

The Gathering

Handout Track 13: Square Dancing on the Road
Sources for Square Dancing Away from your home club
Jim and Catherine Douglas

So you would like to visit out-of state or overseas square dance clubs! How do you go about it?

First, out-of-state clubs – for neighboring states visit clubs close to or in the bordering state. For New York visit Rockland Rockytops or Al'e'Mo Squares who are both members of the Hudson Valley Council in addition to NNJSDA. Hudson Valley has 14 SD clubs in New York and 2 in western CT plus several for round dance. A nearby dance location from the Tappan Zee bridge is Katonah in Westchester County where several clubs dance at the United Methodist Church. The two CT clubs are just over the NY border in Danbury (Mad Hatters) and Newtown (Rocking Roosters). Information on this Council can be found in their publication Hudson Valley Dancer issued 3 times a year. Other New York State Councils are Capital Area, Rochester and Finger Lakes. CT uses a monthly sheet of dances within the state. South of us the Washington DC Area Square Dance Cooperative Association (WASCA) has over 70 active clubs in southern Maryland, northern Virginia and in D.C. Their monthly publication (except summer) is Calls'n'Cues and their website is www.wascaclubs.com.

The world wide source of information on square dance activity is the annual National and International Square Dance Directory by subscription, annual or lifetime, previously in print but since 2007 available only on the Web. It lists CLUBS by state or country then alphabetically by town, club name, type of dance, level, where, day, week, contact address and phone. In the Directory information in the section headed TRAVEL are listed Conventions, Festivals, etc. for the current year by month and date for the U. S. and Canada. In the section PUBLICATIONS are listed National Publications and area publications in the U.S. by state, in Canada by province and overseas by country. Each publication's shows its name, contact, address and phone number. In the section headed ORGANIZATIONS are found major U.S. organizations and area dancers associations by state showing their name, contact, address and phone number. Similar information appears for dancer organizations in Canada and overseas. The accuracy and currency of information in the directory is dependent on those who supply it. We have found a fun activity if you have the time -- attend a convention and either before or after it, tour surrounding states sightseeing or visiting friends in the daytime and square dancing in the evening. As the only out-of-state dancers to be present you become an immediate center of attention of the club members. Builds the ego! Suggestion – always when you plan to dance at a club at a distance call the contact before you travel to be sure the club will be dancing, and if you are unfamiliar with the club's location, arrive early enough to find it in the daylight.

Now for overseas -- overseas square dancing is usually best arranged initially by mail, then e-mail for follow-ups. In addition to the Directory as a source for overseas club information, on the computer try square dance + country or city and let Google do

the searching, however, the language will be in the language of that country. When you e-mail an overseas contact whose first language is NOT English, keep your first messages plain, simple and to the point to avoid misunderstandings. All overseas calling is in English though they teach the movements in their native language.

We found our European square dance contacts and hosts extremely helpful and hospitable. Stockholm has no club that dances in the daytime when we would be visiting so their first response to us was negative. Our only daytime experiences were with retired groups, so they gathered two squares of retired ladies for more than an hour of dancing and gave us lunch. The caller took us on a motor tour of the area and a walking tour of the old city, picked us up and dropped us off at our ship. In England our caller hosts were similarly hospitable, offering us overnight accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Foreign visitors are a special event for these clubs. In Denmark we danced with a 154-member club, the same evening attending a class with one caller-teacher and dancing Plus to another caller in a different room. Each caller received a standing invitation to be our future guest.

We found overseas clubs dance at higher skill levels than that found currently in the U.S. and that the majority of dancers were younger (few seniors). Their skills likely come from more workshops and not starting Plus until their third year.

Early in our square dance experience we learned of a reciprocal bed and breakfast club with about 2000 members scattered over every state and a few foreign countries. Reciprocal means members have a willingness to be a guest and an occasional host, are age 50+ and have an available spare bedroom. The annual fee is \$75, overnight bed and breakfast for a couple \$15. This 25+ years organization is Evergreen Bed and Breakfast (www.evergreenclub.com). We have used it extensively for nearly a decade in our square dance travels to 50 states and in England and have never been disappointed. Evergreen made our extensive travels possible. Our hosts have been interesting people, as much interested in us as we have been in them. Currently, we were Evergreen guests during the recent New England convention (Springfield, MA) and are hosting an Evergreen caller-couple for the Gathering from Rochester, NY. We will be guests of one of 8 Evergreen hosts at the National in Charlotte. A curiosity, 15% of our hosts have been or are square dancers. Upon request we will be pleased to supply more information. To those interested, our phone is (973) 338-7787; e-mail jmdouglas35@verizon.net . Thank you for your attention