



friendship force
GREATER CINCINNATI

Member Handbook

Our Club invites members to share in international friendships and global understanding.

Friendship Force is an international cultural exchange and home hospitality program that promotes international understanding, friendship and world peace.

WELCOME!

Welcome to our club! We hope the content of this booklet gives you more in-depth information about Friendship Force, how our club operates and the many membership benefits available to you.

As a member, you obviously share our interest in exploring new cultures, countries and regions. Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati (FFGC) provides us the opportunity to meet new friends through travel and home hospitality, and those experiences lead us to deeper global understanding and greater desire to serve our global village. We invite all members to travel and to host. And, we also welcome you to suggest interesting program topics for our meetings and to enjoy in the fun and food at meetings. We invite you, too, to suggest special local gatherings and to join in.

This handbook will explain how you can be involved in those features of FFGC that you choose. We are really glad you joined us, and we want your membership to be a rewarding experience!

Friendship Force International

Friendship Force is a non-profit cultural organization focused on promoting understanding, cultural education and citizen diplomacy through homestay journeys and personal friendships. We are based in more than 60 countries and on six continents, with 15,000 active members and over 300 journeys taking place each year.

Through these exciting personal encounters, strangers become friends – and we know that by experiencing different views, we can discover common ground.

Our programs bring diverse people together into each other's cultures and homes to share one-of-a-kind experiences not available to regular tourists.

Friendship Force International (FFI) is a nonprofit organization with headquarters in Atlanta, GA. It has a President/CEO, and a governing Board of Directors comprised of member of clubs around the world. In addition to the FFI staff working at the Atlanta office, there are volunteer Regional or Field Representatives who serve as a resource to our club by coordinating between the clubs and FFI.

History of FFI

The Friendship Force was founded by Wayne Smith and introduced by President Jimmy Carter at a White House gathering of state governors in 1977. Rosalyn Carter served as Honorary Chairperson until 2002.

Initially, FF involved groups of 150-400 U.S. citizens, known as friendship ambassadors, traveling via chartered aircraft to a partner city where a group of the same size boarded to return to the original city, hence the term "Exchange," the word we formerly used to refer to our travel programs, now called journeys. Over the years, Friendship Force changed from charters to one-way journeys on regularly scheduled airlines, allowing greater flexibility and a reduction of group size. Today, most journeys involve 18-22 Friendship Force members visiting another Friendship Force club somewhere in the world.

While the size and number of journeys has changed dramatically since 1977, the basic Friendship Force formula is the same, with visiting Ambassadors spending a week in the homes of host families. While each Journey is now in just one direction, the participating Ambassadors and hosts develop a shared understanding of each other's culture and, thus, a true cultural exchange takes place. In many cases, the friendships continue for many years, with follow-up visits through later Friendship Force journeys or through private visits.

In 1992 Friendship Force was nominated for ***The Nobel Peace Prize*** for its (American Russian Mutual Survival) program that arranged exchanges between citizens of the U.S.A. and Soviet Union. Since 1977 Friendship Force has been an effective means for promoting international understanding.

The Friendship Force has brought together millions of people. Today there are over 330 Friendship Force chapters active in 60 countries and 6 continents in the world and over 300 journeys occur each year. Membership fees, journey fees, donations, and foundation grants support Friendship Force International. Currently, FFI is working on adding clubs in areas not yet well represented including China, India and Africa.

Mission

To promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. Each individual can make a contribution to global goodwill. The Friendship Force worldwide network of clubs and individuals seeks to overcome differences among people and nations.

Values

Mutual Respect Cultural Diversity Cultural Exploration Service

Vision

- Each individual will make a contribution to global goodwill.
- The Friendship Force worldwide network of clubs and individuals will overcome differences between people and nations.
- By connecting the world one friend at a time, we will create a world of friends that becomes a world of peace.

Slogans

A World of Friends is a World of Peace.

About Our Club
Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati (FFGC)
Referred to in this document as the Club or our Club

History

Our chapter was founded in 1988 and is chartered by Friendship Force International, located in Atlanta. We are an affiliated club but not a corporation. FFI is a non-profit corporation registered as a 501(3)(c) organization and thus can accept tax-deductible charitable contributions.

Membership & Dues

Membership is open to anyone who accepts Friendship Force principles (as put forth on the previous page) and pays annual membership dues. Dues are set annually by our Board. Dues payments are sent to our Membership Chairperson with checks payable to "Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati". The membership year is from January 1-December 31, and all dues are collected by the end of December for the upcoming year. As a member of our Club, you are eligible to apply for all the journeys organized by our club and the Friendship Force International(FFI) office in Atlanta. In addition, other clubs often advertise for applications through the FFI website and email communiques from FFI. As a member, you will be signed up for regular communications from FFI on up-coming journeys. To see a sample of some of these, go to the site <https://friendshipforce.org/journeys/>

Meetings and Events

Typically, we meet four times per year for programs in September, November, March and May. When circumstances require it, our meetings may be held electronically or electronically and in person. Most meetings begin with a potluck meal and involve fellowship, a brief business meeting and a presentation. In addition, we meet in other months for social gatherings such as visits to museums or shows and meals together at a restaurant. Check our Club website <http://www.friendshipforcecincinnati.org/> for information about the location, time and program for meetings or gatherings. An annual meeting is held in November to elect new club officers.

Newsletter and Website Our Club newsletter or announcement of meetings is sent out every month by email to all members. Upon request, a printed copy will be mailed to members. The newsletter lists all upcoming events, information about journeys, committee reports, and news from the FFI office and other alerts. Similar information is posted and regularly updated on our Club website <http://www.friendshipforcecincinnati.org/>.

Name Badges All members are asked to wear their FF Club name badge to Club meetings and events. (We want to get to know you!)

Officers

Club officers serve two-year terms from January - December. We elect our Club officers at the November General Meeting. Our elected positions are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Officers may serve up to two consecutive terms.

Board of Directors

All club business is conducted by members of the Board of Directors/Officers. All Club members are invited to attend. Voting members of our Club's board include all elected officers, chairpersons of standing committees, and COORDINATORS of current Host Inbound and Ambassador Outbound Journeys. Non-Voting members include the immediate Past President/Co-presidents, Immediate past Inbound and Outbound Journey Directors, and additional members appointed by a majority vote of the Board. Reports of Board business are made in the website and newsletter.

Committees & Appointed Positions We are always looking for new members to join one of our standing committees or to work on a special project. You don't have to commit a lot of time or assume a lot of responsibility. It's a great way to get to know other Club members better and make your membership a more interesting and enriching experience. Opportunities include:

Journeys: Help to recruit and train Journey Directors as well as assist in planning and administering journeys

Communication: Help with newsletter, website, publicity, photography

Hospitality: Help with meeting logistics (e.g.potluck set-up and clean-up)

Membership: Help with new member orientation, mentorship, and greeting

Programming: Help with planning programs at meetings

Websites:

The international website: <http://www.friendshipforce.org/>

Our club website: <http://www.friendshipforcecincinnati.org/>

The FFI website is a "must" – especially if you are interested in participating in a journey or learning more about Friendship Force. The home page features the link to journeys, listing travel opportunities and journeys, so you can explore and join journeys arranged by other clubs or our FFI office in Atlanta. Many of the journeys are designed with a humanitarian or environmental focus, and most involve a home stay with members of our Friendship Force clubs.

***"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."* Mark Twain**

Traveling with Friendship Force

As a FF member, you have a number of options:

- You can apply for travel on international or domestic journeys arranged by our Club
- You can apply for travel on international or domestic journeys arranged by other clubs
- You can apply for travel on Global Journeys arranged by Friendship Force International.

Our Club Travel - How It Works

Each fall, every Friendship Force club submits destinations their members would like to travel to the year after next. (Example, in the fall of 2018 our Club submitted preferred destinations for 2020.) Each club also identifies how many weeks they would be willing to host visitors from other clubs.

This information is submitted to FFI in Atlanta where all the preliminary assignments are made. FFI does the initial coordinating and then turns it over to the clubs to implement.

Details regarding how these requests are granted are available on the FFI web site. Two important considerations are:

- Avoiding requests to a recently visited region as these are seldom granted within a three-year period, and
- Demonstrating a club's historic success in filling its journeys.

The club that is traveling (Ambassadors) and the club that is receiving guests (Hosts) assign Journey Coordinators. The Journey Coordinators communicate closely about home accommodations, sightseeing opportunities, and cultural activities that are coordinated by their committees. The Journey Directors customize the trip, coordinate details and costs and prepare members for hosting or traveling.

What's Involved in Traveling as an Ambassador?

Every member who wants to travel on a club journey will complete an application to become an Ambassador and submit a registration fee. Members are asked to consider their health and abilities in relation to the nature of journeys when deciding to apply. Typically there are 18-22 Ambassadors in a journey group. The Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinator with the Journey Advisor(s) will then select the Ambassadors to go on the trip, with this selection based on the priorities established in the Club Policies.

When you travel as a Friendship Force Ambassador, you are truly immersed in the new culture. You stay in the homes of other Friendship Force members and spend your days with hosts or day hosts who are always proud to introduce you to their family, friends, traditions, lifestyle and, of course, important sites in their region. Generally, you will know something about your home host(s) before the trip – their names, ages, professions and interests.

Don't worry about language problems! There is always someone who can help translate, and you will be amazed how smiles, nods and assorted hand language are universally understood. It all makes for new friends and great stories! Of course, you will be spending many of your days with other travelers from our club/group, and you will know what to expect because your trip's itinerary has been planned in great detail to give you a rich and personal experience. Bottom line – relax and have a great time! Friendship is the golden thread that ties all hearts together.

Planned Time and Free Time Generally, most journeys involve a one-week home-stay in the home of another Friendship Force member at the chosen destination. Often, the trip may include two journeys to two destinations, with two different host families. There is usually one free, unplanned day per week that you will spend with your host. Frequently, there will be an optional extended trip in the same region, before, after, or between the journeys. Members may also travel independently to other destinations before or after the journeys. There are ample opportunities for you to spend free time doing the things you might choose to do on your own. Details of the planned activities will certainly be given to you when you arrive at your destination. Sometimes this information will be sent to you before the trip. Your Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinator will have a general idea of the planned activities several months before the trip, but will probably not know exact schedules and details.

As Ambassadors, we try to exhibit the qualities of a friend including:

Keeping an Open Mind: this is the ability to keep one's opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli. The fewer expectations, preconceptions and private agendas you have, the more successful your experience will be. After all, the joy of discovery is a surprise.

Having a Sense of Humor: the ability to laugh and find humor in things helps guard against disappointment and frustration. Be quick to overlook and slow to lose your sense of humor.

Being Flexible and Adaptable: the ability to cope with new situations as well as keeping options open and judgmental behavior to a minimum will enable you to enjoy new and different experiences. Your hosts have agreed to welcome you into their homes without reimbursement. Allow them to be hospitable. Be open to their attentiveness and the ways they express it. Let your host family take charge of your life for a week. You won't be disappointed.

Having a Positive Regard for Others: remember the ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for others. A willingness to communicate is important. Keep in mind the duties of a good guest and avoid taking advantage of your host's hospitality. Be sensitive to hosts whose economic resources may be more limited than your own. It may or may not be appropriate to help with the extra expenses during your visit. Remember that your hosts are proud people; feel your way with your heart in this matter.

Showing Appreciation: you will want to bring along a gift for your hosts. This, in addition to a warm note of thanks left behind in the guestroom, is a very personal way to show your gratitude for your host's attentiveness.

Concentrating on the experience of sharing a week in the lives of your hosts. Accept this time as a gift from this tiny planet we call home. You may never come this way again. Your new friends are waiting. Enjoy!

A few more "hints":

- Be sensitively aware of the feeling of other people (hosts and your fellow travelers), thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part.

- Take along photographs of your home, family and community to share with your hosts so they have a better understanding of you.
- Refresh your knowledge of history, demographics and geography, your own community as well as of the cities you are visiting.
- Punctuality is a must for all activities. One person's tardiness affects the entire group. Be patient if lines are long and service is slow.
- Be independent. Enjoy the activities your hosts have planned for you, but be able to amuse yourself as well. Explore the neighborhood, write postcards, read, play with the children, or go sightseeing or shopping when the family is busy.
- Be reasonable about your purchases of souvenirs. Don't let shopping seem more important than making friends and learning about a different culture.
- Remember that many problems will work themselves out (it's only for seven days). If a hosting situation poses a real problem, ambassadors are expected to exercise tact and diplomacy. First address the problem with your host. When necessary, contact your Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinator.
- Cultivate the habit of listening and sharing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Instead of knowing all the answers, ask questions.
- Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in an attempt to deepen your understanding.

Costs of a Journey

Budget

The total budget is worked out in detail before your commitments are made for the journey and will include the items in this section.

Basic FF Cost: While other cost structures are possible for domestic (US) or FFI Global Journeys, currently (2019), typical costs for a 5 to 7 day international journey are listed here:

\$170 to FFI;

\$25 to your local club;

A small amount (determined by Journey Coordinator) to contingency fund which may be used to cover fluctuating journey rates and other non-anticipated events;

A pro-rated (per person) amount to share in covering the transportation cost of the Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinator to and from the host city.

A minimum of \$150 to the host club. This is negotiated between the Journey Coordinators and may be changed.

Possibly some meals, generally lunches when out.

Possibly some extra costs for local transportation and entrance fees though most of these are covered by the fee given to the host club.

The above costs are usually reflected in an amount that the Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinator advertises as the cost of the journey.

Other costs include:

Transportation cost to the hosting club (may include local air or ground to Host city). Normally this involves the cost of an international flight and it is the Ambassador's responsibility to arrange and pay for this. In some cases your Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinator may seek out charter fares and arrange a discount. Use of this service is normally optional.

Small gifts to your host and others (dinner hosts, day hosts, children, etc.

Taking your host out to dinner once.

Visa and passport costs

Insurance:

All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their journeys. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

1. Through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel;
2. Through the policy offered by FFI on its website (see https://www.thefriendshipforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Benefits_and_Plan_Costs.pdf);
3. By purchasing a separate travel insurance package.

Potential Extra Costs:

Some programs have extra costs due to the specific activities or local costs. In addition, some journeys include pre- or post-journey tours – usually optional, sometimes required. These may raise the costs significantly.

Hosting Ambassadors from Another Club

How It Works

When our club receives Ambassadors from other clubs, our Host Inbound Journey Coordinator and members assisting her/him plan their itinerary, assign their home hosts, coordinate their visit and identify opportunities for each of our members to participate. The Host Inbound Journey Coordinator also prepares us for understanding

the culture, history and worldview of the visiting Ambassadors who will become our new friends.

Generally, all of our club members will be asked to participate in one or more of these ways:

- Hosting Ambassadors in your home
- Serving as a day host
- Providing transportation to the scheduled activities
- Hosting a small group dinner in your home
- Attending a welcome and farewell reception
- Planning entertainment for our visitors at the above receptions
- Welcoming - making signs and assembling welcome bags including finding items to fill them – maps, brochures, small gifts, etc.

Our Club usually has a week of activities planned for our visitors, all designed to acquaint them with our culture, geography, traditions, etc. The full week is not planned completely – there is usually at least one free day in the week when the home host or a day host can plan an interesting experience. Alternatively, the Ambassadors may go out on their own if they wish. We always have a welcome and farewell reception and group activities during the week that may interest you even if you are not hosting.

Hosting Ambassadors in Your Home

When you host an inbound Ambassador in your home for their 5-7 night visit to our community you will find it a wonderful experience. Often your Ambassador's visit will be the beginning of an enduring friendship that will grow through correspondence and visits.

Our Host Inbound Journey Coordinator is armed with information about the ages, gender and interests of the Ambassadors and will try to pair you up accordingly. Our club will have a full week of activities planned, so you don't need to worry about entertaining your guests around the clock. Group activities are planned in advance; the cost of the Ambassador's portion will have been paid for by part of their program fee.

Hosts are responsible for providing suitable accommodations and some meals that are not part of the group activities. Hosts are responsible for getting their guests to the group activities and paying for their own entrance fees or meals, but other members also serve as day hosts so you don't have to be on the go all the time. In addition, other members who don't have extra bedrooms also assist by hosting dinners, offering transportation, etc.

The most important thing to remember is that you are hosting Friendship Force

members who share the same interest in learning about different cultures. They will surely enjoy their trips to the riverfront, museums and nearby attractions, but meeting your friends and family and understanding your lifestyle will enrich their travel experience. Hosts might consider taking them to their places of worship, the grocery store, the library or even the post office. Walks through your neighborhood, bike rides on one of our bike trails or a backyard barbecue with neighbors - these everyday experiences might be the best memories of their visit to Greater Cincinnati.

Cost of Hosting

Hosting ambassadors in your home is somewhat like inviting any guest. You will generally provide breakfast, sometimes a few packed lunches or snacks; transportation on the days not covered by a day host, your own meals, entrance and activity fees on days you accompany your ambassadors; and possibly some potluck items which you bring to the Farewell or Welcome dinners. The Club has "scholarship funds" available to help you with the costs of hosting if that presents a difficulty for you. Simply make a written request to the club President.

Host Inbound and Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinators are essential to our success!

Very simply, we cannot receive Ambassadors as Hosts or travel as Ambassadors if we don't have Journey Coordinators. FFI has a detailed manual for Journey Coordinators and our members are willing and able to mentor any members interested in learning how to serve as a Journey Coordinator - either for an Ambassador Outbound Journey or a Host Inbound Journey - either international or domestic. Being a Journey Coordinator can be great fun and our club and FFI can provide you all the support you need. Ambassador Outbound Journey Coordinators can have some of their travel expenses paid when they organize a journey. Host Inbound Journey Coordinators can be given priority on future Outbound Journeys.

We don't expect new members to make this level of commitment but we hope you will volunteer to participate in journeys and offer to assist one of our current Journey Coordinators. It's a great way to make friends and learn more about the journey operation. Just let us know that you are interested!