

# HOST Matters

Welcoming International Students

Issue No 29 Autumn 2015

## MARGARET'S BAGGING MARILYNS!



"I celebrated my 70th birthday this year and wanted to mark my 7th decade by climbing 7 Munros (Scottish mountains over 3000 feet). However, health issues have forced me to abandon

this challenge. My alternative challenge is to climb 7 Marilyns (hills with at least 500 feet of ascent on all sides). An advantage of this change of direction is that Marilyns are nearer to my home than Munros – but there are none in Oxfordshire where I live!"

Margaret has been a host with HOST since the charity was founded in 1987. She was also an active member of the Board of Trustees for 13 years until her retirement in 2015. After hosting nearly 200 students, Margaret has many stories to tell: from a tipsy Chinese student asking for an explanation of the Trinity over Christmas pudding, to sitting around the table with an Uzbeki teacher, teaching English nursery rhymes for his class back home, Margaret has many fond memories of hosting.

Whilst Margaret is an active walker, hill walking will be much more of a challenge than ambling across the flatter landscape of Oxfordshire!

To donate, please visit [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MargaretHancox](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MargaretHancox).

## WIN!

Don't forget that you can win a traditional British Hamper as part of HOST's Photo and Video Competition 2015-16. Send in your best photos and visits of your HOST visit for a chance to win. For full details, please visit [www.hostuk.org/news](http://www.hostuk.org/news).

## FREE Christmas Cards

HOST has a stock of Christmas cards to give away. All you need to pay is the price of postage. Contact [info@hostuk.org](mailto:info@hostuk.org) for more information.

Unit K106, The Biscuit Factory  
Tower Bridge Business Complex  
100 Clements Road  
Southwark, London  
SE16 4DG  
Telephone: 020 7739 6292  
[www.hostuk.org](http://www.hostuk.org)  
[info@hostuk.org](mailto:info@hostuk.org)



Reg Charity 327592  
Reg Company 2179430

## Ahmed El-Ashry, Egypt



It had been close to one year since I spent time with my family in Egypt when I had the fortune of participating in the HOST program and forming a new family in a place I have recently come to call home.

This was the first time I spent a weekend with another family and it was one of the best experiences I had. During the day we visited

several places at the city and at night we talked about everything. My hosts were so open, understanding, and they were open to answering any questions I had.

My home stay presented me with an opportunity to experience the realities of daily life in the UK. One of the highlights was meeting the Mayor of the city in the market. I told her about HOST and how great it is to introduce young people to the real British culture.

It amazed me how welcoming my host family was and how much hospitality they showed to a complete stranger. I truly believe that our world would be more tolerant if homestay was done regularly amongst people of different cultures. Cross-cultural understanding, communication, and the ability to find cultural similarities and reflect on the differences creates a truly memorable homestay experience.

These meetings help to inform both sides, dispel misconceptions and prejudices, broaden outlooks. In this particular time in the world, never have these things been more important to promote peace and understanding. People fear what they do not know and young people are ambassadors for change. **Isabel Ingram, Norfolk**



## HOST TIPS

Sometimes I tell students that hosts are disappointed when their guests seem to spend more time on their phones than engaging with their hosts: some students are shocked at such impolite behaviour; others are bemused that anyone would think this rude. All of them will glance at their screens within the next 60 seconds! They just don't think about it, any more than they remind themselves to breathe.

My own grandchildren are just the same. I've decided it's not worth getting het up about – just make light of it, and offer them some engaging alternative activities to give them something really interesting to write home about! **Margaret Stevens, Cornwall**

**Do you have a top tip to share with other hosts? Let us know by using the contact details at the front of this newsletter.**

## JINGLE BELLS AND CHRISTMAS TREES

You may already be groaning at the mention of Christmas. With Advent Calendars already in the shops, carols will no doubt soon be piping through sound systems, and toys will be crowding the shelves. Yet despite the reluctance to start thinking about the season *just* yet, Christmas is, for many people, a time to look forward to. Whether you think of family, friends, warm houses, big dinners, exchanging gifts, music, Father Christmas, TV or sherry, Christmas is a time that generally conjures up childhood memories, loving thoughts, and goodwill to all. Unfortunately, many international students will already be dreading the prospect of a cold holiday stuck on a university campus, with few friends, family many miles away, and little in the way of festive feeling.

Last year, HOST received over one thousand applications from students who hoped to spend part of the festive season in a home, where they could not only learn about how people in the UK celebrate Christmas, but so they could also experience a home-away-from-home at what can be a very lonely time of year. Unfortunately, due to a lack of invitations, HOST was only able to offer about half of these students a visit at Christmas or New Year due to a lack of invitations.

Students have now started applying to HOST for Festive visits, so please do start thinking whether you could offer an invitation or two. Even if you can't offer a visit at Christmas itself, or if you don't celebrate the holiday, perhaps you could offer an invitation for one of the weekends surrounding the 25th December?

Visits throughout the year are hugely appreciated by international students, and of great enjoyment to hosts. Whether you want to teach your children another culture, prevent any Christmas family-feuds, or just offer a warm welcome to a student, please do continue to offer an occasional invitation and encourage your friends and family to give it a go.

*"Thanks to my hosts and their kindness, I could spend a nice Christmas here instead of staying at home alone. I am grateful for you all."* **Mamiko Moda, Japanese student**

## THE THINGS THEY SAY

"Share the love of your area, all new experiences for your guest. My guests although had visited some cities said that they hadn't had much contact with locals and had built friendships with other foreign students, so to be home based was a myth buster weekend."

**Gillian Cox, West Sussex host**



*Student Dewi Safitri, from Indonesia, with her host's mother*

This visit was a million dollar worth for me. We spend 3 days with host and do remarkable things, specially I wore kilt on one day and go to community centre, met with people and they gave warm welcome to us. At start I was afraid to go but if I missed this tour its would be a big mistake of my life. Thanks HOST. **Sohail Muhammad, Pakistani student**

HOST Matters is made to be enjoyed by everyone and anyone interested in international friendship and cultural exchange. Why not pass on the newsletter to someone who you think would enjoy it?





## GET SOCIAL

Are you a member of Streetlife, Facebook, Mumsnet, or another social site? If so, could you consider posting the short message

below to help HOST recruit hosts in this very busy period?

*I am a HOST volunteer, a charity which arranges for adult international students studying in the UK to spend a day, weekend or Christmas in a British home. It's a great way to learn about different countries and cultures, and to offer a young adult far from home the opportunity to spend some time in a British home. It's a really wonderful experience and I would recommend it to you. If you would like to find out more or be put in touch with your local organiser, please visit [www.hostuk.org](http://www.hostuk.org), or call 020 7739 6292. Thank you.*



*Kingsley Anyim, from Nigeria, enjoys exploring Edinburgh with hosts Kate and Ramsay.*

## ECO FRIENDLY

If you receive HOST Matters by post, could you consider an email copy instead? HOST is conscious of its environmental impact and tries to print only what is necessary.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the newsletter, please contact HOST.

# How you can help

## Friend of HOST

Become a Friend of HOST and give a regular donation. Find out more on the [HOST website](http://HOST website).

## Gift Aid

If you are a tax payer, gift aid your donation and increase its value by 25% at no extra cost to you.

## One-off Donation

Make a one-off donation at HOST's Big Give page: [www.secure.thebiggive.org.uk/donation/to/1136](http://www.secure.thebiggive.org.uk/donation/to/1136)

## Legacies

Make a gift to HOST in your will to help the work continue. Find out more on the [HOST website](http://HOST website).

## Challenge Yourself

Raise money while completing a challenge. Set up a fundraising page

[uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving)

## Host

HOST's work wouldn't be possible without its wonderful volunteers. If you haven't hosted in a while, please contact your Regional Organiser, and do encourage your friends to host too!

## THANK YOU

Thank you for helping to make the world a friendlier place by supporting HOST.