

TEXT

A couch surfing experience

Penny Sadler of *Adventures Of a Carryon*

One of my best vacation memories is my first and only couch surfing experience in a small town in northern Italy.

This trip came at a time in my life when I was under quite a lot of stress and really needed to get away. Only Italy would do. That's another story.

I didn't think I could get a host for more than a day or two at a time and was trying to sort out how I could afford to pay for accommodations and airfare. Then, miraculously, Angelo offered to host me for an entire week. With accommodations taken care of, I booked my airfare immediately.

Angelo was an experienced couch surfing host and made me comfortable immediately. He picked me up at the train station, showed me around his town, which wasn't too big but big enough to be interesting, and he knew a lot about the history so he was a really great tour guide. He worked during the day but we would meet in the evening for dinner or go out for a gelato and a walk, a typical Italian pastime. I met his friends, took the train and explored a new city every day, and just generally had this incredibly relaxing stress-free week, which was exactly what I needed. Exploring an area of Italy that I had never experienced before was the perfect way to forget myself completely.

Many people have asked me if I felt nervous about staying with a stranger. The answer is no, because a friend of mine had already stayed with Angelo so I knew that I'd be safe with him. But he also had many good references on his couch surfing profile and knowing what I know now I probably would've stayed with him anyway. Couchsurfing is a great way to immerse yourself in a culture or just to get to know an area more intimately, as if you live there. I'm still in touch with Angelo today and saw him just last year for a few days. I feel that I have made a lifelong friend in Italy.