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Granny aupair knows best



Granny aupair Anna Seufert with her American family.

By Christine Davis

Experience – it's the one thing many new mothers lack. It is why they often have their mothers, or other experienced mothers come stay with them when a new baby is born and why the German-based Granny Aupair service works for so many families.

With a philosophy emphasizing a cultural exchange, Granny Aupair offers matching services where women 50 plus and families can connect online to discuss the opportunity for the Granny Aupair to travel to the family's country on a private trip that has the grannies integrate into the families, providing love, comfort and care for the children when their parents are too busy.

The first of its kind worldwide, Granny Aupair was started seven years ago by Michaela Hansen, who felt that older women were just as capable of caring for children abroad as young women.

The result is a network of experienced grannies, many of whom have raised their own children, grandchildren, and come from professions such as teaching and nursing, who play, paint, bake and sing with children while travelling abroad, experiencing a foreign country off the beaten tourist track.

Conversely the families benefit from an experienced granny caring for their children and providing the help they need to navigate the transition into parenthood or balancing the needs of older children.

The process begins when families and grannies register for free on the Granny Aupair website. If either party wants to get in contact with grannies or families, they become a member of the site.

Grania Groezinger of the Granny Aupair team explains that memberships of different lengths from three months to one year are available. "Within your membership you can contact as many grannies/families as you like," she says in an e-mail.

While Granny Aupair does not place grannies with families as such, the company offers an online community where they can contact each other, build a rapport and decide whether or not they are a match.

Groezinger goes on to explain that a special service for busy families where they find

"Families benefit from an experienced granny caring for their children."

a Granny Aupair for the family is available for an extra fee.

As grannies are on a private trip, it is their responsibility to arrange all travel details themselves, though the Granny Aupair team does give advice where required and Groezinger says that many families take on part or all of the granny's travel expenses.

The average stay of a Granny Aupair is three to six months, depending on the country and visa regulations. And when it comes to wages, that is a matter decided on between the granny and family, though Groezinger says that most grannies are just looking for pocket money as their main goal is to be seen as a member of the family and not as an employee.

Should a match not work out, which Groezinger says is very seldom, and if all attempts at communication advised by the Granny Aupair team do not work, the Granny can simply leave. If the family and/or granny remain members of the network, the team will try to find a replacement together with them.

In many cases grannies return for multiple stays, becoming integral members of the family, teaching the children their language, customs and traditions and learning those of the family.

Grannies starting on a trip are excited about their new experiences so they are not rusty or grumpy. They are not mothers-in-law and often become close family friends, keeping in touch and even hosting families in their own German homes after their stays are complete.

Grannies like Anna Seufert, who spent 40 years teaching Kindergarten, enjoy the great challenge of being a granny during their retirement while passing along their skills. While Seufert admits that becoming a Granny Aupair isn't for everyone as it is a big challenge on both sides, she's gained mostly positive experiences in her five years of travelling to the United States, Thailand, Costa Rica, France, Greece and Switzerland.

Groezinger reports that nearly all families say both the children and parents are sad when the granny leaves and in many families, one granny is quickly followed by another.

It's an experience that goes both ways. 