

Thinking about a **Vacation Home Swap?**

Here is our 2008 summer vacation challenge: We must visit Michael's family in The Hague, Netherlands again, but flights to Europe have become very expensive and the Euro exchange rate is miserable. We are trying to watch our expenses, but the mortgage and car payments keep coming even when we are away. We need somebody to watch and play with our cats and we always feel more secure knowing our home is occupied. On the flip side, we cannot afford to be out of touch with our clients, so we need easy computer and telephone access, and it sure makes it more economical when we can feed the kids breakfast before heading out to explore. We think we found the solution: House Swapping!

For many travelers, home exchanging, or house swapping, is an economical, comfortable and fascinating way to vacation far from home. You arrange to occupy someone's home at your destination while they occupy yours.

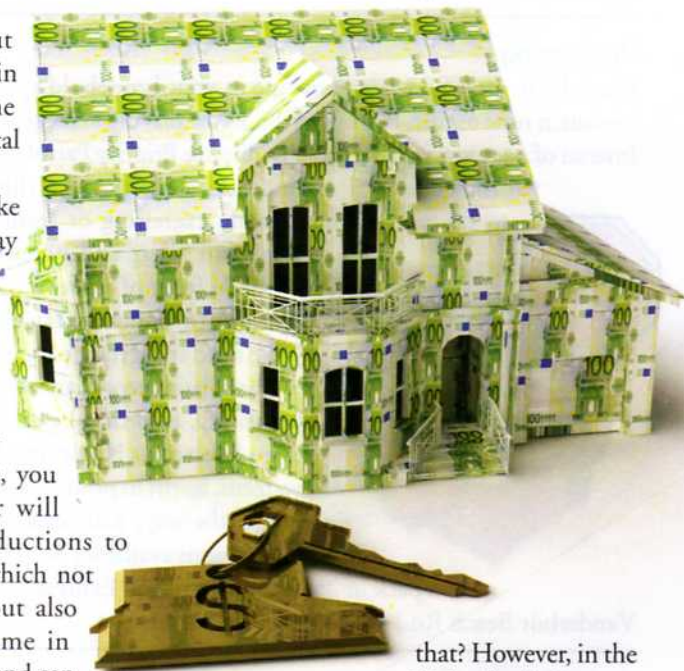
There are several types of home exchanges. In a traditional exchange, you and your exchange partner travel at the same time and stay in each other's primary residences. However, another type of exchange has emerged for people who own more than one home. In "non-simultaneous exchanges," home swapping partners don't need to worry about coordinating dates and traveling at the same time. Instead, exchange partners come to stay in a vacation home or secondary residence while the owner continues to live in his own primary home. Then the owner can travel to another home exchange property whenever it's convenient. A third type of exchange, known as a hospitality exchange, involves you and your trading partner taking turns staying as guests in each other's primary homes.

Home exchanging isn't for everyone. Some travelers are turned off by having to cook and clean on their vacation, while

others feel uneasy about having strangers living in their own homes. In the latter case, a vacation rental might be a better choice.

Home exchanges make an ideal base for one-day or weekend excursions, especially when cars are included in the swap. Perhaps best of all, house swapping immediately makes you part of a new community. Chances are, you and your swap partner will leave each other introductions to friends and neighbors, which not only provides security but also puts you quickly at home in unfamiliar surroundings and can help you get the most out of an intercultural experience.

As homeowners in desirable Naples, we are great home swapping candidates for folks living in colder climates. Moreover, we keep reading that the Dutch are coming in record numbers to the US this summer drawn by low prices. So let's get started: In the Netherlands are 589 exchange homes listed on HomeForExchange.com. We need to be in The Hague, where we found 20 exchange homes. In Florida we are competing with 337 other exchange homes, of which 28 in Orlando, 26 in Miami and 26 in Naples. Helped by the web site's advanced and user friendly search tool we are able to figure out how many home swappers in The Hague want to exchange with somebody in Florida. Whoops, there are no home swappers in The Hague who want to come to Florida. Can you believe



that? However, in the Netherlands there are at least 19 house exchangers who want to swap with somebody in our state. We would also be happy staying in Amsterdam, which is only 45 minutes to Michael's family by train and also a wonderful destination. In Amsterdam there are currently 6 homeowners who would consider Florida!

Now that you have read this far, I should tell you that we have actually been swapping homes for many years already. We know one husband and wife from The Hague who love to come to Naples in the summer for the golf, while their teenage daughters go crazy for the beach and the shopping. In addition, we have untapped family and friends who we might be able to persuade to stay in our home in Naples. And when those sources dry up, we still have HomeForExchange.com to give us a vacation rather than a staycation, which, in Naples, is always a nice alternative!



Mara Muller has lived in Naples since 1996 with her husband and two school-age daughters. Her focus is helping families reach their Real Estate goals. She was a Women's Council of Realtors' Top Team Producer for 2006 & 2007 and has joined Premier Properties. Contact her at www.MaraSellsNaples.com or 597-3332 with all your real estate questions.