

Living in a Homestay

We know it's hard to know what to expect when you're staying with a family in a different country, so this will hopefully help you to prepare yourself for what's in store. The points are stated in no particular order.

- We cannot stress enough that you should not expect western standards of accommodation. If you are lucky enough to get it, great! Not all families have internet, modern furniture or luxurious electrical items that people consider the norm in Britain. If they have it, they might not let you use it. Please note that all flats meet Russian safety standards.
- You should pay to use the washing machine if the family has one, but they might not allow you to operate the machine yourself.
- In Moscow arrangements have been made to allow students to cook an evening meal. Elsewhere, you are **unlikely** to be allowed to cook for yourself in the kitchen. This is an important point. You will be given breakfast and in Yaroslavl an evening meal is also included. Elsewhere you can normally pay extra if you want them to provide you with an evening meal, but if you don't pay for it, you'll have to eat out.
- You should be given your own key. Please let us know if you don't get one for whatever reason.
- Please don't bring back guests without prior permission, and certainly don't have any overnight guests.
- You should ask permission before using things like the phone, internet (if they have it), etc.
- Please don't talk on the phone late at night as it can disturb people. In Russia it is illegal to be loud in any flat between 11pm and 7am.
- Always inform your host family if you intend to stay out late or not return that night at all. Despite their behaviour, they are always concerned about where you are.
- When you enter the flat, always take your shoes off and put on some slippers (if you have some). Usually they'll have some in their flat, but if not just walk around in your socks.
- Never give your key to anyone else.
- In Moscow and St Petersburg we **do not guarantee** centrally located accommodation – it's pot luck as to who is placed where, usually taking into consideration your accommodation request form and what the landladies request too.
- You may have to commute to your classes everyday, perhaps even by using more than one method of public transport. Due to the traffic in Moscow and St. Petersburg, this commute can take up to 1.5 hours. In Petrozavodsk the maximum commute is about 40 minutes.
- If there's anything you can't eat, don't like, etc. please inform your landlady from the start, even if you put it on your accommodation request form. To be on the safe side, inform your reps of any allergies/dietary requirements before arrival so that they can check that the necessary arrangements have been made/give you any advice.

- Your host family might not talk to you very much, or they might be too chatty for your liking. Both extremes are quite normal.
- Some landladies seem overly concerned about your health, how many layers you're wearing, etc. This is normal. Remember in Russian families, people of university age are treated as little children by their parents and you will be no exception to the rule.
- The prices for accommodation are not fixed by RLUS, but by the institutions who negotiate prices with the host families. The families can actually make more money by taking in business clients than from you so though the price may be higher than expected, it is reasonable. There are full details of current prices on the website.
- Until the heating comes on in October it can be cold inside the flat if the weather is cool outside so you will need warm clothes. The temperature in September is usually quite nice but drops steadily afterwards. Once the heating comes on, you may roast in your flats so make sure you don't just have woolly jumpers. Likewise in the second term, it's warm inside until they turn off the heating in spring, then it can be chilly in the flats, but late spring can often be really nice and warm outside.

Students usually enjoy the homestay experience if they know what to expect from the beginning. There are a lot of cultural differences to bear in mind, but if you remember all the above, everything will be fine and you will get a lot out of your stay.

If for some reason you don't enjoy it and want to move out, please don't hesitate to contact your representatives to discuss the reasons why. Perhaps something can be done. If you decide to move into your own accommodation, it not difficult to find in Moscow and St Petersburg but RLUS cannot act as an agent or advise you on agents due to legal reasons. Please always keep the representatives informed of your address in case of emergency.

Please remember to keep your RLUS reps updated of any minor situations that occur, even if you don't wish to make a complaint. If the situation later becomes a problem, it can be harder for the reps to deal with it without having the background information. We are always ready to listen no matter how trivial the problem, or if you have any feedback so that we can update the information and advice that we provide.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Document updated October 2011.