

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the “One for One Exchange Program”

Here are the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions by students and their families. Please contact us for further clarification and with other questions you have about going abroad with the Comox Valley international student program (CVISP).

What is the application procedure and the selection criteria for the program?

- The following information is gathered at your school:

Social Emotional Readiness	Multi Cultural Readiness	Achievement	Work Habits	Citizenship	Ability & Motivation to learn a 2nd language
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- You must be 15-17 years of age (going into grade 11 or grade 12)
 - Letter of application indicating why you wish to do this exchange and include a statement of support from your parents
 - Two letters of reference - teacher or administrator; community re- service, leadership, etc.
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How will I go to school if I don't know the language?

Because CVISP students are thoroughly immersed in a host culture, they learn the language quickly. At first, students will find that academic classes are very challenging. Some subjects, such as Math and Physical Education, have a quicker adjustment period. It generally takes longer to follow language-heavy subjects such as History, Literature or Political Science. CVISP students are expected to attend classes and to do their best.

For most school-based programs, prior study of the host language is not required. However, this varies and you should check with the CVISP office about the countries for which you are applying. Some host countries provide language tapes or CD's before arrival and other provide language lessons during an arrival orientation camp or via classes within your host community.

Language acquisition time varies from person to person, and depending on the amount of study conducted prior to arrival in the host country. Many students attain conversational ability quickly, while for others the process might be a bit slower. CVISP strongly encourages students to begin studying their host language as soon as their country placement is confirmed.

How will the CVISP experience affect my education?

CVISP is education beyond the classroom. Apart from any formal study undertaken during a program, you will return with new skills in setting priorities, dealing with pressure and new challenges and gain a deep appreciation and knowledge of a different culture.

Will I be able to get academic credit in my secondary school here for studies that I complete abroad?

Students must speak to their home school officials to learn whether or not they can receive credit for study in another country. Schools that have more experience with study programs abroad tend to recognize the educational value of the experience in itself, regardless of the actual courses taken, and are more likely to give credit.

The academic subjects that you study will depend on the host country. CVISP students will generally choose from among the same elective courses and take the same required courses as students do in the host country. CVISP can provide students with general information about classes they are likely to take abroad; e.g. physics, geography, foreign languages, but they will not learn their finalized course schedule until they arrive in their host countries.

Where will I live?

You will be placed in the home of your exchange partner. CVISP host families fill out an application and are screened by the program's Homestay Coordinator, in conjunction with the CVISP District Principal. They are selected for their qualities of stability, flexibility and interest in receiving a foreigner in their home, and they come in many shapes and sizes. If it is acceptable to you, your parents and the host family, your exchange partner does not need to be of the same gender. You can include any requests about your host family on your application, but we cannot guarantee that all such requests will be fulfilled.

CVISP expects host families to provide their hosted student with his/her own bed, although not necessarily his/her own room. If sharing a room the students/children will be of the same gender. Furthermore, host families are advised to treat their students as a member of the family, not a guest, and therefore CVISP students usually are asked to do chores around the house, just like the other children in the host family.

Families who host for CVISP live in all kinds of places: in big cities, suburbs, small towns and on farms. Placements vary according to where CVISP has a sister school partnership.

CVISP host families are not paid. They open their homes to foreign students in order to facilitate a mutually beneficial exchange for their own child, to share their community and culture, as well as to enrich their own family life.

When do I find out who my host family will be? What if I don't like my host family?

Information about your host family can arrive at any time. CVISP staff work hard to find an exchange partner for you. If you have special requirements (smoking, non-smoking, no pets, vegetarian), it may take longer to place you, but CVISP will find a suitable host family. Because host families and their child go through an application process the same as yours, this process can take time. But as soon as CVISP has identified your exchange partner and host family, you will be contacted.

CVISP staff provides support for the student and the host family. They will be able to help resolve communication problems or other misunderstandings between the student and the host family. Because the students are participating in a "one for one" exchange, it may not be possible to move the student into a temporary or transitional family if a situation seems unresolvable. The staff of the CVISP will then do their best to find a new family for the student. If this does not work out, unfortunately the exchange will be terminated and the student will return home.

What if a unique timing issue does not allow the exchange partners to be together at the same time?

This is not an issue. Here are three scenarios (and there are others):

1. The exchange happens in the same year and is one semester long
 - a. One student travels to live with their exchange partner for the first semester then the two students return together to the other partner's city for the second semester or,
 - b. Each of you travel in the same semester and live with your partner's family but without your partner being present
2. The exchange happens in the same school year and is one school year long. You live with your partner's family but without your partner being present
3. The exchange happens over consecutive years
 - a. One of you travels the first school year and lives with their partner and their family
 - b. The other travels in the second school year and lives with their partner and their family

What can I expect when I arrive?

You will be met by your new host family at the local airport/train station. They will help you get used to your new country and city for the first few days. They will also ensure you make it to the school or program office for orientation.

Can I pursue my special interests in the foreign country?

It is often possible to pursue special interests, but CVISP cannot guarantee it. Music, sports, art and many other activities are available in different forms all over the world. Students may have an opportunity to continue their interests in the same formats they used at home. They may also have opportunities to translate their interest into local formats. CVISP encourages students to continue their interests while abroad as this is a good way to connect to another part of your host community.

The way that sports and other special activities are organized varies from country to country. In some places special interest clubs are part of the school and students can choose from a variety of activities there. In other countries, students join sports clubs, art institutes and other separate organizations in order to pursue their interests, whether new or something that they have done for years. The school staff and the host parents in the host country will be able to help students get involved in athletics and other activities in their host community. Applicants should be sure to include their special interests in their application.

Will it be safe to go overseas?

CVISP has over 15 years of experience in organizing intercultural programs. We have handled some difficult situations over this time, using our proven CVISP risk management and emergency procedures. CVISP staff are fully trained to deal with any type of emergency whether it is medical, personal or political. The situation in each of our partner countries is regularly monitored through our International Student Program head office.

What if I have special requests for my placement?

Students with special requests, such as placement that supports a vegetarian diet, should be very flexible in terms of the countries they are willing to go to and must be prepared to have their beliefs challenged, no matter how accepting the family is of this dietary restriction.

As an intercultural exchange program, CVISP places students with families of many different religions and creeds. You can request placement with a host family of a particular religion or to have access to a particular type of church or other religious institution, but CVISP cannot guarantee that such a placement will be available. Keep in mind that placement with a family of a different religion is another opportunity for learning about a different culture.

What does the CVISP price of the program include?

- Information and Orientation meetings
- Private meeting with each family
- Processing of all paperwork required by sister school
- Processing letters of reference
- Completion of signed Student Participation Agreement
- Provision of documents required for Visa processing
- Information about the visa application process
- Medical insurance support (monthly cost borne by the student)
- Liaison with sister school Principal and/or relevant staff during the exchange
- Minimum monthly communication with the student, the parents and the sister school while the student is abroad
- Offset of the cost to maintain sister school relationship (includes an annual visit by an ISP recruiter/administrator)
- Analysis of school work while abroad and awarding of appropriate equivalency credits upon return
- Pickup at the local airport
- Travel from your host family to your local international departure point
- Room and board with your host family
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Expenses you will need to pay in addition to airfare/travel and our fee will be: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses contacts and routine dental care, and personal spending money (miscellaneous meals, trips, reading materials, cell phone, excursions, etc.)