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Inside a San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato home whose owners
are signed up with HouseSitMexico.

House-sitting service is a win-win for homeowners and sitters alike

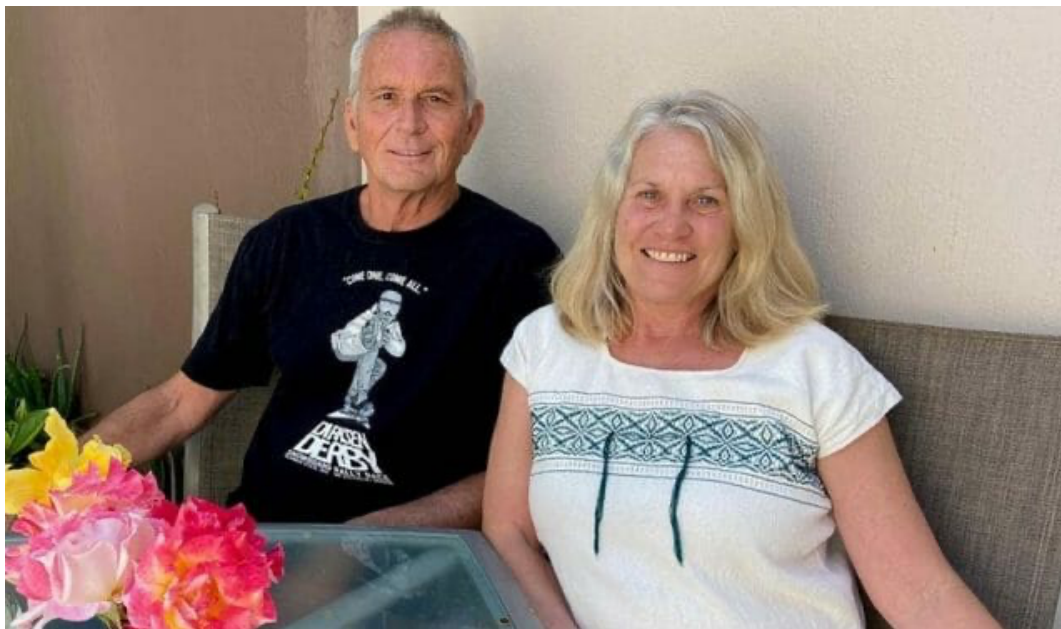
Thousands of people have discovered the fun and benefits of house-sitting and pet-sitting exchanges as ways to explore Mexico.

Some even find their “forever home,” like Alexandra Gordon, who settled in the Lake Chapala area with her husband after exploring a handful of other places in Mexico. House-sitting enabled them to “live like the locals” in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, and San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, before deciding that lakeside was where they wanted to be.

“It really worked for me,” Gordon said. “I saw what a fabulous experience it was, and I made really good friends wherever we were.”

In 2016, she had the opportunity to buy the name www.HousesitMexico.com, which was otherwise a non-working website. With her background in media communications, she spent six months redesigning the site and service and then relaunched it in November of that year.

Since then, Housesit Mexico has successfully filled more than 1,000 house-sitting assignments — something Gordon is very proud of.



Housesit Mexico members Jack and Valerie Pearce ended up buying a house in the Lake Chapala area while house-sitting there.

“There’s a real need for this kind of service ... from the house sitters and the homeowners and pet owners,” she said. “It’s truly fulfilling a need, and people are getting a lot out of it, which is really a pleasure for me.”

Housesit Mexico is set up to be secure, easy and informative. You can browse for free without access to contact or personal information while you decide if you want a membership. When you’re ready, three types of annual memberships — for sitters, for owners or a dual membership at a reduced rate — give members access to detailed information about the properties, sitters, FAQs and reviews.

Sitters post profiles, references, pet- and house-sitting resumes and comments from satisfied homeowners. Photos are crucial for both sides of the house-sitting coin. Communication starts with the site’s private, in-system messaging, and then people can communicate directly in whatever way they want.

“It’s like a mutual aid society, and it creates value and friendships for everyone involved,” Gordon said.

Close to half the homeowners on the site have a combined membership, she said, enabling them to both find a sitter as well as travel and be sitters themselves. Gordon personally reads every submission and sends out hundreds of personal emails to members, as well as a weekly digest of available house-sitting opportunities.

It’s been Gordon’s experience that people become house sitters or pet sitters for three main reasons: to vacation and explore a certain area, to investigate where to retire and as a full-time occupation.



Housesit Mexico’s owner Alexandra Gordon went into the house-sitting business after experiencing it for herself. *Photo by Peter Donaldson*

She makes it clear that although sitters are not usually paid, a housesit is not a “free trip” and comes with responsibilities that must be taken seriously.

Typically, there are pets that need care.

“There’s a person-to-person exchange of services in return for a place to stay; that’s what house-sitting is,” she explained. Different types of homes require various levels of maintenance, and most involve pets, everything from dogs and cats to parrots, poultry and koi.

“It’s such a relief for people to have their ‘furry family’ taken care of,” she said.

Gordon strongly encourages homeowners to ask for references and then to make a phone or video call to at least one.

“It’s really important to spend the time to talk to one another before accepting a house sitter,” Gordon said. “On a video call a homeowner can do a house tour and show their pets; sitters should be personable and come across as real people. There’s nothing like talking to someone yourself.”

While the site has listings for house-sitting opportunities all over Mexico, Gordon said the most popular places reflect where English-speaking residents live (or want to go on vacation): San Miguel de Allende, the Lake Chapala area, Puerto Vallarta, Cancún, Isla Mujeres. Fall, winter and spring are the busiest times.



House-sitting often comes with responsibilities, such as taking care of homeowners’ pets.

Gordon keeps a balance between the number of sitters and listings so that no one is overwhelmed by a huge response. The “How It Works” section on the website explains the process carefully.

Carolyn Simpson has lived in the Lake Chapala area for more than 20 years and has used a wide array of house sitters for her frequent travels back to the United States.

“My experience with Housesit Mexico has been the best; with friends, it was the worst!” Simpson said. She especially likes that most people looking for sitting jobs have done it a lot. “They have a lot of reviews, so you can check their experience. And we talk on the phone, so we both get an idea of what it’s going to be like.”

Some of Simpson’s past sitters have become friends and visit her and her dog when they’re in the area. Another couple, from Oregon, who house-sat recently, ended up buying a house during their stay and are now neighbors.

“A Brazilian couple who work online and have house-sat all over the world — Europe, China, the U.S., South America, all over Mexico — come to visit and take my dog for a walk,” she said. “It’s been a wonderful experience! I’ve met so many different people who are house-sitting for so many different reasons.”

Otherwise retired, Gordon said that the business has been going very well. And even though the pandemic slowed down travel during 2020, she used that time to focus on customer service and fill the listings they had with sitters already living in Mexico.

The pandemic also forced more people to learn how to use video communication like Zoom, Messenger and Skype, which translates into better introductions for homeowners and potential sitters.

“I feel like I’m creating an enormous amount of good karma,” she said. “I get a lot of wonderful comments and thanks. It’s a wonderful way for me to be involved with the country I’ve adopted and to be a help to so many people.”

• **For more information, visit the [HouseSitMexico website](#) or check out its [Facebook page](#).**