



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL

FRIENDSHIP FORCE AND COVID-19

Updated March 27, 2020

Dear Friends,

As we navigate this unprecedented time in history, our thoughts are with our friends around the world. Hard decisions are being made by our club leaders about whether or not to cancel Journeys resulting in feelings of loss, disappointment, and even relief. We are all eager to get past this and look forward to a time when our members can again take part in the transformational experience of Friendship Force.

Based on the facts today, to ensure the safety and comfort of our members, we will support any groups who do not wish to travel on planned Journeys. If this applies to your group, please contact FFI for assistance with the postponement of the Journey, fee refunds, or a donation of the FFI fee. Please note that this applies to the FFI fees and host fees only. Airlines, tour companies, and other travel providers may have different policies and charge penalties.

We have introduced the following measures so that you may make future Journey plans with confidence:

- Journey payments for Journeys scheduled from now until the end of the year will be due when it is confirmed that the Journey is, in fact, taking place.
- If you have already paid FFI fees for a Journey and it is canceled due to concerns about COVID-19, we will assist in processing your refund or issuing a donation acknowledgment for ambassadors who wish to donate their FFI fees to FFI.
- We will work with clubs to reschedule Journeys that have been canceled. (*Hosting a Journey postponed due to Covid-19 in addition to your 2021 assignment is a great way for your club to help FFI as we recover.*)

FEBRUARY 2021 WORLD CONFERENCE

We recently reached the booking deadline for the Kaohsiung hotel that was chosen to host the world conference. Due to the current world health concerns, Friendship Force and the International Board of Directors have decided that, in the best interest of the health and financial stability of our members and our organization, committing to such a large event contract represents a risk which we have ultimately decided against taking.

As a result, the February world conference in Kaohsiung is officially cancelled. In its place, we hope to plan a smaller event, a Taiwanese Friendship Festival, for late February/early March 2021, with cultural workshops and activities as well as home-hosting for up to 100 people around the country. Details will follow this summer, but you may register your interest at support@friendshipforce.org.

FFI is immensely grateful to The Friendship Force of Kaohsiung and all the clubs in Taiwan for their flexibility and willingness to host a completely different kind of cultural event next year.

TRAVEL INSURANCE & COVID-19

While we strongly recommend travel insurance for standard travel and medical issues, travel insurance does not typically cover pandemics. Please contact your travel supplier to request a refund. If refunds are not available, a voucher for future travel may be available.

For those who have purchased the Friendship Force Travel Protection Plan, the premium you have paid is non-refundable but is transferrable. Please contact Allison (allison@friendshipforce.org) or Dana (dana@friendshipforce.org) for an updated confirmation of coverage.

GENERAL ADVICE WHEN TRAVELING:

Stay informed about the situation, exercise sound judgment, and understand that by participating as an ambassador or host you agree to assume responsibility for your own welfare. As always, we strongly recommend **travel insurance** for standard travel and medical issues.

Be sure you're aware of cultural and religious differences, sensitivities, and general health and safety recommendations for each place that you travel. Consider using your government's resources for safety alerts and advisories. Examples of these are:

Australian Government: www.smartraveller.gov.au/destinations

Brazil Government: www.saude.gov.br/saude-de-a-z/saude-do-viajante

Canadian Government: [Country Travel Advice and Advisories](#)

Deutsche Auswärtiges Amt: [Reisewarnungen](#)

France Diplomatie: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/

Japan MOFA: www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/

Netherlands Rijksoverheid: www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/reizen/reisadviezen

New Zealand Government: www.SafeTravel.govt.nz

Russian MOFA: www.mid.ru/preduprezdenie-dla-rossijskih-grazdan1

UK Government: [Foreign Travel Advice](#)

U.S. Department of State: [Travel Alerts and Warnings](#)

WHO (World Health Organization): www.who.int/ith/en/

If you have any questions, please email us at support@friendshipforce.org.

We live in uncertain times. Whether we are dealing with political unrest, acts of terror, natural disasters, or even COVID-19, as Friendship Force members we understand the importance of sound research and informed judgment in our decisions to travel and host.

Have you ever traveled during times of uncertainty? We'd love to hear about your experience! Email us your story at support@friendshipforce.org, subject line: *Traveling in uncertain times*.