

the
CouchSurfing
p r o j e c t



The world is smaller than you think.
www.couchsurfing.com

CouchSurfing

It is a corporation based in San Francisco that offer its users hospitality exchange and social networking services. It is a for-profit private corporation, planning to go public. With more than 3 million profiles in 246 countries and territories, CouchSurfing has an Alexa Traffic Rank of about 1,700. It recently suffered significant criticism from thousands of users after becoming a for-profit corporation when it had been a non-profit for years.

Idea of CouchSurfing

- The mission of CouchSurfing is «creation an inspiring experience». The idea is making active an intercultural exchange and dialogue of people in friendly relaxed atmosphere. It gives a chance to realize natural desire to learn something new, to exchange experience in various spheres of life. Moreover, thanks to this dialogue of people from different countries, dialogue of representatives of different cultures and nationalities, these people have a possibility to look at many international problems from the different parties, to learn of tolerance.



How is it working?

A registration in a site is free, all functions are accessible after the registration. You will be able register, if you are 18 years old.

The screenshot shows the CouchSurfing website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Login', 'Surf / Host', 'Community', 'CouchRequests', 'Messages', 'Share', and 'About'. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, there is a main banner with the CouchSurfing logo and a tagline: 'Participate in Creating a Better World. One Couch At A Time'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Quick Links' with a list of links like 'FAQ's', 'Sign Up Now!', and 'About CouchSurfing'; 'CouchSurfing Statistics' featuring a world map and a table of statistics; 'Testimonial' with a user profile and a quote; and 'Users Online' showing a list of active users from various countries. The statistics table is as follows:

Category	Count
CouchSurfers	2,509,476
Successful Surf or Host Experiences	2,815,180
Friendships Created	2,908,378
Positive Experiences	4,656,898
Countries Represented	245
Cities Represented	81,033

This is a promotional banner for CouchSurfing. It features the CouchSurfing logo at the top left. The main text reads 'The World is Smaller Than You Think'. Below this, there is a sub-headline: 'You know where you need a friend or a friend is off your mind? That happens all the time around here. In the last week 11,600 CouchSurfers around the world have met to person-to-person fun, adventure, and beauty.' There is a video player showing two people smiling, with a play button and the text '21 Positive References Since 2003'. A search bar is also visible on the left side of the banner.

Profile of a participant

In a profile the participant can tell about his hobbies, experience of travel, possession of languages. Also he can put photos and another files. Also the participant can state there, that he receives visitors or not. If he can, he will specifies quantity, the possible sex of visitors, conditions of staying, what transport goes to his house. If the participant can't receive visitors he will be able put a status «I'm ready to meet and communicate».

Also, in a profile the participant can see responses about him from other participants, the reference to profiles of his friends, his contribution to development of the project.



Search place where there is possibility to stay

Search in questionnaires in different parameters, such as a geographical position, information about the participant, possibility to receive visitors for registered participants is accessible. In the letter with a request to accept on a visit guests usually write about the plans of travel (date of an arrival/departure, plans of entertainment, excursions, team works) and other information which can interest a receiver. Also you can find people, who can help to show you round the town, tell something interesting.



Languages

The "Native" language of a site is English, but there are versions in many other languages, including Russian. However, dialogue between participants is realized in English more often: in such groups as «Moscow» and «Russia» the most part of messages is written in English. It makes for visitors from other countries will be able put the helpful information and participate in discussions.



Ambassadors

- In many big cities and/or countries there is so-called Ambassadors— members of community, actively promoting development of community. Ambassador's task consist of greeting of new associates, organization of meetings and other events, Mmoderating a forum and other.



Safety

The great attention is given to safety of participants in travel. For this purpose there are some tools, giving the chance to know opinion of other participants about an interesting user, and system of verification of a name and the address of the user. Also the site administration dispatches to all participants the information about safety rules periodically or, less often, about the revealed swindlers.

system reviews

- Every member after meeting with the other member can leave a comment about him. The comment is shown in the profiles of both members. Recommended to leave comments after a personal acquaintance (not online).



- Every member may add another member to friends. It also notes how, and when met, the general opinion about the member. The second member should confirm that he wants you to add him to friends. The Buddy list of user is shown in his profile. Going into the profile of any member you can see how many "mediators" you know him (for example, if you have a common friend on the site, you will see that you are familiar through it).



creation



The idea of creation of this resource came Casey Fenton (Casey Fenton) in 2000, when he bought a cheap ticket to Iceland, but he did not have a place where he can stop. Then he sent letters to more than 1,500 Icelandic students to allow him to stay with [them](#). As a result of the correspondence, he met with several groups of students who are ready to show him 'their' Reykjavik. After he had spent an unforgettable weekend in Iceland, he decided that he would not use the services of tourist infrastructure and decided to create a web site. After this journey Casey Fenton with Dan Hoffer, Sebastien Le Tuan and Leonardo Silveira began to develop the [site](#). In January 2003, launched a beta site, and in January 2004 the site became available to the public.



Other functions



- For public communication on the site using a forum, split into groups. The group includes members, united by something common: geographic location, interests, etc. There is also a tool for organizing meetings (events). In large cities, periodically hold meetings of members and guests of the city. Such events can not only have a good time, but also to meet other community members from both the city and from other places, learn about the culture of other countries, the interesting parts of the world, especially travel in a particular region of the world.



Got Couch?



<http://www.couchsurfing.org/>