



ADVICE FROM THOSE WELL TRAVELED AND EXCHANGED:

MAKE YOUR EXPECTATIONS CLEAR.

I think you have to be really, really clear about what the expectations are. Distinguish whether it is a high traffic lake where noise isn't an issue or a quiet lake with a fragile septic system like ours. We know we need to be flexible, and we are, but we are careful to make our expectations clear.

— Fran Bukrey, Mercer, Wisconsin and Evanston, Illinois

IF LEERY, WRITE A CONTRACT.

When we arrived in Scotland on our very first exchange, the husband of the exchanging couple picked us up. It was then that we learned he would be staying at the house with us for the first 10 days of the five-week trip. When we got back to their house after the exchange we found that both cars were emptied of gas, we found gooey red wine spots in the fridge and our plants were dead. The next time we exchanged a contract and a checklist of expectations were agreed upon. At the same rate, we only used the contract once and every exchange has been smooth with courteous guests each time.

— Betsey Sansby, Minnetonka, Minn.

PLAN ABOUT A YEAR IN ADVANCE.

We learned the hard way. I tried to plan a few months out and found that a lot of people already have their exchanges planned. But, you never know. Most of your time is spent researching locations and finding people you think would be interested. That time is absolutely worth it!

— Valerie Schooley, Red Wing & Itasca, Minn.

RICHARD AND FRAN BUKREY

When Richard and Fran Bukrey find people interested in coming to their upscale Chicago condo, they stay at their lake home on Martha Lake in Mercer, a historic lake town in Northern Wisconsin. It's much simpler than the city. "There's no fudge shops here, just bait shops and bars," she says. "You have to want to get here," Fran says. But, the backwoods cabin offers another attractive retreat for a different kind of exchanging party. When they find people interested in the cabin, they stay at their condo.

www.HomeExchange.com

These stories are no surprise to Ed Kushins, president of HomeExchange.com. "From tens of thousands of exchanges, we have never had problems with theft or malicious damages, he says. "The process helps you get to know the people, (and) it is like having your own tour guide, only less expensive." The movie, *The Holiday*, is a great representation of what it's like to swap homes, he says. Although, there's no romance guaranteed.

Kushins started the company in 1992 with a print directory as other home exchange agencies have been doing for about 50 years. Home Exchange was online in 1997 and, with its easy navigation, has quickly become the house-swapping site of choice by its 14,000 members in more than 100 countries. Membership has doubled each year for the last three years. "It is the best travel value you can imagine," Kushins says. "...and it is just way more comfortable."



To compare home exchange sites and their membership prices, go to mylakehom.com.

