



friendship force  
INTERNATIONAL

## Ambassador Selection Packet

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## Introduction

You have hosts with empty beds, your journey is on the FFI World of Friends Catalog, and friends are waiting to be made! Before accepting participants, it is essential that ambassadors and hosts be vetted, or screened, in order that all will have the best possible journey experience.

After a journey is publicized, you will begin receiving e-mails or telephone calls from people you have not yet met, or you may receive a completed application. Your task is to determine if they will make a good ambassador, based on e-mail and telephone communication. It is different from accepting a person from your club that you already know. In fact, when interviewing a stranger it is easier to ask the standard questions that sometimes don't get asked of people we already know. Remember that you are still "selling your journey" at this point in the recruiting process, so be positive and friendly! A friendly conversation encompassing the suggested questions is preferable to asking the questions one after another.

Prior club membership SHOULD NOT be made a precondition for a person to apply to be an ambassador. However, some clubs have a policy that all who join a journey are required to join the club. It is simple to include club dues as a part of the Journey Program Fees for non-members.

### Quick Tips:

- Talk to the person inquiring about your journey about the Friendship Force to see what they know, explain the itinerary, and specific requirements for your journey including fees and deadlines, travel options (if any), as well as the physical and cultural conditions you anticipate.
- Share your experiences about our special home hosting component. Get to know this person in a casual, approachable manner while selling your journey and the Friendship Force. Remember, we were ALL newcomers once!
- Ask the applicant if they have any questions. Share some of your memorable Friendship Force experiences of interacting and becoming friends with people from other cultures, economic levels, religion, race, etc. Often the person will relate similar experiences they have had either hosting or meeting people from other cultures.
- It is a mistake to follow a "first come, first serve" approach to recruiting - rather emphasize from the outset that you are looking for those that are best qualified. Applicants are not signing up the way they might for a cruise or a conference. They are applying and need to be accepted before they can be considered on your journey. If you make this clear from the beginning you can avoid problems later on.
- Strive for a true cross section of the community. If, after completion of general recruiting, the group lacks participants from certain races, ethnic groups, occupations and ages, specifically seek to recruit them.

- Share the mission of the Friendship Force and explain how wonderful it is to be a citizen ambassador and how the friendships made can last a lifetime. Explain that opening your home to a “stranger” is a very self-selective process because only warm and generous people tend to want to do this.

## Questions for Potential Ambassadors

1. What is your understanding of the goals of the Friendship Force?
2. Have you been on a Friendship Force journey before...or traveled with a group? What qualities does a person need to make a good group traveler?
3. Anyone who has traveled knows that things can sometimes go wrong. How will you handle the unexpected problems that might arise, such as a delayed flight, stolen credit card, or lost luggage?
4. How do you view people who have different traditions from your own in such areas as dress, behavior, attitudes, foods, even a different standard of cleanliness in their homes?
5. You might be assigned someone of a different race, religion, political ideology, or socio-economic level. How would you react to this?
6. Can you tolerate different foods? Is this a situation that would cause you significant stress?
7. Some homes require guests to climb stairs or maneuver to the bathroom on a different floor. Could you handle this challenge? Can you handle carrying your own luggage?
8. Would you be willing to participate in planned activities, even if you might prefer to do something else?
9. Do you have any health issues, or problems with mobility? How about stamina...can you stand for half an hour? Walk for twenty minutes? Would stairs or uneven surfaces, like cobblestones, be a problem? (Relate this question to the particular requirements of the program.)
10. What do you look forward to most on this journey and what might you do afterward with regard to your new cultural understanding?
11. What qualities does a good guest, a good traveler have?
12. How will you prepare for your Friendship Force experience?
13. It is possible that your host will speak or understand very little of your language. How do you plan to communicate in this situation?

## Questions for References

The selection process includes the [Ambassador Application and Agreement](#) form, which should be completed and signed by each applicant. Each application includes a place for two references, a previous Ambassador/Host Coordinator, or others who could attest to the prospective ambassador's ability to travel and be a good participant in the Friendship Force program. Below are questions to help guide you through a discussion with the references the applicant nominated to support their application.

(The interviewer should use the applicant's name rather than saying "the applicant.")

1. Does this applicant have a positive or negative outlook toward new cultural experiences?
2. On almost every travel experience, something goes wrong. How will this applicant handle unexpected problems that arise...a delayed flight, lost luggage, stolen credit card?
3. How will this applicant behave if assigned to a home that is not kept to the same standard as his/her own home?
4. How will this applicant contribute to the well being of the group?
5. How will this applicant contribute to cross cultural understanding?
6. If you were traveling on this journey, disregarding the gender of the applicant, would you be willing to room with him or her? Why or why not?
7. Be sure to ask about the applicant's health and mobility, explaining the physical demands of your journey. Will this applicant be able to fully participate?
8. (For previous Ambassador Coordinator) Would you take this ambassador with you again? If not, why?

## Follow Up Guidance:

- At the end of the interview, tell the applicant you are taking applications at this time and will get back to him/her when ambassadors are selected. Then be sure to do so in a timely manner, no doubt with a welcome letter to your journey!
- If you should get a negative response from references or otherwise decide the person should not be accepted, you can use a face-saving response (I am sorry but we had so many good applicants that the journey is full.) unless you are very adept at explaining that they are not suited for this type of experience.
- If the person is accepted but will not be able to attend preparation workshops, arrange to send them all the material that is needed, everything that would be received if they were from your own club! Stay in touch with them on a regular basis to make them feel part of the preparation process. Introduce the non-local ambassadors to all of the others by e-mail. Short bios with pictures are a nice way to do this and those can also be sent to your counterpart Host Coordinator to assist with host assignments.
- Communicate with everyone both near and far by group e-mails or a website on a regular basis and be sure to share a summary of what is presented at local workshops.

Discussing the Ambassador Pledge and Being a Good Ambassador over the telephone or Skype interview is highly recommended. You can also follow up with the applicant, if you are going to select them to participate on your journey by emailing them, and pasting these into your email, reminding them that this is what they are agreeing to.

## **Ambassador Pledge:**

*My main objective as I join this journey is for cultural understanding and friendship. My health is good enough to keep up with the group activities planned and I know I will be responsible for carrying my own baggage.*

*As an ambassador, I am aware that my actions reflect on the club and the country from which I travel. I promise to conduct myself in an exemplary manner. I understand the Ambassador/Host Coordinator of this journey has been given authority by the Friendship Force headquarters to lead and conduct this journey for the best interests of all parties concerned. The Ambassador/Host Coordinator has the authority to remove any person from a host home who is not in compliance with the goals of Friendship Force International. In case there is need to use hotels as auxiliary housing, or a need for a single room on the add-on part of the journey, I will bear the expense.*

## Being a Good Ambassador and Guest:

Those who travel as Friendship Force ambassadors go not just for their own personal goals but also to represent their home community and their country. This means that in addition to learning about the host culture, they can share about their own. As they make friends in the host community, ambassadors provide a very personal and unique connection on behalf of their country. They should go prepared to be a true ambassador, reflecting the best of their country.

What makes travel with the Friendship Force unique is the opportunity to live for five to seven days with a local host family. The ambassador becomes part of the host family, sharing everyday responsibilities around the home while learning firsthand about the host culture. Living conditions vary around the world, and the ambassador should be physically able to meet the requirements of the host community. This may include walking to the market, traveling on public transportation and climbing stairs in the home. Lodging and meals in the home are provided by the host, and group activities, such as welcome parties and local sightseeing, are included in the basic Friendship Force fee. Other expenses outside the home are the responsibility of the ambassador: local transportation (or a tank of gas), admission costs to local attractions, and meals outside the home. Sometimes ambassadors like to share their culture by preparing a meal in the home—purchasing the items required at the local market. Being a good guest also means expressing gratitude in appropriate ways. Taking the host out to dinner and sending a thank you note (not just a quick email) after the journey.

A Friendship Force experience is a great way to experience the world from a new and unique perspective. With local citizens as guides, the ambassador is introduced to the best attractions of the region. Interested in particular opportunities? Just ask! Ambassadors who enjoy exploring on their own will find ample time for it. Traveling as a FF ambassador is enjoyable and enriching, but it also requires special dedication and preparation. A spirit of adventure, flexibility, and being open to new experiences are all essentials for a successful Ambassador experience.



## Special Note on Mobility and Health Limitations

Ambassador journey coordinators are responsible for accepting only those who can comply with the physical requirements of the journey program. Ambassadors must be able to join in with the activities of their hosts. Extensive walking, carrying one's own luggage, riding public transportation, and climbing stairs are all normal within a journey. Participants must also be alert and capable of following directions.

Here are some tips for screening potential ambassadors:

- Review the health section of the Ambassador Application with the applicant and make sure that any potential or current health problems, including mobility and stamina issues, are adequately noted. Limitations or conditions within the hosting homes or community should also be taken into consideration. This could be everything from the form of public transportation available or altitude of the host city.
- Ask applicants direct questions about their daily routine, travel habits, and level of physical and mental abilities. Explain the nature of activities proposed on the journey.
- If the applicant has traveled previously with Friendship Force, check with the applicant's most recent Ambassador Coordinator. Or, ask for references that can speak about the applicant's level of physical and mental capabilities.
- If concerns remain, ask for a letter from their health provider indicating that the applicant will be able to meet the requirements of the journey.
- Use common sense. There will come a time when each of us will no longer be able to travel comfortably. If you believe that to be the case, be candid but caring, sharing your concerns. Make sure they realize that it is not fair to the other members of the journey if you accept a person who is unable to cope.

FFI does support the participation of ambassadors with health limitations and physical disabilities. However, without exception, they can only be accepted on a journey upon full disclosure of their limitations to both the ambassador and host coordinators and with written agreement from the host journey community and/or travel suppliers that they are able to accommodate the limitation.



# friendship force

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Experience different views. Discover common ground.

## Who We Are

Friendship Force International (FFI) is a non-profit cultural organization focused on promoting understanding, cultural education, and citizen diplomacy through homestay Journeys and personal friendships. FFI provides opportunities to explore new countries and cultures from the inside by bringing people together at a personal level, as local hosts welcome international visitors into their culture, sharing with them meals, conversation and the best sights and experiences of their region. Through these exciting personal encounters and our signature program of home hospitality, strangers become friends – and we know that by experiencing different views, you can discover common ground.

Friendship Force International conducts over 300 programs every year, in over 350 communities throughout more than 60 countries. 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. When you travel or host with the Friendship Force, you get to know real people by sharing real life. Friendships are formed that often last a lifetime.

## Mission

To promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people

## 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 among 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.

## Tagline

Experience Different Views. Discover Common Ground.

# Friendship Force International 2017/18 Policies and Guidelines for Clubs and Programs:

## Part B: Journey Guidelines: V. Ambassadors and Hosts; b: Recruitment and Selection (p.10-11)

The Ambassador Coordinator should recruit as many qualified applicants as can be accommodated by the host club(s), while maintaining a waiting list. The ambassador recruitment goal is the maximum number the host club can host.

Coordinators should look both within the club membership and to the broader community for the most qualified ambassadors and hosts. FFI provides an online journey catalog on [friendshipforce.org](http://friendshipforce.org) where Coordinators can publicize their journey openings if they choose. The outbound Coordinator should request advertisement of a journey on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the journey with their own membership. Many regions also offer regional recruitment tools.

Prior membership in a club should not be a requirement to apply for a journey, but clubs may, if they choose, ask new participants to become a club member when joining their first journey. Care should be taken to screen all applicants and to accept only those who understand the goals of the organization and who fit the health and mobility requirements of the journey. Clubs should avoid a "sign-up" process that suggests to applicants that acceptance on journeys is automatic

## Part B: Journey Guidelines VI. Filling a Journey; a: Accepting Ambassadors from Other Communities (p.11)

The increased promotion of journeys via email and the online catalog, along with travel flexibility, make it possible for ambassadors from anywhere in the world to join a journey. As a result, Ambassador Coordinators are increasingly looking outside their own communities for qualified applicants to fill their journey. Since these candidates cannot attend workshops or meet face-to-face with the Coordinator, other techniques are needed to ensure that only qualified candidates are accepted on the journey. Coordinators wishing to recruit ambassadors from outside their community should follow these guidelines:

The current ambassador application includes the following statement: "In the event the applicant is not able to meet in person with the Coordinator, you will be asked to provide references and other supporting documentation." This enables the Coordinator to request references as needed to support the application.

The Coordinator should correspond with the applicant via email and also speak with him/her on the phone, or via Skype. If the applicant is in a different country, the Coordinator may request assistance from FFI in making direct contact to interview the applicant. The Coordinator should have several conversations or emails with the candidate, including a detailed discussion regarding the journey and why the candidate is interested in participating. Suggested interview guidelines are provided on the FFI website in the Club Resources section, under "Documents."

If, after discussing the journey with the applicant, the Coordinator wants to consider him/her for the journey, the Coordinator should obtain at least one written reference for the applicant. This should be from the applicant's Friendship Force club president, other suitable club reference, or previous Coordinator. Clubs that are asked to provide references must be honest in responding to the Coordinator's questions. The applicant may also be asked to provide one or more non-Friendship Force references who may be contacted by the Coordinator. In the case of an applicant who is not currently a member of a Friendship Force club, at least two references should be obtained. If a non-club member lives in a community that has a club, they may also be asked to meet in person with a leader of the local club.

The Coordinator should provide applicants from outside his/her community with all of the same material that is provided the local applicants at the journey participation workshops. To facilitate this process and to provide an additional means for pre-journey communication, the Coordinator may want to establish an interactive email, online or social media forum (such as Facebook) with all the ambassadors participating in the journey.

## Developing a Successful Recruiting Strategy

Your recruiting goal is to solicit enough applications so that you can have a full journey with excellent ambassadors and hosts. If you have done a good job in planning the journey, this should be an achievable objective. Participating in a journey entails a major commitment of time and money on the part of both ambassadors and hosts. Armed with an excellent itinerary and an enthusiastic attitude, where will you find prospective ambassadors and hosts?

### **Your fellow club members**

You should start publicizing the journey in your club's newsletter and on the website as soon as your journey is confirmed. Make sure, however, that you let your members know the type of journey you are planning and the degree to which it will be physically challenging. Be sure the members of your club understand that they are applying as an ambassador. They are not simply signing up on a first come first serve basis.

### **The broader community**

It is equally important to look to the larger community to recruit new participants. One of the best ways to do so is to see your journey as an excellent way to enlist new people from the community. There are many other ways to get the word out: local newspapers, radio announcements, speaking to civic organizations, placing flyers at local libraries, or seeking support from a local University professor.

### **Your friends and colleagues**

Do not forget to invite friends, family and professional colleagues to consider joining you on the journey.

### **Friendship Force members from other clubs**

Ambassador coordinators are recognizing that other clubs provide an excellent source of potential ambassadors. Even if you would like to fill the journey from within your own community, you should look for ways to promote the journey to other clubs from the very beginning. Too often ambassador coordinators wait until they know they have vacancies before doing this and then very often it is too late.

The key is to pursue all categories simultaneously. The mistake that is often made is to focus only on the club membership during the early months of recruiting. The problem with this approach is that if the club membership does not provide sufficient qualified applicants, then it may be too late to recruit from the other categories.

## How to Recruit Ambassadors from Beyond Your Community

After a journey is publicized, you will begin receiving e-mails or telephone calls from people you have not yet met, or you may receive a completed application. Your task is to determine if they will make a good ambassador, based on e-mail and telephone communication. It is different from accepting a person from your club that you already know, but it can be just as effective. In fact, when interviewing a stranger it is easier to ask the standard questions that sometimes don't get asked of people we already know. Remember, while you are determining if they will be good ambassadors, you also need to "sell" them on the journey, so be positive and friendly:

- Talk to them a bit about the Friendship Force to see what they know and explain the itinerary and our special home hosting component. Get to know this person in a casual, approachable manner while selling your journey and the Friendship Force. Remember, we were ALL newcomers once!
- Ask the applicant if they have any questions. Share some of your memorable Friendship Force experiences. Often the person will relate similar experiences they have had either hosting or meeting people from other cultures. Ask if the person would have difficulty "living" with a person of a different economic level, religion, race, etc.
- Be sure to ask about the applicant's health and mobility, explaining the physical demands of your journey. Tell them that FFI can and does accept ambassadors with challenges, but we must know of these in advance to see if accommodations can be made.
- Share the mission of the Friendship Force and explain how wonderful it is to be a citizen ambassador and how the friendships made can last a lifetime. Explain that opening your home to a "stranger" is a very self-selective process because only warm and generous people tend to want to do this and that these people are known by the host coordinator in your destination city. (Make sure they understand what ambassador/host coordinator means!)
- Ask for the names of previous ambassador coordinator's or Friendship Force club members he/she may have traveled with, if applicable. For someone who is not associated with a Friendship Force, you might ask what other groups they are in as these might overlap with some local Friendship Force members. But, they may be complete strangers! In that case, tell them that we want our host families to feel as comfortable with their guests as they wish to feel welcomed by their host families. So we require a couple of references. If one is a family member, ask that the other reference be a non-family member.
- Make sure the applicant fills out the application and returns it to you, so you will have the information from it before your next conversation. After having references and the application, you can arrange a Skype or Facetime interview with the applicant to get to know each other better. You may also be able to arrange for a Friendship Force person to meet the applicant so more questions can be asked and answered face-to-face.
- Make sure they understand the application process and fees and transportation arrangements. Most people are surprised to learn that the home hospitality is basically given to them and their hosting fees go to the activities for the week.

- Tell the applicant you are taking applications at this time and will get back to him/her when ambassadors are selected. Then be sure to do so in a timely manner, no doubt with a welcome letter to your journey!
- If you should get a negative response from references or otherwise decide the person should not be accepted, you can use a face-saving response (I am sorry but we had so many good applicants that the journey is full.) unless you are very adept at explaining that they are not suited for this type of experience.
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For additional help or guidance feel free to contact Laurie Ann Scott: [lalpscott@aol.com](mailto:lalpscott@aol.com) or Vicki Vance: [vcvance@aol.com](mailto:vcvance@aol.com)