lions International Youth Exchange Program. This was part of Lions contribution to the improvement of international relations throughout the world and to the promotion of world peace through mutual understanding.

In participating, you will be furthering the first purpose of Lionism - *To create and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples of the world.*

The purpose and objectives of the Youth Exchange Program are:

- To bring young people into contact with youth and adults of other countries;
- To share family and community life of another culture;
- To promote international understanding and goodwill throughout the world of Lionism.

GENERAL INFORMATION

You have been selected by your Lions Club to be an ambassador for Australia, Lions Clubs International and your Lions Club. Therefore, you must at all times behave in a manner that will in no way bring discredit.

From the outset you should understand that your visit is not a sightseeing tour. You will be living with, and treated as part of a family during your stay. Your Host Family is under no obligation to take you anywhere, however the majority of youth do see a great deal of the country or area where they are staying.

On your application form you may have requested to be hosted in a particular town, city or state. Wherever possible, your request will be given consideration; however, the governing factor is the availability of host families. **No guarantees are given as to the location of your hosting or that your first choice of program will be met.**

You are strongly advised to maintain a folder in which to file the information you will receive from the Program Chairman and your District Youth Exchange Chairman. All correspondence **MUST** be read, understood and answered immediately. Details relating to passports, fare concessions and Department of Health requirements are frequently altered and the responsibility of keeping this information up-dated rests ultimately with the youth involved. By being slow to respond you will delay the finalising of the whole Program, affecting everyone in your group. **PLEASE ADVISE ANY CHANGE TO EMAIL ADDRESS AS THIS IS THE PRIMARY METHOD OF COMMUNICATION.**

If there are any details you require concerning your trip you should enquire through your Nominating Lions Club. If they are unable to assist you, ask for the name and telephone number of the District Youth Exchange Chairman, who should be able to answer most questions.

You will be advised of a reference number that must be quoted on all correspondence that assists in your identification.

Your passport is an important document and should be treated as such. If it is lost or stolen whilst overseas, you must report it immediately to the closest Australian Consular Office and the local Police. It will be cancelled IMMEDIATELY. IF YOU LATER LOCATE THE OLD PASSPORT, DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES ATTEMPT TO USE IT AS IT BECOMES AN ILLEGAL DOCUMENT. THERE ARE ALSO ADDITIONAL FEES PAYABLE FOR THE REPLACEMENT ON TOP OF THE USUAL APPLICATION FEE.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

You should have studied the culture of the country you are about to visit including important details of history, geography and social composition.

While fluency of the language may not be required you should know some basic phrases.

You will be asked many questions about Australia and the town or city in which you live. Therefore, it is important to refresh your knowledge of Australia.

If you are accepted to go on a Northern Hemisphere exchange to Europe, Scandinavia, Japan or North America, you will find it extremely cold; you should take warm clothing. However, don't forget to pack a swimming costume, as there are many heated pools.

If you intend buying clothes, souvenirs etc. it is advisable to send any surplus luggage back to Australia prior to your departure from your host country. If you will not require them for some time, return them by surface mail, otherwise send them back by air as unaccompanied luggage. **Check-In luggage is restricted to 20Kg. Carry on luggage is limited to your Youth Exchange Back-Pack (7Kg) and Camera.**

Your Travelling Uniform comprises the Lions Youth Exchange Polo Shirt and a polar-fleece jacket, along with tailored jeans/slacks, black sneakers and supplied name badge. This travelling uniform helps you to identify with your exchange group and also to the Lions in your destination country. It is **mandatory** that the uniform is worn while traveling. A measurement form has been sent or will be sent to you. Send the form back to the Program Chairman immediately to allow time for the shirts and polar-fleeced jacket to be made and returned to you by post.

Money - How Much Do I Need? How should I take it? Which Currency? In general, everything is already paid for the exchangee – transport, food, accommodation. Essentially, all you need money for is for personal needs, gifts, snacks, outings like movies etc. General rule of thumb recommended is about A\$200 to A\$300 per week. Depending on your program there may be a need for food on stop-overs (Program Chairman will advise on this). We recommend a combination of cash and debit cards as usually the safest. Money should be taken in the currency of the host country to save the cost of changing money while away. Common sense should rule in all cases. We recommend that you take approximately the equivalent of A\$200 in cash in the currency of your first host country to have on your arrival. This may be obtained at all International Airports using companies such as Travelex.

If you have a credit/debit card, some problems are experienced in some countries where funds are attempted to be withdrawn from ATM's. Speak with your Program Chairman about this. Your itinerary and your travel details (e-tickets) will be emailed to you by our Travel Agent.

Your Youth Exchange pins and back-pack will be supplied to you at a Club presentation. Your e-tickets will be e-mailed to you directly from the Travel Agent. Any paper tickets will be posted to you and those passports required for visa applications will be returned to you from the travel agent.

Besides the back-pack, you are allowed **ONE** suitcase, limited to 20Kg. This will be strictly enforced. You are responsible for carrying your own luggage.

Your overseas hosting arrangements will be organised by the overseas Lions Club. One or more families of that Club will host you. You will be notified of your Host Families' names and addresses as soon as that information becomes available. In some instances, you may find that you receive correspondence from your host families before being officially notified by the MD Program Chairman. As soon as you have this information, you should commence communicating with them.

Do not forget to buy small gifts for your Host Families. Something typically Australian would be of special significance.

DURING THE VISIT

On your arrival in your Host country, you will be met either by your Host family or a member of Lions. If you have onward travel arrangements, you will be assisted with these. Your Host Family will then meet you at your final destination. Your Host Family and Club have probably spent a great deal of time preparing for your visit and planning excursions. Be courteous and show interest in whatever they have planned for you. You may have up to three host families in a single country over the six weeks of your exchange. If you are going to multiple countries in Europe, you could be hosted by two families in each country.

You must be willing to adapt to a new culture and learn different customs. While you are with your Host Family, you should be careful to avoid critical statements about their town or country, and do not make unfavourable comparisons between Australia and their country.

Keep an open mind, there are usually two points of view on most issues; try to see the other side even if you do not necessarily agree. Above all, be tactful and diplomatic when your host expresses views opposed to your own.

You may be asked to speak at a meeting of your Host Lions Club. Prepare a speech on Australiana and where possible show photos. If you are in Europe or Asia include a message of greeting or farewell in the language of your Host Country.

Your Host parents or Lions Club may also arrange for you to meet their local Mayor or be interviewed by the local media. Be prepared for this.

Do not neglect to write a letter or postcard to your Nominating Club to advise of your safe arrival and activities to date.

Contact with home must be minimized. A telephone call to let home know that you have arrived safely at your destination and another on Christmas Day. The most common cause of discontent has proven to be too much contact with home.

When you leave your Host Family, do not forget to thank them for having you. Sometimes, in the excitement of going, young people forget this very important courtesy. Some youth find it useful to buy a small supply of postcards and envelopes for this purpose.

On your return trip to Australia, wherever possible, an Australian Lion (Chaperone) will accompany you. He or she will ensure that your return international flight arrangements are re-confirmed, meet you at the International Airport and ensure that your luggage is checked through to your final destination. If you have a London or Los Angeles stopover, your Australian Chaperone will meet you at London Heathrow or Los Angeles airport.

AFTER THE VISIT

Upon returning home you should send a thank you note to your Host Clubs and Host Families.

If not invited to do so, you should ask the President or Youth Exchange Chairman of your nominating Club if you may share your Youth Exchange visit by addressing the Club. In any event, write a letter of thanks to your nominating Club.

Your nominating Club may ask for your collaboration in reaching other youth for the Youth Exchange Program. Such invitations should be accepted since this is helping in a practical way to spread understanding and good will.

CHECKLIST

Preparing for the Visit:

- Do I understand the purpose and objectives of the Lions Youth Exchange Program?
- Am I reading about the culture and language of Australia?
- Am I co-operating with my nominating Lions Club?
- Have I written to my Host Families?
- Have I organised gifts for my Host Families?

After the Visit:

- Have I written a thank you letter to my Host Families?
- Have I paid a visit to my Nominating Lions Club?
- Have I written a brief report on my visit and completed the evaluation questionnaire, and forwarded it to my Program Chairman with a copy to my District Youth Exchange Chairman?

YOUTH EXCHANGE – TRY IT, YOU’LL LIKE IT
www.lionsclubs.org.au/ye