

# CouchSurfing links travelers and like-minded locals

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CouchSurfing International on Monday had transformed from a non-profit to a corporation focused on doing business in a way that fosters public good.

CouchSurfing.org launched in 2004 as a social network that matched travelers with hosts in places around the globe.

The organization evolved into a community where people visiting other parts of the world could be matched with local folks for experiences ranging from home stays to joint outings or taking part in family gatherings.

"CouchSurfing is a global network of travelers that seek out authentic experiences with the people they meet and the places they visit," said co-founder and chief executive Daniel Hoffer.

"Accommodations is just one benefit," he continued. "We also facilitate life-changing experiences that you could never find in a guide book."

It is free to join CouchSurfing, which gets revenue from charging about \$25 to confirm that people out to connect with others in the community are who they say they are.

CouchSurfing boasted more than three million members and has orchestrated more than 5.6 million "culturally-infused experiences."

"CouchSurfing has managed to create a large scale trust network between perfect strangers, coming from varied cultures and spread around the world," said Stanford University institute for Research in the social sciences director Karen Cook.

Benchmark general partner Matt Cohler, who was on the founding team at LinkedIn and among the first five employees hired at Facebook, joined the CouchSurfing board as part of the investment deal.

"It reminded me a lot of things I've seen at [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) early on," Cohler said of CouchSurfing.

"It is almost a matchmaking service for travelers," he continued. "There are a lot of people in the world who want to [travel](#) this way and have

these sorts of experiences."

CouchSurfing has set up headquarters in San Francisco. The company planned to hire aggressively and beef up its infrastructure.

"The concept of socially responsible businesses is growing like wildfire," Hoffer said. "I believe it is the wave of the future."

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