

# General Guide lines for HomeStays

## **Generalities**

There is probably no better way for students to be immersed in their host culture than to share everyday life with a homestay.

The down side of this is that students probably have not lived with their own family in a few years. Conforming to someone else's rules, especially if they seem strict, may be a strain.

Students may need to accept some limits on their independence. Home-stays may restrict student's guests to the house, or may have different rules governing use of the phone, food, and utilities.

Although students may be made to feel like a part of the family, some families are more distant and will establish a more impersonal and business-like arrangement. The degree of interaction with other members of the household varies in relation to the diversity of the households in Aix.

Students may well find themselves living not in a traditional family unit, but with a single individual and one or more family members or direct kin.

Retired single individuals (usually retired ladies) frequently enjoy hosting students. You should therefore not always expect a traditional French nuclear family, nor the dynamics that you might otherwise experience with such a family.

The French are conservative about the use of electricity, hot water, and showers. Students should respect host family expectations with regard to use of utilities. You need to be flexible. The burden of adapting is on the student, not on the host family. The home-stay is intended to be a mutually convenient social arrangement, a cultural experience, and a financial agreement between the host family and the student. At the same time, the home is intended to be more than just a place to stay. Being in a homestay setting, it is imperative for students to take into account local customs. The matching between homestay and student has been made carefully, but a perfect match is virtually impossible. Dialogue, patience, negotiation, and consideration are usually the best vehicles for good results.

## **Transport to and from school/town centre from homestay**

In Aix, students staying in homestays will have between a 15 to 25 minute walk or 10 to 15 minute bus ride to their classes and town centre. However, this kind of commute is average, as it is for all other "Aixois".

Transportation options include walking and the bus within Aix.

It is possible to purchase a "*Pass Mensuel*" bus pass, which allows unlimited bus transport on the Aix inner city bus system.

The cost of this monthly pass is €20. Individual bus tickets cost €1.

Depending on the bus line, buses in Aix stop running any time between 20h00 and 22h00.

It is not recommended to walk home alone late at night alone - as in any city - and you should budget money for taxis if you intend staying out late at night.

Night rate for a taxi in Aix and suburbs is between 7 – 10 €.

## **Food**

Meals: Students in homestays have daily breakfasts and 5 evening meals from Mondays to Fridays.

No lunches are provided unless invited by the H/S.

Students should always inform their homestay well in advance if they are going to miss an evening meal.

You should discuss any special dietary needs and respect scheduled meal times.

You should inquire about access to the kitchen.

Do not help yourselves to any food in the fridge or cupboards without prior consent of the homestay.

Do not take anything away for your lunch, unless the homestay allows you to.

Vegetarians must be flexible.

## **Alcohol**

It is not permitted to bring in alcohol or any illegal substances allowed into a homestay.

## **Your room**

The homestay will clean your room once a week. Make sure you make your bed each morning and leave your room tidy at all times. Otherwise this can cause problems for the weekly cleaning.

Homestays often complain that students leave their clothes lying around on the floor - mix dirty and clean clothes, keep food in their room and this can attract ants, mice etc.

## **Bathroom privileges**

Normally bathroom facilities are shared with the other homestay members. If possible, students should set up a schedule, especially for the morning. Students are advised not to take showers after 10 pm as the noise of water can disturb the homestay and neighboring apartments.

## **Guests**

Students must check with the homestay if they are allowed to have guests.

Most homestays do not allow students to have guests over as this can be a security problem.

Students must respect their homestay rules about guests. Students should also inform homestay about any out of town trips and times when students may expect to arrive home late, in case of an emergency.

## **Laundry services**

- **Laundry:** Home-stays will do 2 loads of laundry a week, if you need more laundry done you should go to the Laudromat.

## **Water & Electricity**

This is a common complaint from homestays.

A typical shower in France lasts no longer than 5 minutes !

Utilities in France are a lot more expensive than in the US - you must bear this in mind.

Also most homes or apartments have limited capacity of hot water.

Students must not leave lights, computers, or other items running when not in use.

**Telephone:** When living in a homestay, do not expect to use the telephone unless you are given permission to do so.

Students should plan to purchase a pay as you go cell phone to receive and make outgoing calls and to communicate with their family and friends. Your family from the US should only call you on the homestay phone in the case of an emergency.

## **Internet access**

WIFI internet may be available but is not guaranteed in all homestays. Students may have to seek out other ways to access the internet, such as internet cafés . If the homestay does allow you to use the home computer – don't abuse. Don't download any programs or stay on the computer for hours on end without permission from the homestay.

*Communication with your Homestay is the key to " Happy Homestay Experience".  
If you have any difficulties you should immediately tell The Aix Connection representative. Concerns should be aired immediately to avoid having a small instance build up into a major annoyance. Often, an upsetting situation is the result of a cultural misunderstanding that we may be able to help explain.*