

Summer Short Term Exchange Program (STEP)

Frequently Asked Questions for Students and Parents

Is Summer Short Term Exchange new? Why is it being offered now by Rotary's North Star Exchange Program?

- Short Term Exchange has been popular in Europe for decades.
- North Star Youth Exchange piloted the program in 2017 and sent 20 students abroad that first summer.
- There are two STEP types – **Family to Family** exchange and **Camps/Tours**.
- North Star is getting involved with STEP to give more and younger students the opportunity to experience the life changing benefits of youth exchange.
- Never has promoting world peace and understanding been more important – this is one of Rotary's prime focus areas.

Who is a good candidate for a Summer Family to Family Exchange?

- Students ages 15-19 (as of July 1, 2019) who are excited to experience exchange as a freshman or sophomore or who may need to build confidence before applying for school year long term exchange sometime in the future.
- Students who can't make a school year exchange work due to family, school or extracurricular conflicts.
- Students who have the time to spend with their matched sibling (not working or too busy) and have a family that is excited to host and share their life and culture.
- Students who are curious, flexible and excited to spend two months with their new sister or brother from another country.

How is STEP different from Long Term Exchange?

- STEP Family to Family is approximately a two month experience during school break vs. a 10 or 11 month experience where you would attend school in another country. STEP camps or tours are 1-4 week experiences.
- STEP generally does not require a visa and students will not be enrolled in school. Some STEP matches may however visit school for a few days depending on how school holidays match up.
- Family to Family exchange is just that – every applicant also hosts so the whole family is involved and must be approved as a host family.
- Matched students and their families work out their exact exchange dates and book and pay for their own airline tickets.

How do students apply and are chosen for STEP?

- Students complete and submit the online application available on the North Star website. They contact their local Rotary Club to advise them of their application and if chosen for STEP – someone from Rotary will need to do a home visit required for host family approval.

- Students and their family will attend an information session and be interviewed for selection to the program by a team of Rotarians on Saturday December 7th, 2019 in Roseville MN.
- Approved applicants will be notified, and the matching process will begin.
- A full day orientation for all STEP participants and families will be held on Saturday, April 25th.

When are STEP applications due?

- Preference will be given to applications received by November 29th.
- Late applications will be accepted until March 1 as program capacity allows.
- Applications for camps/tours can be completed and on file. Tour and camp brochures come in throughout the spring applicants need to check the camp google doc list frequently. Once they find a camp or tour of interest, applicants notify the North Star STEP camp team member who will submit your application and inform you whether you are accepted.

What does it cost to participate in STEP?

- Family to Family applicants pay a \$500 program fee to North Star, \$80-\$210 for Rotary approved insurance (varies by length of exchange), buy their plane ticket or use frequent flier miles for travel, and bring spending money.
- Camp participants pay a \$250 program fee, \$80 for insurance, camp fee (varies from free to \$800 – average cost \$250) plus travel and spending money.

What countries are choices for Summer STEP exchanges? (See the list on the North Star website)

- There are many partners in Europe – this is due to the long tradition of STEP in Europe and the number of applicants that want short term exchanges from those countries.
- New countries may be added to the list in the future. Students will indicate their country preferences when they are interviewed.

How are matches made?

- Information is exchanged between Rotary STEP coordinators including the applicant's gender, age, hobbies, interests and exchange country preference.
- Once country STEP coordinators believe they might have a good match – they exchange applications and review these in detail for compatibility.
- If coordinators believe that the two students/families would be a good match – they will share information with the families to approve the match.
- Once both families approve being matched with each other – the match is finalized and students and families can begin communicating.

Can matches be between students of difference genders?

- Typically girls are matched with a sister and boys with a brother but brother/sister pairs are possible.

If a student goes on Summer STEP could they still go on Long Term Exchange?

- Yes! Students are welcome to apply for Long Term exchange after STEP.
- We hope that STEP families may love the exchange experience so much that they may also want to host a long term student in their community.

What are the exact dates of the exchange?

- For Family to Family exchange – dates are worked out between the two families. Typically, USA students go abroad first sometime after school ends and their exchange sibling will come to the USA later in July or August but either can travel first. Exchanges are typically about 30 days in each country.

What are STEP Camp/Tour options?

- Rotary Exchange Programs in many countries offer camps or tours that bring together students from around the world to experience their country and culture. Rotarians host and often financially support these experiences that offer language camps, bike tours, cultural camps, etc.
- Specific camp/tour flyers give exact dates, details and costs of each experience. Information will be shared via a shared google doc once applicants have been selected.
- Camps fill very quickly once published so applicants must monitor opportunities and let the North Star camp coordinator know which they want to apply to.
- Camps/Tours are one-way exchanges but still require a STEP application to be completed. Students wanting to participate in a camp should apply, be accepted to the program and when specific camps are published – they will have their application sent to the camp organizers.
- Once accepted to a camp – applicants must stay with that placement vs. apply to others that may be published later.

Can frequent flyer miles be used for the airline ticket?

- Yes – families book their own student's flight so can pay for a ticket or use miles.
- Travel One is a travel company that Rotary uses and they are happy to help families book flights.
- Tickets should not be purchased until the match is finalized and the student receives a final confirmation letter.

What is the timeline for the full process?

- Submit STEP application by Nov. 29th – March 1 (preference given to early submissions)
- Informational meeting and interview – Dec. 9th
- Notification of acceptance – late December
- Camp/Tour information will be posted in a google doc to which you will receive a link
- Family to Family matches are made – February through April.
- Program fee due on or before the April 25 orientation.
- Full day orientation for students and parents – April 25th.
- The North Star student may go abroad early summer and then return, or the exchange sibling may come first.