

## Introduction to Rotary District 5400 Youth Exchange (Long-Term) Program

Thank you for your interest in the Rotary Youth Exchange of District 5400.

### About Youth Exchange

A Brazilian student makes her first snowman in Finland. A South African masters eating with chopsticks at his Japanese hosts' home. An Australian becomes part of an extended family in Russia, and a Mexican student in France raises funds to benefit homeless children in Haiti. New experiences, new "families" and friends, and new adventures can await you, too.

As a Rotary Youth Exchange student, you will spend a year, or perhaps just an extended period of time, living with a host family in a country other than your own. You may learn a new language; you will learn a new way of living and a great deal about yourself. But there's more. While you are busy learning, the people you meet will be learning as well — about your country, culture, and ideas. You will be an ambassador. You will be helping to bring the world closer together, and you'll be making good friends in the process.

If you are ready for the challenge and the rewards of living in another land as an exchange student, then you are ready for the Rotary Youth Exchange.

### A true one-for-one exchange

Rotary Youth Exchange is a true one-to-one exchange. Rotary sends out an American student for every foreign student taken in exchange. The District 5400 Rotary youth exchange program is a long-term high school exchange program which lasts for an academic year. During your stay, you will attend high school and live with one or more host families — in some cases as many as three different families.

### Objectives of the Program

We strive to achieve the following objectives through Rotary Youth Exchange:

- To further international goodwill and understanding by enabling students to study firsthand some of the problems and accomplishments of people in lands other than their own.
- To enable students to advance their education by studying for a year in an environment entirely different from their own, and undertaking the study of courses and subjects not normally available to them in their own country.
- To give students opportunities to broaden their outlook by learning to live with and meet people of different cultures, creeds, and colors and by having to cope with day-to-day problems in an environment completely different from the one they have experienced at home.



## Eligibility

To qualify, Rotary requires that you be between the ages of 15.5 and 18\* upon arrival the host country be in the upper third of your academic class, be of good character and emotionally stable and be in good physical health. Most importantly, you must be able and willing to be a good ambassador. Students who will graduate from their high school the same year they leave on their exchange are acceptable in the program so long as they meet the age requirements and are accepted by the host country.

**\*Important Note:** Districts worldwide develop varying rules, particularly regarding age. Some districts have more restrictive rules than Rotary requires. Remember, where there's a difference, the district rules apply to all students of that district. For example, a district might require a student to be no younger than 16 years of age to participate, or a district might require that students not be more than 17.5 years old at time of departure. You need to fit within their guidelines to have an exchange in such districts. Flexibility is the key in those situations.

Since some host countries require that the U.S. students still be attending school, if you will already have graduated from high school, it's important for you to be flexible in accepting a host country that doesn't have that limitation.

## Language Skills

All countries require that students make a real effort to learn the basics of their language before they arrive. In fact, France and Germany prefer students who have studied their language for a minimum of 2 years prior to arrival. Consequently, as soon as you know your host country, you will be required to develop an Intensive Language Learning Plan which will start immediately and continue until departure. You will be required to make your best effort to achieve functional fluency prior to departure.

## Interests and Personality

You should have an inquiring mind, be actively interested in your own environment and be a generally well-rounded individual. You should be outgoing, well-adjusted and have a good family relationship.

## Personal Appearance and Habits

If you smoke, you might not be approved for an exchange by District 5400, since Rotary International officially discourages smoking by exchange students. "Green hair, nose studs and similar unusual dress" are also actively discouraged by Rotary. Keep in mind that you will be an ambassador for Rotary and the United States and may be sent to very conservative countries and families.

## Vegetarians

Some countries are reluctant to accept vegetarians, and we aren't able to send vegetarians to Argentina for example. Applicants must provide full details of any dietary restrictions in their applications.

## Children of Rotarians

Sons and daughters of Rotarians are eligible to be exchange students, although they won't receive preferential treatment in the selection process. Their application will be considered equally with all other applications.



## Your responsibilities

All students are ambassadors of the Rotary club that sponsored them and of their country. You are expected to follow the Youth Exchange program rules, be open to new experiences, and strive to learn the language of the host country.

### You Must Help Find Host Families

This is a true exchange program which means that whichever country you are sent to, will send us a foreign exchange student in return. The local Rotary clubs will host those students and provide a Rotary counselor, school enrollment and a monthly stipend. Rotary requires multiple host families and you will be required to provide a list of three potential host families and submit this along with your country preference form. (If you are willing, you may list your own family as one of the possible host families.)

## Rotary Responsibilities

Rotarians work to take care of the logistics of the exchange. As all youth exchanges are carried out at the local level, the local Rotary club and district will arrange school enrollment, tuition and other educational matters with the local secondary school. All program volunteers are devoted to the safety of the students, and the host club and district maintain policies and procedures to protect the students. Local Rotarians also introduce the student to the other club members and organize some social and cultural functions for the student to attend.

### Host Countries

The Rotary Youth Exchange program offers the widest variety in international destinations when compared to other exchange programs. As a Rotary student, you will have an opportunity to exchange with countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The list of countries with whom we exchange is limited each year, and it also changes each year based on interest and availability of students in both countries.

## Monthly Allowance

For long-term exchanges, the hosting club or district appoints a Rotarian counselor and arranges a monthly allowance for the student. The Rotarian counselor maintains contact with the host family and the student throughout the exchange. While Rotary International offers support to local Rotary Youth Exchange programs through publications and suggested guidelines, Rotary districts and clubs run their programs independently of Rotary International. Therefore, each club or district program has its own specific rules for youth exchange participants to follow.





## When to Apply

For long-term exchanges, selection takes place in the fall prior to the year you will make your exchange. If you wish to travel abroad during your junior year, for example, you will apply in September of your sophomore year. If you are wondering why it is necessary to apply so early, once you are selected, your sponsoring Rotary club and district will work to prepare you for your year away. You will be guided through a series of orientation sessions so you'll be ready for your new life in a new country.

The selection cycle begins in August and September each year. September 15 is usually the deadline to submit the preliminary application. Find your Rotary contact person and ask questions early.

## How to Apply & Selection

If you are interested in becoming a Rotary Youth Exchange student, please contact your local Rotary club. Once you have contacted a club, you will then be directed to the Rotary Youth Exchange Officer chairperson in your area to get a preliminary application form.

### Club Interviews

You will need to fill out a preliminary application available on our program website (<https://youthexchange5400.dudaone.com/>). Please submit this online application no later than October 1 (there might be situations where we can accept a later application, but not always). Your application will be shared with your local Rotary Club, whose members will evaluate your application and set up a meeting with you sometime before the end of September. If approved by the local club, you will need to fill out the long application. Candidates approved at the local level will be invited to a second interview at the district level.

### District Interviews

Once nominated by a club, the District Committee interviews all nominated applicants and their parents in the first half of December. The District Committee may, for reasons which it considers valid

or on the basis of assessment of a student at the outbound orientation, disapprove that student's application or suggest that student apply in a future year. You will be contacted by one of the District 5400 outbound coordinators with details concerning the steps leading up to the selection event.

Prior to the District interview you must fill out and submit the online long-term exchange application, which will be provided. Part of this application includes a medical examination and dental examination, so it would be wise to schedule these as soon as possible in September and ask for those forms in advance.

## Orientation

After you are selected to be an outbound student for District 5400, you are required to attend two orientation/training events: One in January or February, and one on April or May. Students are required to attend both of these; parents are required to attend the second one only, in accordance with Rotary and State Department requirements.



## Costs

Rotary Youth Exchange is one of the least expensive international exchange programs open to high-school-aged students. Because volunteers in Rotary clubs and districts administer the Rotary Youth Exchange program, you will not have to pay fees to an agency to arrange an exchange.

### Flat fee

District 5400 has a flat-fee policy, under which all outbound students pay a flat fee of between \$7,500 to \$9,000 (subject to change in the event of spikes in air fares or insurance cost) for the Outbound Exchange. A \$1,000 deposit will be due January 1, immediately following acceptance into the program. The balance shall be paid in installments in accordance with District 5400 guidelines.

#### The flat fee covers the cost of:

- Visa fee
- Round trip air fare
- Health Insurance
- Sponsoring district orientation or language camp, if required.
- Rotary Blazer
- Administrative Fees
- Monthly Allowance
- Room and board during stay in host country
- Event costs for outbound interviews, McCall Weekend and District Conference

#### Expenses NOT covered by the flat fee:

- Emergency fund of \$300-500, if required by hosting club. This is refundable if not needed.
- Voluntary language courses
- Personal expenses
- Passport fee
- Extra spending money
- Optional trips offered by hosting district
- Travel to obtain Visa\*

### \*Consular Visit Costs

Depending on which country you are assigned, you might be required to make a personal visit to a consulate in San Francisco or Los Angeles to obtain your visa. Arrangements for this trip and visa can be through our travel agency. The countries that require this may differ each year.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Do I have to speak the language of the country I want to visit?

In most cases, no... not in advance. However, once you know your host country you will be assigned an intensive language learning program which you must fulfill prior to departure.

### Why do I live with more than one family on the long-term exchange?

In most study abroad programs, students only get the chance to live with one host family. Rotary policy requires "more than one" host families. Because the main goal of the Rotary program is to promote peace and understanding among the different cultures of the world, you will gain greater insight into the ways of your host country by living with more than one family.

### Can I work while I am abroad?

No. As a Rotary Youth Exchange student, you will have a student visa that enables you to live for an extended period of time abroad. Student visas expressly prohibit you from working at a paying job at any time during your stay.

### Will I be able to play sports or participate in extracurricular activities while I'm away?

Organized sports and extracurricular activities are different from country to country. If you are interested in playing a particular sport or practicing a certain extracurricular pursuit, be certain to discuss it with your host Rotary club. Your host club will then try to enroll you in whatever form of organized extracurricular activity you wish.

### **How are host families selected?**

Host families are selected in much the same way you are selected as an exchange student. They must complete an application and an in-home interview with the individuals coordinating Youth Exchange in their area. Host family parents do not have to be Rotarians, but many Rotary club members apply to serve as host families.

### **Where can I go on my exchange?**

Exchanges occur between our Rotary district and other Rotary districts where we have exchange relationships. Currently we offer exchanges with districts in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the Americas and Asia. You will be able to choose as preferences, but the nature of our exchange makes it impossible to guarantee that you will get your first choice.

### **Are there any program rules?**

Program rules generally consist of common-sense stipulations, such as no driving of motor vehicles, no drunkenness, no illegal drug use, and no romantic entanglements plus the need to obtain special permission for travel while on an exchange.

Generally, as a Rotary Youth Exchange student, it is your responsibility to:

- Abide by all the program rules of your host Rotary club and district.
- Accept the supervision of the host district, host club, and host family.
- Act as an ambassador of your own country.
- Be open to new experiences and cultural differences.

Although Rotary International offers support to local Rotary Youth Exchange programs through publications and suggested guidelines, Rotary districts and clubs run their programs independent of Rotary International. Therefore, each club or district program will have its own specific rules for students to follow. Students accepted into the program sign and agree to abide by a list of program rules prior to their departure from home. While the host Rotary club will discuss all program rules with you, you and your parents may wish to review the program rules

to be sure everyone has a clear understanding of what is expected.

### **I'm looking for university-level exchanges. Does Rotary have any programs for me?**

Rotary Youth Exchange is a secondary program only. Other Rotary programs are aimed at under-30 including college students may fit your interest: look for Ambassadorial Scholarships of The Rotary Foundation, as well as Rotary's New Generations Service Exchange. These programs cater to undergraduate and graduate students as well as qualified young professionals pursuing vocational studies.

### **Didn't find the answer to your question?**

Contact a Rotary Youth Exchange committee member for additional assistance:

- Mike Markley  
Youth Exchange Committee Chair  
Boise, Idaho  
208-861-8879 | [mike@markley.com](mailto:mike@markley.com)
- Nancy Chinn  
Youth Exchange Administrator  
Boise, Idaho  
[nkchinn@msn.com](mailto:nkchinn@msn.com)
- Mike Dittenber, Inbound Chair  
Caldwell, Idaho  
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