

FAQs for Friendship Force

What is “Friendship Force”?

Friendship Force International (FFI) is a worldwide network of clubs that bridge the barriers separating people in order to promote global understanding. We do this by connecting people from different countries and cultures at a personal level. When local hosts open their homes to visitors from other lands, true understanding develops through the sharing of meals, conversation and daily routines. Our purpose is to be a multi-cultural group that promotes peace and friendship in the world by building global goodwill through personal friendships and exchanges.

Is the Friendship Force sponsored by a governmental agency or a religious organization?

No.

Why is travel with the Friendship Force called an Exchange?

The word exchange comes from our organization's early history when communities would actually exchange large delegations of citizen ambassadors. In some cases there were several hundred people traveling in each direction. We still use the word exchange to emphasize the cultural exchange that takes place when you become a temporary citizen for a few days, through our home hospitality program. We think this gets you straight to the heart of a country and its people. An exchange involves home hospitality, the heart of a Friendship Force exchange, which provides the opportunity for people of different countries and cultures to connect at a personal level. We refer to it as an “Outbound Exchange” when we visit another club. Often an optional tour of the area follows an exchange. An “Inbound Exchange” occurs when a club visits us. We usually have four outbound and four inbound exchanges per year that are arranged by our international organization.

What is an “Exchange Director?”?

An “Exchange Director” (ED) is an individual who has applied and been approved by the Board of Directors to plan, organize, and lead the exchange. This job is open to anyone who has the desired leadership qualities and can make the commitment of time needed to do adequate planning and recruit Ambassadors with a 9 to 12 month lead-time. Our club has some great experienced Exchange Directors (ED) who are more than willing to mentor a first time ED.

Are exchanges to distant destinations limited to one week?

Whenever possible two sequential exchanges are planned, but each exchange is limited to 6 or 7 days. Often the planning for the exchange involves some sightseeing for the group either before, between or after the exchanges.

What is a home stay? Or home hospitality?

Home hospitality is the signature program of Friendship Force. This means that, on most exchanges, you will have the opportunity to be a guest for a few days in someone's home, where the real power of citizen diplomacy can be experienced. You will learn first-hand the difference between travel as a tourist and the experience of being a temporary citizen. You agree to share your home for seven days and nights with someone from another country or state. Learn about another culture without leaving home. You will have the opportunity to participate in a number of group/club outings so you won't have to plan everything for you and your guest. The cost of events, admissions and outside meals for group activities is paid for our visitors using the fees the visitors have paid in advance. But as you would host a friend in your home, you host without compensation for meals at home and transportation in your car.

What are the responsibilities of a "home host"?

Home hosts invite their guest to be a part of the family for the time the exchange is in your community. Involve your guests in the activities of your family. Participate in all official functions that are planned and attend all scheduled workshops. A "day host" will be arranged to accompany/entertain your guest on days that you are unavailable.

Who are the host families?

Host families are members or friends of Friendship Force in the host community. They are not paid to provide hosting but do so because of their interest in getting to know "citizen ambassadors" from other countries. Your host and their family become your inside guides to the country and its people. There is no better way to explore the world!

Is there a typical itinerary?

Each exchange itinerary is unique, but most will combine a Friendship Force home stay with an active program of taking in the local sites while learning first-hand about the culture by establishing a personal relationship with your hosts.

What are Friendship Force clubs?

Friendship Force exchanges are organized through a volunteer network of 350 chapters (clubs) in 58 countries. The clubs are connected globally through Friendship Force International (FFI), a non-profit organization with offices in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

Why might I want to join The Friendship Force?

Join the Friendship Force if you believe in the goals and mission of the organization; you like the challenge and excitement of new people, places and experiences; you would enjoy having people from other countries stay with you for a week, you would enjoy staying with others in different countries, you believe that friendship among people of different countries and cultures can make the world more peaceful; and you have a curiosity about the world and enjoy learning about other cultures and ways of life on exchange activities.

If I don't see myself traveling in the next year or so, should I still join?

Certainly. Friendship Force is not just a travel club; there are many other aspects of involvement. The mission of Friendship Force is building global goodwill through personal friendships. This can be accomplished in many ways. You might consider being a night host, a day host, a small group dinner host. On a local scale, our members also attend social

activities including exchange welcome and farewell events and other social activities to build friendships and have an interest in the goals of Friendship Force International.

What should I expect financially when I go on an Outbound Exchange?

On an outbound exchange, we pay for our own transportation to and from the host country and a fee (\$125 US\$) to Friendship Force International for the exchange; host club fee (usually \$100 US - but varies) paid to the hosting club to set up a program of activities for the week, plus \$35 Canadian for the registration fee for our club and planning incidentals. If there is a tour following or preceding the exchange, you would pay the cost of the tour if you choose to go.

What if I am not able to go or don't care to go on the Outbound Exchanges you have scheduled? Are there other ways for me to travel with the organization?

There are a number of other ways to travel. You may travel with another Friendship Force club from this country if they have room for you. There are Humanitarian and Discovery trips that include people from several countries where the Ambassadors travel somewhere and stay mostly in hotels but meet people from that country to interest them in forming Friendship Force Clubs. Conferences are held each year in different parts of the world where all are welcome to come to stay in a hotel but meet people from the area. There may or may not be home stays offered after the conference. Regional and International Conferences are held each year. See the list of exchanges and events on the Exchanges and calendar pages of this website and visit the Friendship Force International website (www.thefriendshipforce.org).

Do you travel as a group?

Yes and no; the group usually consists of about 15 to 30 individuals, known as "Ambassadors." Travel arrangements vary from departing the local airport as a group to some, or, all, of the individuals making their own travel arrangements. Group travel can contribute to a more rewarding experience. The method of travel for those who want to travel as a group is a decision made by the Exchange Director.

How do you find out what is happening in the club?

Every new member receives a membership packet and is invited to attend regular general meetings of FFO. Check out the Calendar or Newsletter pages on this website. A regular newsletter is available on the website.

How are single travelers and hosts matched?

While couples will normally be matched with another couple, singles possibly will be hosted by a couple or a single. There are exceptions, but it is your decision. Frequently, the number of bedrooms and type of bed(s) available play a part in matching hosts and ambassadors. Often, ambassadors are matched by common interests and occupations. Also, traveling as a single is easier when you are with a group and a family; you are not alone.

Will I have the opportunity to communicate with my host or guest prior to his/her arrival?

Usually that is the case. It is amazing how many foreign guests and hosts have e-mail. Important: As soon as possible, contact your host/ambassador by e-mail, letter, or phone. For many, friendships, communications, and private visits continue for years and even a lifetime.

What is a “day host?”

It is someone who wants to participate in the exchange but, for whatever reason, doesn't wish to home host. This individual volunteers to escort an ambassador for one or more days to the scheduled activities or, if it is a day when no group activity is planned, decides how and where to spend the day with the guest. It would be a good idea to discuss this with the guest so the activity you plan is something of interest to both of you.

What would be expected of me if I volunteer to be a “small group dinner host?”

You decide how many guests, in addition to the number in your family, you feel comfortable having for dinner on an evening specified by the Exchange Committee. The menu is your choice and generally you provide the main course and arrange for your invited guests to bring a salad, dessert, appetizer, or wine. It is entirely up to you. The evening is for you to plan whether you play a game or just visit. The whole idea is to share the culture of your guest and give them the opportunity to visit another home and meet others. When space allows, members, new and potential new members are included as guests. Of course, the guest's host family and where possible, the day host accompanies them to your dinner. Sharing, fun, laughter, and conversation are the goals for the evening.

Do you have regular exchanges to clubs in the United States?

Yes, there are over 100 clubs in the United States.

What types of social activities does the club have?

Members enjoy art appreciation, a walking club, a bridge club, a dinner club, along with club-wide social events including a Christmas Party, and Annual Golf Day.

Am I required to host or go on Outbound Exchanges if I am a member?

There is no requirement by our club for members to host visitors or go on outbound exchanges. We hope though, that those joining would want to actively participate in those events, as they are how we can best learn about people in other cultures. If you cannot host or travel, you can still day host or participate in other ways.

How much are membership dues?

Dues are for the calendar year. Currently dues are \$35 for each individual member.

Who decides what group visits what country and when?

Each club sends a list of desired exchanges to the International headquarters in Atlanta and they work out the logistics and determine the most suitable arrangements. Clubs are then informed of which groups they are expected to host and what outbound exchanges are available to them.

Would I, as a single woman, I be matched with another woman?

Yes, that is usually the situation, while couples normally host another couple. You can always invite a friend. There are exceptions to the hosting, but it is your decision. Frequently, the number of bedrooms (and the types of beds available) in the host's home determine the matching for hosts and ambassadors. Interests, ages, and occupations are considered. Many single women really like traveling with Friendship Force.

Will I feel comfortable staying in the home of a new friend?

You will find your host most eager to make your visit a happy one. Ask any experienced Friendship Force member about this; they will assure you that friendships come quickly and are cherished.

What is involved in becoming a member of The Friendship Force?

Join The Friendship Force **IF**: you believe in the goals and mission of the organization; you like the challenge and excitement of new people, places and experiences; you believe that friendship among people of different countries and cultures can make the world more peaceful; and you have a curiosity about the world and enjoy learning about cultures and ways of life. Visit the **Join Us** page on this website for directions in joining FFO, the Ottawa club.