

# Homestay Host Guidelines

**Prepared by Oya No Kai on behalf of the Japanese Magnet Program**

The following guidelines are intended to help JMP host families establish and maintain a comfortable homestay experience. The focus here is on homestays for teaching interns -- these are adults who typically stay for several months or more with a host family. During stays of this duration the guest necessarily becomes integrated to some degree with the host family's domestic patterns. Paying a little extra attention early on to how things should work will pay off later in terms of a more comfortable and relaxing experience.

Some of these guidelines also may apply to shorter-term homestay situations, say a visit of a week or less. For such short stays, however, the visitor is probably seen as more of a guest, accorded more direct hospitality and expected to integrate less with the household.

## **Some basics**

As a host family you are expected to provide a comfortable, safe and supportive environment for our intern. Some basics include:

- A private room with adequate heat, light, ventilation and access
- Access to a bathroom, which can be shared with other household members
- Dinner each day
- Food for breakfast, and lunch on the weekends or other non-school days
- Access to a telephone
- Access to laundry facilities
- House key

You can certainly exceed these guidelines if you wish, such as by providing a private bath, a set breakfast, separate telephone, etc.

## **The first contact**

Soon after the intern arrives do a brief walkaround in order to point out some basic housekeeping and other items.

- Location of the sleeping room; where to store clothing, personal items, etc.
- Location of the bathroom(s); where to put their shampoo, razor, etc.
- How to use basic appliances – how to flush the toilet, turn the shower on and off, etc. (be specific here – Japanese appliances don't necessarily work like ours do)
- Where you store food, do dishes, put the trash and recycle (and what you recycle)
- Where to hang coats, hats, umbrellas
- How to lock and unlock the house

- How to do laundry; they will do their own if you wish, or you can include it with your own loads (many Japanese put laundry in mesh bags to keep it separate – you can just include with other loads)

Some interns arrive very tired and sleepy from jet lag and extended travel. In this case you might do the walkaround in phases – when they first arrive just show them the bedroom and bath and let them rest.

## **Other helpful assistance**

Within several days there are other things you can do, at your option, that will help the intern adjust more quickly and have a better experience, including:

- Assist with setting up a bank account, credit card, etc., if they wish (you should not give them money or extend them credit, however – they should have their own). Note that to set up a bank account, the intern will need a piece of mail addressed to him or her at your address.
- Location of nearest library, grocery store, bus stop
- Web sites for TriMet, Portland Public Schools, other information sources they may find useful
- Telephone numbers for doctor, dentist, hospital, taxi company, as seems appropriate
- How to use 911

## **Shoes and slippers**

Most Japanese avoid wearing shoes inside a house, typically switching to slippers. Sometimes there are separate slippers for use in the bathroom. Explain your household patterns if they are not readily apparent. At least some Japanese are completely comfortable wearing shoes inside a house if that is your habit, but in any event you should provide space for house slippers and shoes inside the entry door.

## **The bathroom**

Sharing bathrooms can be one of the trickiest points of friction and it helps to be a bit explicit about how it would work best for your family. If you have established patterns that work for the family and which are consistent with your household work and school patterns, explain them to the guest. The bathroom may be pretty well booked up in the mornings, for example. Many Japanese take showers or baths in the evening, after dinner and/or just before bed, and this may be a compatible time with respect to other users. If the guest needs to be worked in to existing busy times, try to establish a schedule. It may be necessary to start things earlier, for example, in order to fit everyone in.

## **Family activities and outings**

To the extent possible, and desired by your guest, you should include the guest into your family recreation activities, such as movies, eating out, physical exercise and sports. Early in the visit the guest may be more interested in certain activities than later on – kids soccer games can get old after a while.

You may also organize some special sightseeing trips for your guest, either brief trips downtown, to museums, gardens, etc., or longer trips to Mt. Hood, the coast, etc. Sometimes it is nice to do this with other families hosting interns. Or just bring along other interns if yours has made a particular friend. You are not obliged to do this, however.

In general, in the case that the guest accompanies the host family on a day or overnight car trip the host family is expected to pay for travel expenses (don't ask them to share the cost of gas) and food you bring on the trip. The guest pays for personal items and out-of-pocket expenses such as admissions and snacks. The host family can choose to cover these costs as well, if it wishes. Be aware, however, that many interns have been instructed to cover these costs themselves and may be somewhat insistent. Guests are expected to cover other transportation costs themselves, such as for train or air tickets.

## **Phone and internet**

The host family is expected to make basic telephone access available for the guest, but this does not include the cost of long distance calls or other charges such as for internet dialup. The guest can use a telephone card for these purposes. If you wish you can allow the guest to use the phone for these purposes and total up the bill at the end of the month on the basis of the telephone company statement. Be aware, however, that this should be arranged beforehand and can be prone to misunderstandings. Check with your long distance provider to find the least expensive calling plan to Japan, if needed.

Many interns are very conversant with email and the internet and travel with their own laptop. If you are able, you can provide them with access to a telephone jack for email and internet access purposes. Expect that they will have their own dial-up access number. If you have a single line into your house that is not set up for DSL service then it will be tied up whenever they use it, so make arrangements for how much and when such use should occur. If you have two lines and/or DSL service they may be able to use an internet connection for email purposes.

## **Transportation**

Interns are responsible for arranging their own transportation to work and for personal activities. Oya No Kai provides each intern with a TriMet bus pass for this reason. Show them where the nearest bus or MAX stop is and, if you are able to, explain some basics about how to get around on public transportation. Certainly if you wish to you can offer periodic or daily transportation to your guest.

## **Medical emergencies**

Your intern is responsible for health insurance coverage but may need guidance or help in the case of any medical emergency. Know which emergency service location you would use, and point out to them the location of a hospital or emergency room that they could use on their own. Explain how 911 works and how to call a cab if they need transportation when you are not there to help.

## **Some intern responsibilities**

Interns have typically been fully briefed regarding their responsibilities as a guest and you may or may not need to be explicit about your expectations. Here are some requests you can make of the intern, as necessary, so that each of you understand the basic rules of the household:

- Notify you if he or she will not be home for a meal, such as dinner
- Notify you if he or she will stay somewhere else overnight
- Be home by a certain time in the evening, say 11:00 pm, and notify you if he or she will be coming in later
- No overnight romantic visitors
- Ask you beforehand if the guest wishes to have a daytime guest over for a visit; you have the right to ask that such socializing take place outside your home

You can expect your guest to help around the house to some degree, including:

- Preparing their own breakfast and lunch, if these are not set meals in your household (show them where the food is located, which preparation area to use, etc.)
- Cleaning up their own dishes, food prep, etc.; if all members of your household share duties such as dishwashing the intern can be requested to join in as well
- Maintaining their own room; show them where the vacuum is, other cleaning materials
- Turning off lights, appliances, etc. when they are finished

Some things you should avoid asking your intern to do include:

- Babysitting
- Yard care such as lawn mowing
- House projects such as painting
- Washing the car or other large maintenance chores

You may find that your intern volunteers for certain activities such as this and, if you are satisfied that the offer is voluntary and in good spirit, then you certainly can accept it.