



A home swap will allow us to visit Venice

is the best part of home-exchange, cultures collide and genuine friendships are born.

The home-exchange experience relies on people to be honourable and true to their word, and our experience has not been without disappointment. We have had a few cancellations, some we have re-booked and we are confident we will fill the last few gaps. When one door closed, another opened, and mostly things worked out for the better. While making our dream come to life, we decided to grab onto it with both hands, keep a positive outlook, have faith in people, and keep moving forward even when we felt like giving up.

The thought of 20kg of luggage for a year has become increasingly intolerable as our January departure approaches. Lyon, the gastronomic heart of France, is our first home for three mouth-watering months. Then London, and picturesque Ireland,

where we will live in a cottage overlooking a bay, home to a pod of 120 dolphins. Back to Nantes, France, before spending sun-kissed summer days in Spain. We have an apartment in Paris, and Provence will be in full bloom for our stay in September. Living between Venice and Padova will allow us to explore both of these cultural Italian cities. We will stay in a luxurious home in Luxembourg's wine country, 15 minutes from the German border. Experiencing winter's chill in December, and ice-skating to the soundtrack of a festive choir in Brussels' Grand Place, will allow the atmosphere of a true European Christmas to seep into our hearts.

Thanks to home-exchange, we three will be no longer sitting on the sidelines, we will be in there boots and all, living life a little less ordinary.

For more information visit [www.homeexchange.com](http://www.homeexchange.com).

## Home swappers guide

Karen Reymont may be going overseas for a year but most house exchanges are for periods of one to three weeks. Here are a few things you should know before you go...

- Join a home exchange website to suit your needs. It's free to browse before joining, so you can get the feel of the site first. There are sites specialising in singles and seniors and some have wider selections in some countries than others. Each site requires a subscription fee, usually for a minimum of a year, to allow a listing and communication with exchangers.
- The site that Karen Reymont chose boasts that in 14 years and after tens of thousands of exchanges there has never been a report of theft, vandalism or exchangers turning up to their destination and facing a vacant lot!
- Check the site's privacy policy. For example, [www.homeexchange.com](http://www.homeexchange.com) does not post your name, street address or email on the site but provides secure email contact between exchangers.
- Think of it like you would internet dating and take similar precautions to those you would make before meeting in person. Spend time getting to know each other, email, chat on Skype and organise video calls before you commit.
- If you are worried about last-minute cancellations, ask to see copies of ticket purchases by fax for reassurance a commitment has been made to travel.
- Create a profile with photos highlighting your home's assets. Promote your locality, websites to local attractions. List when and where you want to exchange. Put your best foot forward, this is your big chance.
- Brisbane is not Paris where members are inundated with enquiries. It may take a bit longer to find an exchange "partner" so allow plenty of time before you travel – a year ahead is not unusual. Karen Reymont started her search in April this year to plan her year-long itinerary for 2009. Chase what you want, be friendly, it really works!
- Ask for referrals from prior exchanges.
- Be specific about requirements and the possibility of car-exchange. Have a written agreement between you (there's a sample on [www.homeexchange.com](http://www.homeexchange.com)) to clarify what is or is not included in the exchange.
- Many home-exchangers want to experience new cultures. Be open to possibilities of new friendships. Encourage family and friends' involvement to enhance your visitor's experience.
- Home-exchange relies on trust. Have integrity, expect the same from others. Trust your instinct, if things don't feel right, they usually aren't.
- Customise insurance policies for house, contents and car. You may have to exchange copies of driver's licences and statements of driving records. Check with your insurance company about cover for "invited guests" and "permitted drivers".
- Prepare a manual explaining operation of appliances, security, internet access, local services, emergency contacts, pet care, and a guide to your neighbourhood.
- Discuss access to keys on arrival.
- Lock away valuables and anything you don't want exchangers to use.
- Leave your home clean and stocked with basic necessities. And leave the house you visit clean and replace food you have used.
- Leave a welcome gift, it's a nice touch.



### HOLIDAY IN THE WORLD'S TALLEST RESIDENTIAL TOWER

Just metres away from the Gold Coast's famous beaches and a short stroll from the heart of Surfers Paradise, the world's tallest residential tower, Q1 Resort & Spa, embraces the spirit of the beachside dream getaway. The resort features luxury self-contained apartments and offers world class facilities.

Call 132 678, visit [www.Q1.com.au](http://www.Q1.com.au)

\*Special offers apply subject to availability. Valid until 31/03/2009. Q1 Spa discount voucher is only valid during the stay dates. Q1 Bar welcome beverage is the house beer or wine. Not valid for group or conference bookings.

### QUEENSLAND RESIDENT'S PACKAGE

From **\$196\*** per night in a 1 Bedroom

Including 2 tickets to QDeck - the observation deck at Q1, a welcome drink at QBar and a \$25 discount voucher for Q1 Spa.



## The new space. Atmosphere enhancements by Livezi.

Science fiction? Absolutely not! As a result of an ongoing commitment to innovation, Livezi has launched its most forward thinking range of intelligent technologies. These innovations enable you to control the precise temperature in every room of your home. Now you can easily and efficiently enhance the space you live in. To discover more, call Livezi on 1300 306 125 or visit the Livezi display at the Home Ideas Centre, 66 Merivale Street South Bank.



[www.livezi.com.au](http://www.livezi.com.au)