

# Members' Guide To



**International Travel and Hosting Fellowship, Inc.**  
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## **Mission Statement**

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**The Mission of the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship is to stimulate and facilitate connections and cultural sharing throughout the Rotary world by contact, hosting, visiting and travel.**

# Welcome to The Members' Guide to ITHF



Whether you are a new member seeking information on how the ITHF works, or you are an experienced member interested in improving your skills for visiting, hosting, communicating or other, we welcome you to the Members' Guide to ITHF.

This publication is a summary of many things we've learned over the past several years on how to "connect" with peoples of other cultures successfully. It is not complete and we expect it never will be for we are constantly learning from our experiences and trying to build an even better guidebook for future members.

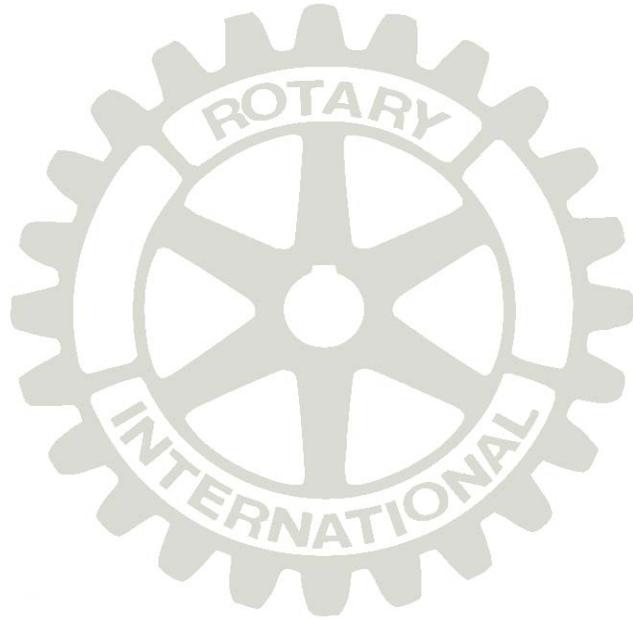
In this booklet, the subjects are:

- The Rotary Recreational Fellowships
- The International Travel and Hosting Fellowship
- The Origin of ITHF
- How the ITHF Operates as a Corporation
- How to Make the Most of ITHF
- How to Get Started in ITHF
- How to Prepare for the Visit
- How to Prepare to Host
- Cross-cultural Communications
- Obligations of the ITHF Member
- Pitfalls to Avoid
- The Benefits of Membership in ITHF
- Attracting New Members to ITHF

You are invited to help us improve The Members' Guide to ITHF by sending your suggestions to ITHF, 2601 Top Hill Road, Louisville, KY 40206 USA, or e-mailing them to [r.harned@ithf.org](mailto:r.harned@ithf.org). Of course, if discussion is warranted, don't hesitate to call Administrator Rick Harned at +1 502 439-1826.

We hope you have many rewarding experiences from your membership in ITHF. As with most of us, however, you can expect to get out of ITHF proportionate to what you put into it.

## **What are the Rotary Recreational Fellowships?**



Some Rotarians and their partners enjoy playing golf. Others enjoy yachting, stamp collecting or cycling. Others like to pilot private planes or talk to people in far away places via shortwave radio. If there's one thing Rotarians universally enjoy, it's the rich fellowship with other Rotarians.

The various fellowship organizations within Rotary offer Rotarians and their partners the chance to spice their hobbies and avocational interests with that same fellowship that sparks every other Rotary Club activity.

The Recreational and Vocational Fellowships of Rotary International are associations of Rotarians and spouses who share common interests in worthwhile recreational or vocational activities for the purposes of furthering acquaintance and fellowship.

A recent count revealed over 40 Recreational Fellowships and 40 Vocational groups. All fellowships are listed in Rotary's official directory and listed on the R.I. website. Many are linked directly from the R.I. website. Persons to be contacted for information about each one are listed accordingly.

## **What is the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship?**

The International Travel and Hosting Fellowship is a network of Rotarians and partners throughout the world agreeing to host and share their lives with each other in return for like favor some time in the future.

Members planning regional, national or international travel refer to the membership directory to identify other ITHF members living in the area.

Prospective hosts are contacted preferably 30 days prior to the desired visit. The prospective hosts consent to a “connection” with the visiting party subject to their own convenience.

ITHF “connections” take many forms. Some will involve simply an evening at a restaurant, some will provide admission to “the club,” some will include everything - accommodation, food, sightseeing, entertainment, etc. Such is strictly the hosts’ choice, but without any obligation. Details of the visit are worked out between the members.

ITHF “connections” are self-paced and subject to individual preferences and can coincide with business or pleasure travel. Membership in the ITHF implies a desire to accommodate other ITHF visitors; however, such “connections” are always subject to the convenience of the hosts.

The ITHF is not a bed and breakfast organization. It is not a home hotel association. There is no obligation to house the visitor in the home. The “connection” will be richer for it, but some do not have space for visitors.

The ITHF “connection,” therefore, is for the purpose of having a cultural experience. Those simply wanting a place to stay, a meal to eat or who are more interested in their own itinerary than that offered by their hosts will soon discover they are in the wrong fellowship.

Common courtesy requires that ITHF members make their inquiries well in advance of the planned arrival, respond promptly to all inquiries received, and take maximum care to avoid any surprises to the hosts.

## What is the origin of ITHF?

The International Travel and Hosting Fellowship (ITHF) began as the International Hosting Rotarians Fellowship (IHRF) in 1990. It grew out of experiences an American Rotarian and his wife had while connecting with several Europeans during an extended visit there in 1986. As result, they discovered many Rotarians who were prepared to offer hospitality as a chance to meet and enjoy fellowship with foreign Rotarians. Thus the idea of IHRF was born.

In 1989, an Australian Rotarian and his wife, on tour in the USA, contacted these same Americans. All were members of the Home Exchange Fellowship and had listed their preference to exchange visits rather than homes. Arrangements were made and, from those small beginnings, the IHRF evolved to what it is today.

In 1993, as outgrowth of the very successful tour of members through Australia in conjunction with the convention in Melbourne, the IHRF petitioned for a change in name and expansion of function. The International Travel and Hosting Fellowship was born and a series of tours has been offered at least every other year since.

Following the Australian tour by 38 members, 33 members traveled for 16 days from Austria to Hungary, through Switzerland, into Italy for the Nice Convention and then continued on to Paris. Subsequently, 73 completed the successful "Celtic Capers" tour of England, Wales, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland in 1997.

In 1999, 86 ITHFers gathered in Hong Kong to begin the 16 day "Into The Orient" tour which included the convention in Singapore. Almost every year since then, ITHF tours have united members in experiencing the sights and cultures of countries around the world, including Portugal, Australia, Brazil, Taiwan, and Korea.

Most ITHF tours have been organized in association with the Rotary Conventions, but additional tours of Nepal, Bhutan, and Taiwan have offered members unique opportunities to learn about these countries.

While tours are a major segment of ITHF's program of activity, our primary purpose remains to stimulate and facilitate personal cultural sharing experiences among our members during their own individual travels and "connections".

# How does the ITHF Operate?

**R.I. is the Ultimate Authority.** ITHF was recognized by R.I. in late 1989. Accordingly, it exists at the pleasure of the R. I. Board of Directors and is subject to all its policies and decisions. ITHF, however, is not an agency of Rotary International.

**ITHF Constitution.** In 1998, ITHF members unanimously adopted a constitution. It is the next level of authority over the decisions and activities of the ITHF. (The By-Laws of the Articles of Incorporation replaced the original constitution in 2000 - a copy is available upon request to the Administrator).

**Elected Officers.** As set out in the ITHF Articles of Incorporation, the elected positions of president, senior vice-president and regional vice-presidents provide primary leadership to the organization. Regional vice-presidents are responsible for promoting the growth of membership in their respective areas and for representing the interests and preferences of those same members. A chart of current ITHF officers is published in the front pages of each quarterly directory on the website.

**Board of Directors.** The Board of Directors, comprised of all elected officers, chairman of the past presidents council, administrator, treasurer and secretary, has voting authority over those operational matters brought before it. It adopts short- and long-range plans and goals and carries them out. It supervises elections and provides oversight of and guidance to appointed officers

**Past Presidents Council.** As provided in the constitution, the long-range plans and directions for the ITHF are developed by the Past Presidents Council and submitted for ultimate approval by the Board of Directors.

**Membership.** Through newsletters, e-mails and/or via the annual meetings, the membership has final approval of all issues affecting it and elects all officers.

**Appointed Officers.** The positions of treasurer, secretary, administrator and directors of tour services, membership services, communications, publishing and promotions are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the board of directors.

**Incorporation.** The ITHF is incorporated under the laws of the state of Tennessee USA as the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship, Inc. Accordingly, officers of the fellowship as it exists under the rules of Rotary are the same as the officers of the corporation as it is legally constituted.

## How does one make the most of membership in the ITHF?

**Review** your directory listing. Does it accurately tell about you and your interests? Does it include a current photo? Does it list complete and accurate contact data? You can update your listing by mailing to ITHF, 2601 Top Hill Road, Louisville KY 40206 USA; or e-mail [r.harned@ithf.org](mailto:r.harned@ithf.org).

**Explore** the current directory to learn about fellow Rotarians and partners in distant lands who wait for a visit from you.

**Communicate** with those of interest in other countries. Write, phone, fax, e-mail to others living in countries you plan or hope to visit some day. Don't wait until your bags are packed.

**Invite** Rotarians in your club and district, particularly friends in other countries, to join ITHF. Tell them about <https://www.ithf.org> - they can join on-line, or refer prospects to email [r.harned@ithf.org](mailto:r.harned@ithf.org) for membership information.

**Visit** your fellow members as you travel. Without visits there can be no "connections." Every "connection" is an adventure - many never end.

**Receive** your fellow traveling members at every opportunity you have. The hosts frequently are "the recipients of the adventure."

**Promote** the ITHF by publicizing our web site, <https://www.ithf.org>. Your effort may result in a Rotarian couple having the international experience of their lives.

**Make suggestions** This is your fellowship. Your suggestions and feedback may be just what will make a difference in our future.

**Share your experiences with others** Sharing of the experiences of your "connections" with other members will enrich the value of membership for all of us. Send stories of your "connections" to Connections Editor Kimberly Carroll, email [kvcarroll@yahoo.com](mailto:kvcarroll@yahoo.com), with photographs. Each published report extends your membership one year.

**Step up to leadership** Take the lead by offering yourself as a district or regional representative of ITHF. Job descriptions, organizational goals and the ITHF Articles of Incorporation are available to you for the asking.

## How does one get started in ITHF?

### **It's easy when another member contacts you and you agree to host.**

Then your opportunity has been created for you. The obligation to “do the necessary” to properly accommodate your guests is nearly the same as if you had friends or relatives visiting. Being the good hosts that you are, you just draw on your own experience and intuitions. Search the book store for books and articles on being a good host in general, if needed; but, be certain to explore the suggestions on the following pages for hosting and communicating with visitors from other countries and cultures.

### **But, if you need more prodding to get started, consider this . .**

You joined the ITHF because you are interested in having additional communication, experience, sharing, learning, exploring with Rotarians and partners from other countries, other parts of this small world of ours, other cultures rich in ways we can only imagine, other systems, other climates, other everything. Well, the 2200 plus other members of ITHF didn't join for a different reason - they WANT you to contact them for a “connection”.

Every week or month there's a lost opportunity because one is too timid, too busy or too uncertain to ask. Don't let an opportunity for an international “connection” be lost because YOU were the reluctant one.

### **OK, so how do you ask for a “connection”? We suggest this following approach.**

“We are members of ITHF, listed in the directory on page 72. We are visiting your area between the 15 and 24th of April and wonder if you would be able to host us in some manner convenient to you. We are very interested in your country and plan to see ----- and do ----- during our stay. We welcome any suggestions and any type of “connection” you can arrange for us during the time we'll be there.”

Of course, you don't have to wait until you're in final preparations for your trip. Write to members you are interested in at any time, or to members living in areas you might be visiting in the future.

## How does one prepare to make the visit?

**CONTACT IN ADVANCE!** Contact your prospective hosts at least 30 days in advance of the desired “connection.” Remember that the “connection” is always at the convenience of the host. Hosts wouldn’t have joined ITHF if they didn’t desire visitors from other parts of the world. Such is not always convenient, however, so don’t expect or imply an expectation. A three (3) day visit is the maximum ever to wish for. Two (2) days is minimum for real sharing to take place.

**REMEMBER,** your “connection” can take many different forms such as no accommodation but a tour, dinner, advice, use of the club, etc.; accommodation but no evening meals, etc; or many other combinations of meals, sightseeing, accommodation, guidance and advice.

**NO SURPRISES!** Be certain that you present no surprises to your hosts. If children or other are traveling with you, make certain that such is known and is acceptable to the hosts.

**BE PREPARED** to cover your own expenses when taken out to a local restaurant or to any place charging admission. Many hosts will cover these expenses, but such should not be taken for granted. And, of course, for their efforts, treating them to a special meal or event might be most appropriate.

**GIFTS ARE APPRECIATED.** It is usually appropriate to bring a small gift to your host or hostess. The gift need not be expensive. In fact, giving expensive gifts sometimes causes embarrassment to the recipients. The best gifts are those things representative of your country and culture.

**TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN** about the predominant religion in the area. Some religions restrict meats and alcohol. Knowing about these in advance can help you avoid embarrassing situations during the visit.

**BE SENSITIVE** to your host’s expectations. Never smoke in a host’s home unless invited to do so. Never assume a host is obligated to provide for you.

**BE FLEXIBLE.** This is perhaps the best advice for all. It is impossible to know everything about your host country before arrival, and learning about your host’s culture is one of the principal reasons you are there. By remaining flexible, you will help ensure an enjoyable and productive “connection.”

# How does one prepare to host the international visitor?



**GUESTS NEED FREE TIME TO RECOVER** from a long flight or drive and time changes. Speaking a different language all day can be very tiring, so try not to overschedule activities.

**KEEP IT SIMPLE AND NATURAL.** Traditional accommodations and meals enhance the experience. Hosts should not make elaborate preparations for their ITHF guests. Keep the reception, environment and accommodation as natural and casual as you can.

**GIVE A TOUR.** Soon after your guests' arrival, give them a tour of your home. Show them where the bathroom is located, how appliances function, where the kitchen is, etc.

**HOUSE RULES.** Every house has them. Your visit with your guests will be greatly enhanced if you review the household rules with them. These "rules" can cover a broad range of activities, and it is better that you explain them rather than leaving it to your guest to learn the hard way. For example, you may want your guest to feel free to help him or herself to food or drinks from the kitchen. However, you may have restrictions about where food is eaten.

**SMOKING.** It is important to establish this rule early on if your guests smoke. You should explain fully if you have a "no smoking" rule and show them where they might be allowed to smoke, if needed. Smoking is on the increase in some countries. It can be a problem!

**CUSTOMS VARY GREATLY** from one country to the next regarding the use of the bathroom. Be sure to explain what restrictions exist, if any, on using the bathroom. For example, if a family member routinely uses the bathroom at a certain hour to prepare for work or school, let your guests know. Bathroom layouts and fixtures also differ greatly from country to country. Clearly explain where everything is and how it works.

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES** include Rotary meetings, zoos, museums, picnics, barbecues, shopping, town meetings, parties, bowling, skiing, concerts, board games, schools and universities, sharing photo albums and collections. Be sensitive to cultural differences in diet. A barbecue may not be suitable for a vegetarian guest.

**ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS** and remain flexible. **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!** Normal routines of personal hygiene, mealtime etiquette and what is considered "polite" vary greatly from culture to culture.

**THE SENSE OF TIME** also varies greatly. Different cultures have different definitions of "prompt" and "late." Because you have been brought up using one concept does not mean another's is "wrong." Be aware of any differences in how time is perceived and adjust. Your guests will not be trying to irritate you by showing up so "late" or so "early."

## How does one prepare for cross-cultural communications?

**SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY.** Face the person and speak distinctly. Speak loud enough to be heard, but do not raise your voice. A raised voice will deter communication. Speak more slowly than usual, but not so slowly the other person becomes offended.

**USE SIMPLE** vocabulary, grammar and short sentences. Avoid slang and idiomatic expressions. Write what you are trying to say if you are having too much difficulty in getting your point across. Pause more frequently than you would when speaking to a local.

**ENCOURAGE** the other person to speak, regardless of errors. Do not interrupt to make corrections. The best way to correct is by “modeling,” that is, simply repeating what was said in a correct manner. Remember that most people are afraid of embarrassing themselves by speaking poorly. Praise efforts to speak at all.



**TRY AGAIN.** If you are not sure you have made yourself understood, try again. Most of us comprehend less than we think we do. Have a bilingual dictionary available so you can point to words, if necessary.

**WATCH FOR NON-VERBAL CLUES.** Some cultures put more emphasis on the use of non-verbal cues (posture, facial expressions, touching, eye movements, etc.) than do others. A person may communicate one thing verbally, to avoid being rude, yet communicate the opposite by his posture.

It is not uncommon for people to build up secret frustrations or anger if their non-verbal communications are not responded to “correctly.” They may not consider that you have not been trained to pick up on their culturally acquired ways of communication.

**USE CAUTION WITH JOKES.** Jokes often do not make sense across cultures. What may seem funny to you may be totally misunderstood by a person of another culture. **SARCASM** can inadvertently, yet easily, injure or insult your guests.

# What are the obligations of ITHF members?

**1. Use it!** Most who do not renew their membership cite as the major reason “nobody came.” Your reluctance to ask for a “connection” may be a major disappointment to those having the means and desire to enrich your life in surprising ways.

A European couple several years ago traveled through Australia for four weeks in a caravan/recreational vehicle. They were encouraged to connect with the locals, but they were too timid. They saw all the wondrous sights of Australia, but failed to gain the rich experiences and insights that three or four “connections” would have provided. And who suffered the loss? They did for certain, but it was a major loss for the Australians who yearn for contacts with visitors from other cultures!

1 **Always respond** promptly to inquiry. The choice to host is yours but please respond. This is perhaps the most frequent complaint we receive. Your number two obligation is to respond promptly to any inquiry you get from another member.

2 **Share your experiences with others** through the ITHF newsletter by sending summaries of your experiences with photos to Connections Editor Kimberly Carroll at email: [kvcarroll@yahoo.com](mailto:kvcarroll@yahoo.com). Each published report extends your membership one year.

3 **Protect the confidentiality** of directory information and website passwords. Advise the Administrator if you receive an inquiry from one who is not listed.

4 **Limit use of membership directory** to its sole purpose of enabling you to communicate and arrange “connections” with other members for cultural and fellowship experiences. Use of directory for other purposes (commercial, personal promotions, any illegal) or lending it to a non-member will result in membership cancellation.

5 **Hold ITHF and Rotary International harmless.** In accepting membership and using the directory, members of the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship assume full responsibility for all damages and losses which might grow out of such use. ITHF members represent themselves to be Rotarians in good standing, but no verifications are made with Rotary International or the clubs. Neither ITHF nor R.I. assume responsibility for damages or losses from member travels or connections.

6 **Let Director of Membership Aswini Kar** at [aswini.kar@gmail.com](mailto:aswini.kar@gmail.com) know should you have a major disappointment or experience a failure to respond to inquiry or such. We attempt to address each problem methodically and tactfully, primarily in effort to prevent it from recurring in the future.

# What are some pitfalls to avoid?

## **1. Remember that ITHF members are not obligated to provide accommodation in their home for you as you travel.**

The mission of the ITHF is to stimulate and facilitate connections and cultural sharing throughout the Rotary world by contact, hosting, visiting and travel. "Connections," when arranged, take many forms, all subject to the convenience of the hosts. Frequently, they will include accommodation in the home, but sometimes, such is not possible for a variety of reasons, none of which need to be explained. The prospective hosts joined ITHF because they are interested in having rewarding contacts with people of other cultures. Such is not always convenient at the times you request.

## **2. Visitors are obligated to their hosts when "connections" are made.**

Many hosts will have gone to a great deal of effort in preparing for the visit, even to the extent of changing their own plans in some cases. They may have made schedules and reservations for a number of events and places to share with you. If you have appointments or schedules which conflict with those developed by your hosts, you should inform them of your necessities at the outset. Otherwise, schedules developed by your hosts, particularly when you are accommodated in the home, should take precedence.

## **3. Always protect the ITHF directory and information contained within.**

The ITHF directory is intended for use only by members in good standing of the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship and only for the purpose of communicating and arranging travel "connections" with other listed members for cultural sharing and fellowship experiences. Use of the book for other purposes (including commercial enterprise, personal promotions, any illegal) can result in prompt cancellation of membership.

## **4. Share your experiences with fellow members by sending write-ups and photos to Connections newsletter editor Wanda Jared**

It is so important to receive your feedback that ITHF awards a free year of membership to those submitting reports of "connections" with photos when those reports are used in the Connections newsletters. Send to Kimberly Carroll or email [kvcarroll@yahoo.com](mailto:kvcarroll@yahoo.com).

## And, the benefits of belonging to ITHF are?

- membership in a **family of over 1000 Rotarians and partners** having genuine interest in the internationality of Rotary through opportunities for cultural sharing and rich fellowship
- ready made **avenues for unique perspectives** of distant places and their special characteristics while traveling through other countries of the world or other parts of your own country
- the potential for developing **life-long friendships and associations** with individuals, couples, families and even groups of families from the “connections” made either there or here
- frequent and open **sharing of experiences** with one another through quarterly newsletters and the website [www.ithf.org](http://www.ithf.org), contributing to a heightened level of enlightenment about other people, other countries and other cultures, or could we say:  
**“international understanding and world peace”.**
- opportunities to participate in **highly specialized tours** arranged for ITHF members in connection with Rotary conventions held throughout the world
- opportunities for the best of **Rotary fellowship** with other members --
  - while visiting or working at “the booth” during conventions
  - at the annual membership breakfast meetings on Tuesday morning of every convention
  - through the growing number of social groups being formed in various regions of ITHF
  - during the many tours now being arranged for groups of members, and
  - naturally, through the many “connections” we arrange as we travel

**ITHF seeks only those Rotarians and Partners  
genuinely interested in experiencing  
the internationality of Rotary  
through cultural sharing  
opportunities and  
rich fellowship**

# Attracting and registering new members in ITHF!

The long range goal of ITHF is to steadily grow to 2500 listings or 4500 members by 2020, with at least one Rotary couple from each district in the world. Toward that end we rely on you to help “spread the word” through your club and at district conferences and other opportunities. The best source of information is our web site, <https://www.ithf.org>. Interested Rotarians can join easily over the web site and even transmit their photographs by jpeg attachment or such.

<https://www.ithf.org>

In addition to the website, you can cut or reproduce the following. All potential members have to do is complete and submit as explained below.

**International Travel and Hosting Fellowship Registration:** Please complete and mail this form with photo to ITHF, 2601 Top Hill Road, Louisville KY 40206 USA, or email to [administrator@ithf.org](mailto:administrator@ithf.org) PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY!

LAST or FAMILY NAME \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME (Pref'd) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PARTNER'S NAME\* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ROTARY CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ ROTARY POSITIONS HELD \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ LANGUAGES \_\_\_\_\_

NEAREST CITY \_\_\_\_\_ SPECIAL ROTARY INTERESTS \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER INTERESTS \_\_\_\_\_

\* Indicate if also a Rotarian

CHOOSE ONE:  US \$ 50 for one year  \$75 for three years

Pay by Credit Card: Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_\_

OR send me an invoice via PayPal (secure)  yes

OR I will send the above registration form with a check drawn on a US bank for the amount chosen to ITHF, 2601 Top Hill Road, Louisville KY 40206 USA.

### **The Ten Commandments of Travel**

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Thou shalt not expect to find things as thou hast at home, for thou has left home to find things different.

Thou shalt not take anything too seriously, for a carefree mind is the start of a good holiday.

Thou shalt not let other travelers get on thy nerves, for thou hast paid good money to enjoy thyself.

Remember to take half as many clothes as thou thinkest and twice the money.

Know at all times where thy passport is, for a person without a passport is a person without a country.

Remember that if we had been expected to stay in one place, we would have roots.

Thou shalt not worry, for he who worrieth hath no pleasure, and few things are that fatal.

When in Rome, be prepared to do somewhat as the Romans do.

Thou shalt not judge the people of the country by the person who hath given the trouble.

Remember, thou art a guest in other lands, and he who treats his host with respect shall be honored.

**... and remember, no matter where you go ... there you are!**

## **Vision Statement**

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**The Vision of the International Travel and Hosting Fellowship is to be a broadly based, viable and respected recreational fellowship in the Rotary world.**