

A Traveler's Nightmare: CouchSurfing in NYC\*  
by Peter Geoghegan

[1] Tourists are all for doing more with less. [2] It's a natural to want to see the world, and to do it as cheaply as possible. [3] Parsimonious traveler that I am, New York's hotel prices long kept me away—that is until I heard about a new travel craze that puts visitors in touch with like-minded people and their spare beds (or, more precisely, couches). [4] It might sound a bit rough, but if you don't have a phobia with strangers then CouchSurfing can be a great way to travel and to save money. [5] In the past year I've slept on floors and couches and made friends in Germany, Spain and the UK. [6] I soon realized, however that New York. [7]Problems for CouchSurfers.

[8] First off there are just so many couches to choose from. [9] Iceland has less than 500 registered hosts; in New York there are well over 6,000 putatively willing to have a guest. [10] I say putatively because, like New York itself, the couch hosts display plenty of quirks. [11] If you really want to meet a quirky person. [12] You should meet my girlfriend's sister.

[13] Your host does not always keep the same schedule. [14] In the morning our host kicked us out. [15] Because she forgot to mention we had to leave the apartment while they were at work. [16] This is not typical host behavior. [17] Generally, surfers are given keys and allowed to come and go as they please. [18] Instead, with barely time for a shower, we are shunted on to a New York street on a wet morning.

[19] It's past midnight, but we couldn't sleep—our hosts were fighting. [20] The argument is about the salad for the next day's lunch. [21] “You should have used onions,” the guy said. [22] “But we didn't have any,” the woman screamed in reply. [23] Onions can really make your breath smell. [24] People who do eat onions in their salads should consider breath mints. [25] My girlfriend and I didn't get much sleep that night.

[23] The next morning, I was showered and packed in record time. [24] I thanked our host for the hospitality and give her a bottle of whiskey as a gift. [25] I didn't mention that they should visit me in the home of Jameson. [26] Next time I take my girlfriend to New York I'll pay for a proper hotel.

\*The original article has been modified for the sake of the lesson.