



friendship force international

Traveling with Friendship Force

Congratulations for considering joining a Journey with Friendship Force (FFI)!

Friendship Force is a non-profit cultural organization focused on promoting understanding, cultural education and citizen diplomacy through homestays. In order to ensure that both our ambassadors and hosts fully enjoy their experience and develop long-lasting friendships, we would like to share with you the following guidelines. Please also familiarize yourself with our [Policies and Guidelines for Clubs and Programs](#).

What is a Journey?

A Friendship Force Journey program is a cultural experience between travelers (ambassadors) and hosts. The hosts will introduce the ambassadors to their culture through organized activities and sightseeing tours, but especially through home hosting and sharing of everyday experiences. The goal is to leave with a better understanding of the country and new friends! At Friendship Force, we believe that a world of friends is a world of peace, as an ambassador, you bring your contribution to a more peaceful world.

Sightseeing is not the main purpose of our Journeys, and while some highlights of the destination will most-likely be included, we recommend that ambassadors extend their stay to enjoy additional sightseeing or tours.

What are the costs of a Journey?

Ambassadors pay a program fee that covers most of the activities included in the program. The cost of a journey can vary greatly depending on the destination, the ambassadors' interests and of course, the type of activities included in the program. These costs will be confirmed by the host club well ahead of the journey. In addition to program fees:

- To participate in Friendship Force activities, members need to be up-to-date with their membership dues (\$25 per person in 2023)
- An administrative fee (FFI Fee) of \$25 per night and per ambassador will be charged once participation is confirmed, and upon successful visa application. The FFI fee covers most of the operating costs of Friendship Force International and contributes to the development of our network and mission.
- Ambassadors should budget for their travel to and from their home to the destination (flights, airport transfers etc), visa costs, travel insurance, personal expenses, meals, drinks or activities not included in the program cost and contingency funds in case of an emergency.

What do I need to do to join a Journey?

Ambassadors are representatives of their club and country but also carry the image and reputation of our organization. Therefore FFI ambassadors are carefully selected and vetted by their clubs and coordinators of the Journey. To join our FFI activities, all our members are requested to create a profile on our member's website using their name and email address. Visit [my.FF](#) and use the "Sign up" button to get started. Upon confirmation of your membership by your club leaders and payment of your membership due (\$25 in 2023) a membership ID number will be assigned to you. Your unique member's ID will be required to participate in FFI journeys. Once registered, members can apply to join any available Journey, listed on our websites and catalogs. If you are interested in a Journey not organized by your club, please contact us at support@friendshipforce.org and we will assist you with your application. **An Ambassador Application and Agreement Form is required for any one traveling on a Friendship Force Journey, no matter of their tenure with the organization.**

I need a visa, how do I apply?

Visa application process should be started by ambassadors as soon as possible to ensure that sufficient time is available to gather the requested documentation, secure an interview and follow up appointment, if necessary. The application process can vary from a country to another, please contact the embassy or consulate to verify their requirements well ahead of your journey. Applicants should schedule their visa interview as far in advance as possible. This is very important!

What steps can I take to improve my chances of receiving a visa?

- The Ambassador Journey Coordinator should interview all applicants very carefully to make sure they understand the goals of the program and will return home as scheduled. Please note that in the unlikely situation of a FF club member not returning home, long-term problems for the ambassador club and other clubs in the region can occur, as the visa officials will decide our programs are not reliable.
- During the interview, each applicant should present strong evidence that they intend to return home. Generally, applicants who have traveled before, who have good jobs and strong links to their home community are most likely to receive visas. On the other hand, couples or families traveling together, or young people who may be seen as having economic incentives to remain in the host country are less likely to receive visas. Providing bank statements and other financial information can be helpful in this regard. Also emphasize that there is a careful selection process and that a FF Journey is not just a travel program that people sign up for.

Is there anything FFI or the Host club can do to assist?

FFI will prepare an invitation letter for the ambassadors. This should be available to present to the visa official, along with other application material that may be required.

Applicants should be knowledgeable about the Friendship Force and about their local club as well as the program that is being prepared by the host club. The visa officials may ask general questions about FFI: its purpose and history. They could also ask about the hosting community. If the applicant doesn't know where the host club is located, for example, the official may become suspicious. Ambassadors should emphasize that they have been selected to be a member of a cultural exchange delegation, and highlight any professional or personal benefits from participation in the journey. Throughout the process, please keep FFI and the host clubs informed on the progress of your application.

Remember that the visa laws are complicated and beyond the control of the Friendship Force clubs.

Flexibility, open-mindedness and respect are fundamental values within our organization. Please do not hesitate to contact our team if you encounter any issues while preparing for or hosting a journey.

By accepting a Journey assignment, your club agrees to work with the above conditions.

Thank you for helping spread the word of friendship!

To view our current policies and guidelines in full, please click [here](#).