



## UVic Homestay Information for Students in English Language Centre Programs



Welcome to the University of Victoria's award-winning homestay program! Our staff are dedicated professionals who work hard to ensure that international students and our local host families enjoy cultural exchanges.

### What is Homestay?

UVic Homestay provides an opportunity for students to live with a local family while enrolled in classes at the University of Victoria. Homestay families will welcome students into their home and provide them with a safe, comfortable and friendly place to live within easy travelling distance of the university. Students will eat meals with their host family, participate in their weekend activities and become part of their daily lives.

### The Benefits of Homestay

- Provides students with an opportunity to use and practice their English language skills in an informal setting
- Provides students with an automatic base of support in Canada
- Places students with a family who will provide all meals and snacks
- Provides students with affordable accommodation in a city where housing can be difficult to find
- Ensures that students will live within a 45-minute commute to UVic, on convenient bus routes

### Why should students participate in Homestay?

- Homestay students improve their English skills more quickly than students who live alone.
- Host families help students learn about Victoria.
- Students have a "home away from home" in Victoria, and the chance to participate in daily Canadian life and culture.
- Host families provide a safe, respectful and supportive living environment.

### What can students expect from their host family?

The host family will:

- pick the student up when they arrive in Victoria and drop them off at their departure location when the student leaves Victoria;
- speak English at all times;
- encourage students to practice English conversation skills at home;
- provide a safe, comfortable and friendly home;
- provide a private, furnished bedroom (maximum 3 students per home);
- provide food for all meals and snacks;
- provide Wi-Fi/Internet access in the home;
- help students adjust to living in a new culture;
- encourage students to join in their family activities;
- introduce students to Victoria and the local neighbourhood;
- live within a 45-minute bus ride of the University of Victoria.

### How much does Homestay cost?

- \$250 application fee
- \$800 per month of Homestay (\$27 per night for extra nights or partial months)

### Frequently Asked Questions by Students:

#### Is Homestay a good fit for me?

Homestay provides a great accommodation alternative for those new to Victoria. The ideal homestay student is flexible, a good communicator, and someone that can appreciate differences. Every family in our homestay program is different. Ideally, our students choose Homestay to learn about and experience life in a different culture.

Homestay also provides a great "soft-landing" for our students: You get picked up at the airport; a private room will be provided to you that has a bed, desk, dresser and linens; the program fee includes use of laundry, access to Wi-Fi, meals and snacks; your family will help you integrate and learn about life in Victoria; your family will offer cultural guidance and emotional support; the homestay program will support you with any problem solving and dispute resolution.

#### What are my responsibilities as a homestay student?

As an adult international student living in a Canadian family home, you are required to:

- adhere to the *UVic Homestay Guidelines for Students*;
- pay your hosts on the first day of your arrival (unless otherwise specified);
- prepare your own breakfast and lunch;
- keep your bedroom clean and tidy;
- clean up after yourself in a shared or private bathroom, or in the kitchen after preparing food;
- bring your dirty dishes to the kitchen after you are finished eating or drinking;
- wash your clothes and bed linens in the laundry machines;
- call your host family if you will be late for dinner, or if your evening plans change while you are away from home;
- keep your emergency contact card with you at all times;
- always be respectful and polite with all members of your host family;
- be aware and respectful of the manner in which your hosts manage their home.

## How are our Homestay families selected?

UVic Homestay strives to provide quality homestay experiences for students enrolled in UVic programs. Our award-winning program has been operating for over 25 years, and we enjoy the privilege of working with many wonderful families in Victoria.

- Families must live within our catchment area, generally a 10 km radius, or about a 45-minute commute from the university.
- Families must complete a detailed application form and provide Criminal Record Checks.
- Once the completed application form and Criminal Record Checks are received, the UVic Homestay program sends staff to meet and interview the family in their home. Staff tour the home to ensure it is a safe environment that meets our requirements.
- Families that host for our program are required to adhere to the *UVic Homestay Guidelines for Hosts*.

## How will I be matched?

The UVic Homestay Program will place students in homestay families that, given the information known at the time and provided in the application form, best match the needs of the student and the homestay family. Health concerns or issues will be prioritized for matches. While our program does its best to match a student's preferences, we cannot guarantee that these will be met.

**Please note:** The Homestay Program adheres to the University of Victoria's Policy on Human Rights, Equity and Fairness (GV0200). The University promotes a safe, respectful and supportive learning and working environment for all members of the university community. The University fosters an environment characterized by fairness, openness, equity, and respect for the dignity and diversity of its members. The University strives to be a place that is free of discrimination and harassment, injustice and violence. The strength and vibrancy of the University is found in the diverse life experiences, backgrounds and worldviews of all its members.

The University endeavours to provide the best possible educational experience for all of its students. The academic excellence for which the University strives is unattainable without human rights, equity, fairness and diversity. These values are a foundation for achieving excellence.

Once matched, a homestay contract is sent to the student and host.

Students have a financial obligation to their hosts for the duration of the Placement Contract dates.

Students shall pay their hosts on the first day of their arrival in the home, and on the corresponding day of each following month for the duration of their stay.

If students decide to terminate the hosting relationship during the scheduled term, a One Month Notice Form must be completed, by host and student and submitted to the UVic Homestay office. Students are required to pay hosts for no less than a full month from the day the One Month Notice Form is signed.

Students wishing to terminate their contract may obtain a One Month Notice Form from the Homestay Program Office.

## What if I encounter a problem with my homestay family?

The more effort you put into your Homestay experience, the more reward you will gain from the experience. If you have a problem with your host family, please make sure that you talk to your host family in a positive and constructive manner so that you can solve the problem together. If a resolution to the problem cannot be found, students are encouraged to talk to the UVic Homestay staff about the situation. Our program staff and counsellors will be available to provide you with professional care and support to help you have the best experience possible with your host family.

## If there is a problem or issue with my homestay family, how will the Homestay program help me?

We always keep the students' welfare in mind, and strive to support our students and hosts should a problem arise. Students are encouraged to come and speak to a homestay coordinator to explore ways to resolve the issue or conflict. In case of emergency, the services of a translator will be secured by the Homestay Program to ensure the matter is resolved. This allows students to express themselves freely, without the language barrier. We have a roster of translator agencies in Victoria, which we have used in the past.

Additional services offered include meetings with personal safety officers, counselling services, mental health practitioners, chaplains, etc. These services are offered as part of the University of Victoria's student services, and bear no additional charge to students.

## What if Homestay is not a good fit for me?

Homestay may not be the right choice for you. If this is the case, students can choose instead to live independently by seeking private arrangements. Students may choose to live with other students in shared housing, by themselves in a private suite or apartment, or rent a room from a family. Some students may opt to stay in a hotel for a month or for the duration of their program. The Homestay Program does not provide assistance in finding these types of private arrangements. Students may review our *Finding Private Accommodation and Accommodation in Victoria* documents for further information.

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