

Aspen Sister Cities  
Middle School Student Exchange Program  
Bariloche, Argentina

**What is the Sister City Student Exchange Program**

Students in the eighth grade at Aspen Middle School, Aspen Country Day School, and Aspen Community School can participate in a student exchange program with our sister city of San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina. Students apply for the program in the spring of their seventh grade year. They must be in good academic and behavioral standing at their school and they must be taking Spanish language classes at school.

As eighth graders, the students travel to Bariloche for a period of 10-14 days. While there, students stay with local families, visit the local schools, visit the tourist attractions of the city, take Spanish language classes, and experience local customs and traditions. In October of the same academic year our students and their families host students of the same age from Bariloche for a similar experience.

**Aspen Sister Cities Student Exchange Program Mission Statement**

The Sister Cities International mission statement is to ‘promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation - one individual, one community at a time.’ The Aspen Sister City Student Exchange Program supports this philosophy by providing local students with cultural and linguistic experiences and encouraging families to develop interpersonal relationships with each other and their host students.

**Application and Selection Process**

Students apply for the exchange in the spring of their seventh grade year and they must meet the following criteria. They must be in good standing with their respective school. The student must be taking Spanish language classes or have a working knowledge of Spanish. The applicant and their family must agree to host a student from Bariloche for a reciprocal experience and assist in the planning, organization, and implementation of the reciprocal visit to Aspen. The applicant must also agree to participate in group summer fund raising activities prior to the entire exchange experience.

**Family Expectations**

As a participating family, a Argentine student will stay in your home for approximately 10 days to two weeks. You are expected to provide sleeping arrangements and meals, and to accept the student into your family just as your child will be received abroad. You must also be prepared to deal with the emotional issues that sometimes occur as a result of being away from home (home sickness, eating issues, cultural differences and language barriers). However, support is available around the clock by program coordinators from both countries.

Each host family is responsible for getting that student to school each day, any sack lunches necessary, and taking care of the foreign student during non-school hours. This includes after school and weekends. There may be after school options such as the Recreation Center for swimming and skating. Families are free to structure this time

however they see fit for their families. Their may be some group activities planned on the weekend that are optional.

Each Aspen family (participating student and at least one parent) is required to attend all planning meetings and help organize activities for hosting foreign students. Each family will be given at least one task to complete as part of their obligation to the program and while parents are not expected to help chaperones students around when exchange students are in Aspen, it is helpful to have parent volunteers help out when possible.

### **Student Expectations**

Aspen students are expected to represent Aspen, their respective schools and the United States as ambassadors. Keeping up on school work and making good choices both in school and out in the community is part of the commitment to the program. Students will learn about cultural traditions and behavioral expectations in their preparation classes so that they can be gracious visitors in a foreign environment. After students return from Bariloche, they will be asked to give a very short presentation about their experience to the Aspen Sister Cities committee at their monthly meeting.

### **Details of the Bariloche Exchange**

Each October, a group of eighth grade students from Bariloche come to Aspen. They stay in the homes of students selected to participate in the program and their visit is ten to twelve days long. While here, the students visit all three schools, visit Aspen tourist attractions, and sometimes spend time in nearby desert areas. One weekend is set aside for host family activities to be designed by each participating family. Most of these students come with very good English language skills, but the host families are encouraged to help them further develop these skills. All participating families will be expected to assist in planning and implementing of this visit and parents are needed to help chaperone various activities.

In April of the same academic year, our students travel to Bariloche for ten to twelve days. While there Aspen students live with families of eighth grade level students. However, since our students travel to Argentina during the beginning of a new academic year in Argentina, they will not be staying with the same students that visited Aspen during our fall. In Bariloche, our students will attend Spanish language classes conducted by teachers contracted by Aspen Sister Cities. They will also visit three local schools in Bariloche as well as all the tourist attractions of the area. They will have, at least, one free weekend to spend with their host family.

Participants are expected to integrate to the best of their ability with their host families and follow all host family expectations. They are expected to faithfully, attend their language classes and make their best effort to improve their Spanish language skills. They are also encouraged to build strong interpersonal relationships with all of the members of their host family

The cost of the program is mostly limited to travel expenses (airfare, transfers, travel insurance and various taxes). Over the past years the cost for the Bariloche program has been under \$2,000, but the actual cost of the next exchange will depend on airfare and tax increases. Once in Bariloche most expenses will be paid for by Bariloche Sister Cities Committee, the host families, the three participating schools, and the

Bariloche city government. Group airfare will be purchased from Aspen to Bariloche (approximately 24 – 27 hours of travel time) through Buenos Aires. Local as well and international travel agents and airlines will be asked to submit bids for air travel packages. Selection of the best bid will be made by the student exchange coordinator based on price, travel itinerary, and dates. In addition to their travel costs, the participants will only be asked to take spending money to cover personal purchases and expenses while in Bariloche. Chaperone travel costs will be divided amongst all group members and be included in the total trip fee.

For more detailed information about all the middle level exchange programs please visit:  
<http://www.aspenpitkin.com/Portals/0/docs/City/CommRelations/Program%20Description%20and%20Facts.pdf>