



As each one of us listens to the radio or watches the News on television it become more concerning that the world is in a fragile state and much of the conflict must surely stem from a lack of understanding. It is hard to see what one can do as a single individual and troubling when it is important for future generations that we play our part, doing what we can to encourage international communities engage in dialogue, to realise that for all the intricate and fascinating differences there are, we often have common aspirations-for the common good.

Here at HOST UK we recognise that desire to reach out to the world, and see that some of the brightest and most driven, hard-working and knowledge-thirsty young people from different countries are here amongst us, studying at our Universities UK wide. The greatest pity would be if they returned to their home countries unaware of the *real* Britain, beyond the campus. We have a wonderful diverse country with historic towns and cities, stunning landscapes and innovative architecture, arts and music, festivals and fetes and *above all* vibrant communities. It is every bit as exciting as it is daunting to the international student but when they embrace the opportunity HOST UK offers there is no doubt in their minds that they have uncovered something invaluable.

HOST UK is a small charity with a huge UK-wide brief. From a small office in Hatfield 20 miles outside of London, its small staff, with the help of Volunteer Regional Organisers and the larger pool of Volunteer Hosts, ensure that those students who want to better understand the country they chose to study in, have a chance to meet a British family and live alongside them for a weekend short homestay. Whilst some of our hosts showcase their locality, others share a hobby, invite their guests on a walk, and introduce them to friends and neighbours, share a meal, and above all talk, answer and ask questions and gain trust, insights and new knowledge about each other's perspectives.

It is probably best summed up in the words of a student



"I enjoyed the tea, cake & the delectable Sunday roast, took sunny walks around their neighbourhood, helped out in the home-cooking, saw the Alpacas for the first time at their friend's house, did some local sightseeing to the Ashmolean Museum & Lord Farringdon's house at the Buscot Park and most of all, enjoyed their gracious company.

I had some questions about the British/N/estern culture which they graciously answered and we had interesting discussions. At times, the conversations got a little personal but I felt safe in sharing. I also enjoyed observing and sort of living their routine for a couple of days. It was relaxing and very full of quality. I enjoyed seeing how active they were in their local community

related activities. This visit has shown me some societal aspects of a developed country that have enriched my knowledge and experience.

I encourage students, especially international students to take part in this experience. You will not regret it! I will always fondly remember this visit."

Vineet Mittal, Indian student studying at London School of Economics

This is what James Onyinge from Uganda, studying at the University of Reading had to say about his visit to Gwent.

"I felt so free and close to my host indeed that I enjoyed great tasting English cuisine and slept very relaxed, the kind of sleep I have not had in a long time since starting the course.

I enjoyed every programme that was scheduled during my visit. I will remain to cherish the experience of the morning village



walk, some stretch of two miles with the lovely Toto (pet). What a beautiful scenery of green leafy neighbourhood and beautiful farms- giving me a fresh breath from the concrete neighbourhood of the university."

We look to increasing our pool of invaluable Volunteer Hosts and feel that we offer an opportunity that is mutually enjoyable, so insightful and always memorable. We need hosts UK wide, our students suggest their affordable travel budgets and we look to sending them to locations diverse and alternate to their university town. We are able to send them off the usual tourist routes to secret gems and in so doing showcase the best of British towns, village and countryside. The warmth of their welcome showcases the best of our British nature, a country that whilst an Island has a imagination beyond the confines of our shores and a desire to play its part in forging friendships and understanding for a safer world.

More celebration of our services can be enjoyed on our website www.hostuk.org and you are warmly invited to volunteer with us by leaving a message on www.hostuk.org/hosts/