

PLANNING TIPS FOR HOST CLUBS

The program for the Group Study Exchange Team's visit is to be prepared so as to provide the team with a broad overview of Australia's economic, agricultural, social and leisure activities. Consequently, it is important for the welfare of the team that host clubs comply with the published District itinerary when the team is hosted by it. Should changes to the day-to-day itinerary be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances, the Host Club Coordinator is to consult with the visiting GSE Team Leader regarding the changes.

Initially, the District GSE Committee Coordinator will request individual clubs to prepare programmes for the Group Study Exchange Team's visit to their locality. Clubs through their visit coordinator are responsible to provide the District Coordinator with an active programme which considers the vocational needs of the visiting team and provide opportunities to experience our day-to-day culture and the rich culture of our District. In preparing their programme individual clubs will need to consider a balanced and varied itinerary that will expose the visiting team to cultural and interesting venues and institutions in their locality.

Hosting a GSE team can be a rewarding experience for all members of a club. The preparation of a thoughtful program for the team's visit is central to that experience. Some points to consider:

- Appoint a program co-coordinator. Experience indicates that access to email makes this job easier. Encourage your club co-coordinator to keep in contact with other club co-coordinators.
- GSE is about cultural and vocational experience. It is understood that cultural opportunities will usually dominate a club program but try to capitalise on any vocational opportunity you may have available in your area.
- Organise host families early and keep them informed. Support them as a club however you can.
- Prepare an itinerary with as much detail as possible. The visiting team will appreciate detailed information.
- Be flexible and prepared to alter an itinerary if opportunities arise but consult the team leader first.
- Don't schedule any activities on a rest day or in conflict with their daily programs.
- Try to put team members together with hosts of the same profession, hobbies or interests.
- If possible expose the team to people in the same age group as the team members.
- Plan reasonable workdays – not 15 hour days.
- Try to include more time to join in the day-to-day life of hosts.
- Should your club be hosting at the arrival or departure of the team be prepared for unexpected changes to your program.
- Members of the District Committee are always willing to help.
- Take the opportunity to enjoy the company of the visiting team and at the same time enjoy the company of your own members.

Suggested venues for Host Clubs to consider as components of their programmes are as follows:

- *The City:* Local Architecture, public transportation systems, important buildings, historical sites.
- *The Country:* Areas of natural resources and scenic beauty, historical locations.
- *Government:* Seats of government, discussions with officials.
- *Justice System:* Judicial courts, law offices, prisons, police headquarters.
- *Education:* Schools. Colleges and universities, technical institutions, ministry of education.
- *Social Services:* Government and voluntary welfare agencies, service institutions.
- *Agriculture:* Animal and crop farms, dairies, ranches.
- *Commerce:* Banks, shopping malls, stock brokerages, business establishments, IT firms.
- *Industry:* Manufacturing firms, food processing plants, local industrial trade centres.
- *Research:* Laboratories, research and development institutions.
- *Religion and Culture:* Places of worship, museums, art galleries, opera and concert halls.

District Coordinators will review each host club's programme to ensure that duplication of activities is kept to a minimum. It is possible that some clubs may be asked to reschedule another activity to replace any duplication in the overall District programme.

Vocational Visits: Primarily the emphasis for GSE visits is mainly cultural with vocational exposure to enhance the profession of each team member. The RI Group Study Exchange manual stipulates that each member should experience five formal vocational study days during their visit. That means the team would have 20 days during a 5

week visit. The manual also stresses 'the importance of vocational study cannot be overemphasised as it is often difficult for professionals to take an extended leave of absence from their jobs; valuable vocational visits reinforce to employers the specific professional benefits that GSE can bring to both the company/organisation and the employee'.

Free Time: When preparing your program please make available some free time for the team members to shop for souvenirs & personal items, to write letters or contact home by email, or spend some time relaxing at home with their host families.

The overall District program is arranged to make the team accessible to every Rotarian in the District and in each case, the itinerary is arranged where ever possible, to coincide club visits with the club's usual meeting nights/days. The Committee would like every club to have the opportunity of seeing the team's presentations and each host club should take advantage of the team visiting in their locality and encourage members to attend joint meetings. Invitations should be extended to all neighbouring clubs by the host clubs and should include, information about the meeting, such as the day, the date, the time the meeting will commence, the place where it will be held and the cost of the meal.

Transporting the team will normally require two vehicles each day and three on changeover between clubs when luggage is moved. Host coordinators should allocate escorts for the team daily visits. Cars and drivers should be designated pick up points and the team should be delivered promptly to these points each morning. On changeover, the host club's nominated co-ordinator should liaise with the next host club's co-ordinator as to the time, place and method of changeover. Where the team is to attend meetings and activities organised by other clubs, such as joint meetings, the host club co-ordinator should organise transport and drop off/pick up times directly with the other clubs.

Any costs associated with transport and meals not partaken with their host families, is the responsibility of the Club.

Remember the objective of a GSE Team's visit is to experience the culture and further their vocational education from another perspective. At the same time it is an excellent opportunity for our District's Rotarians to see the workings of The Rotary Foundation in action and enjoy the experience of social interaction with the individual team members.

Above all remember - have fun with fellowship and enjoy the exchange.

"I will retain one overriding feeling for the rest of my life from this experience - that this was an unrepeatable opportunity to experience a different culture in all its aspects to the fullest possible extent.

*GSE Team Leader Frank Martin
District 9780 [Australia] to District 3790 [Philippines]"*

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