

EMPLOYER GUIDE

The Work Exchange *Host* Handbook

The best exchanges are run like small employers with a non-cash wage: clear hours, a real room, a written agreement, and a host who would pass their own checklist. This is that checklist.

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Why EnRoute treats your exchange as a job listing

Work exchange has a reputation problem, and it was earned by hosts who advertised "help out a few hours" and delivered forty-hour weeks for a bunk. Participants now arrive with a calculator: hours at local minimum wage against what the room and meals would cost them. The Work Exchange Starter Kit in this library teaches them exactly that.

So EnRoute lists exchanges in their own category, with hours, stay, room, meals, stipend and visa position as structured fields, and scores them on the mobility track like any seasonal role. Hosts who state the terms fully get participants who read them and come anyway, which is the only kind worth having.

THE FAIR-TRADE RULE

Value the hours at local minimum wage. Value what you provide at what it would cost the participant locally. If the hours are worth more than about 20% above what you provide, you are underpaying, and the good participants know it.

What I ask

Hours per week _____

Local minimum wage per hour (or market rate for skilled work) _____

Weekly value of the work (A) _____

What I provide

Room (what a similar room rents for per week here) _____

Meals (per week, at local prices) _____

Stipend or tips per week _____

Extras: lessons, activities, transport, produce _____

Weekly value provided (B) _____

A ÷ B = _____

Under 1.0: generous; say so in the listing. **1.0 to 1.2:** fair. **Over 1.2:** reduce the hours or add to what you provide; participants who do the arithmetic will leave, and the ones who do not are not the ones you want.

HOST TYPE	TYPICAL HOURS	TYPICAL PROVISION	WHERE IT GOES WRONG
Hostel	20–25	Dorm or staff room, sometimes breakfast	"On call" evenings that are really shifts; hours creeping
Farm / homestead	25–30	Private room or cabin, all meals	Physical load beyond what was described; no real day off
Lodge / retreat	25–30	Room, meals, access to the activity	Season-long commitments with no exit
Boat	Watches	Berth, meals, passage	Safety gear and skipper competence
Family / household	15–25	Private room, meals, pocket money	No boundary between work time and family time

02 The immigration position, host side

You are responsible for knowing whether a participant can legally do this, and the risk is mostly yours.

Most immigration codes define work as any activity that would normally be paid, whether or not it is. Room and board for labour is work under that reading, and in several countries authorities have refused entry to, or removed, participants heading to informal exchanges, with penalties for the host. Enforcement varies enormously; the host's exposure does not vanish where enforcement is lax.

DESTINATION	PARTICIPANTS YOU CAN HOST CLEANLY	HOST EXPOSURE
EU / Schengen	EU citizens, anywhere in the EU. Working-holiday visa holders where the country offers the scheme.	Non-EU participants on tourist entries are outside the rules; some countries tolerate short stays, none permit them.
Australia, New Zealand	Working Holiday visa holders (allowed explicitly).	Hosting tourist-visa participants is a breach; both countries act on it.
Canada	IEC working-holiday participants.	Tourist entrants have been refused for planned placements; hosts are named.
United States	J-1 (camps, some au pair) via a sponsor. Otherwise no legal path.	Hosting on an ESTA or B-2 is a violation for both parties.
UK	Youth Mobility Scheme nationals; settled workers.	Visitors may not work, paid or unpaid; volunteering exemptions are narrow.
Latin America, SE Asia, Georgia, Turkey	Commonly tolerated on tourist entry for short informal stays.	Technically not permitted in most; low enforcement is not permission.

REGISTER WITH THE FORMAL SCHEMES WHERE THEY EXIST

Where a country has a recognised volunteering or working-holiday route, hosts who use it are protected. Where it does not, state honestly in the listing who can legally participate (EnRoute's form asks whether a visa is required), and do not tell a participant what to say at a border.

Participants I can legally host (nationalities / visa types) _____

Scheme or registration, if any _____ Confirmed with (adviser, authority) _____

03

The agreement

Written, sent before arrival, kept by both sides. It protects you as much as them.

TERM	WHAT TO WRITE	OURS
Dates	Arrival, departure, and the notice either side gives to end early	
Hours	Per week, which days, the days off, and whether "on call" counts	
Duties	Listed. Anything else is asked, not assumed	
Accommodation	Private or shared, with whom, what it includes	
Meals	How many, who cooks, dietary needs, whether food is stocked or budgeted	
Money	Stipend or tips, how and when paid; any costs the participant bears	
Insurance	Who covers injury at work; what cover the participant must hold	
Equipment and safety	Protective gear provided; training given before the first shift	
Communication	A named contact; a check-in in the first week	
House rules	Guests, quiet hours, shared spaces	
Visa	What each side has checked and concluded	

SENT AS A MESSAGE, IT READS LIKE THIS

"Confirming: you arrive 3 May, leave 14 June. 24 hours a week, Monday to Thursday, mostly reception and breakfast service; weekends off. A bed in the staff room, breakfast and one other meal on working days, laundry included. No stipend. Either of us can end it with a week's notice. Bring travel insurance that covers hostel work; we cover injury on the premises. We will sit down on your first Friday and check it is working. Reply to confirm and I will send the house guide."

04 Housing, meals, insurance and safety

Housing that keeps people

- ☐ A bed of their own, with somewhere to lock valuables
- ☐ Wifi that supports a video call; they may have remote work too
- ☐ Bedding, towels, and a kitchen they may use
- ☐ Heating or cooling for the season
- ☐ Separate from guest areas at night
- ☐ Described in the listing exactly as it is, with a photo

Meals

- ☐ Which meals, on which days, written down
- ☐ Dietary needs asked before arrival
- ☐ A stocked staff shelf beats "help yourself"
- ☐ Never used as a lever

Insurance

- ☐ Your liability cover names volunteers or exchange participants
- ☐ The participant holds travel insurance that covers the activity (farm, boat and building work are often excluded)
- ☐ Emergency contacts on file both ways

Safety before the first shift

- ☐ Protective equipment issued and fitted
- ☐ Training for any machinery, animals, heights, water or chemicals, before use, by someone competent
- ☐ The nearest clinic and how to get there, written on the wall
- ☐ A first-aid kit that is actually stocked
- ☐ Hours that leave time to rest; tired people get hurt

05 The first day and the mid-stay check

1 Meet them on arrival.

Show the room, the kitchen, the wifi, the house guide. Feed them. Do not put them to work on day one.

2 Walk the job.

Every duty in the agreement, shown, once. What good looks like. Who to ask.

3 Write the first two weeks' rota.

Days, hours, days off. Hand it over on paper.

4 The first-Friday check-in.

"Is it what you expected? Anything different from the agreement? What would make this work better?" Then fix what you can.

5 Mid-stay, week three or four.

Hours worked against the agreement, reviewed together. Ask whether they would come back, and whether they know someone who would.

PARTICIPANT	ARRIVED	DEPARTS	FIRST-FRIDAY ✓	MID-STAY ✓	WOULD RETURN?	NOTES / REFERRAL

06

The listing that attracts people who stay

State everything. The participants who read it all are the ones who last.

EnRoute's work exchange form asks for tasks, hours per week, minimum and maximum stay, accommodation type and details, meals, stipend, included perks, visa requirement, insurance expectation, and an acknowledgement that the arrangement is unpaid. Every one of those becomes a filter or a factor in the mobility score. The description then has three jobs:

- 1 The place and the people, in three sentences.**
Where it is, what it is, who they will live and work with. A photo of the actual room.
- 2 A normal day, hour by hour.**
When work starts, what it is, when it ends, what the evening looks like. Nothing sells an honest exchange like a boring, accurate day.
- 3 The value, stated both ways.**
"24 hours a week for a private room and two meals; a similar room here rents for about €400 a month." You have done their arithmetic for them, and it says you are fair.

OUR LISTING: THE DAY, HOUR BY HOUR

OUR VALUE SENTENCE

REPOST EACH SEASON AT HALF PRICE

An exchange that ran well last summer can be reposted this summer for half the listing price with the same structured data. Ask returning participants to leave a note on the listing; nothing recruits the next good participant like the last one.

EnRoute Jobs

List your exchange where the good participants look.

Work exchange is its own category on EnRoute, with hours, stay, room and meals as structured fields and a mobility score seekers filter on. Your first listing is free.

POST AN EXCHANGE

enroutejobs.com/employers

EMPLOYER RESOURCES

enroutejobs.com/employer/resources

PRICING

enroutejobs.com/employers#pricing

MORE FROM THE LIBRARY

- The Work Exchange Starter Kit (what your participants read)
- The Seasonal Staffing Planner
- The Job Post Template Pack
- The Geo-Flexible Hiring Playbook

All at enroutejobs.com/publications

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