

Friendship Force of Sunshine Coast Inc.

New Members Information

Notes for new members to help them understand the ins and outs of Friendship Force.

What is an Exchange?

Is it an overseas trip? Yes it is and with a lot of adventure and rewards not possible with normal commercial travel. An Exchange is an experience that is very different to your tour guided holidays as you are accommodated and share lifestyles in your Hosts home and with their family. Exchanges take you behind the scene to participate in what the locals enjoy. Many exchanges are to places not on the tourist trail.

Each year our club is awarded two or three visits (**EXCHANGE**) by Friendship Force International (**FFI**) to other clubs throughout the world. We also are allocated visits from two or three clubs. The main objective of Friendship Force is the building of friendships through home hosting. During the week members of the Host club prepare a program to share their lifestyles, area, history and culture. There may be some formal functions – Welcome and Farewell parties, Mayoral visits or similar activities.

Numbers of participants (**Ambassadors**) in each exchange is governed by the hosting capacity of the Host Club. We have found that about 20 Friendship Force members participate in each exchange.

We make the world a better place by making one new friend at a time. An exchange may actually take you out of your comfort zone with new challenges and learning about different places and cultures.

How long is an exchange?

Each Exchange is scheduled for about seven nights of home hosting. Often we are allocated two or three exchanges in the one trip for our overseas travels. These are co-ordinated to maximise the costs, distance and travel time. Optional travel is possible before or after the Exchanges.

Taking part in an International Exchange. (Outbound)

The allocation of Exchanges occurs at least 18 months in advance of the proposed dates. This allows members sufficient time to plan their diaries and schedules. Our club calls for applications from members immediately that the year's schedule is known. The first task undertaken by the club is to appoint the Exchange Director (**ED**) who will manage and co-ordinate the travel, program and logistics of the exchange. Members may also apply for and travel with other clubs to exchanges if that club has sufficient capacity.

The Host club tries to match ambassadors with compatible hosts based on their interests, sports and careers. Many wonderful matches have been achieved over the years.

Travelling on Exchange.

To allow some flexibility in members travel arrangements, we usually organise a meeting point (hotel) where all ambassadors arrive on the day before an exchange commences. During an Exchange we organise travel as a group. We currently use the services of a preferred travel agent to book our group travel. Ambassadors may use a travel agent of their choice for any private travel.

Why have an Exchange Director

Friendship Force International has developed guidelines to assist each exchange follow a successful format to ensure that the objectives of the Friendship Force are achieved. This includes the appointment of an experienced member (and sometimes a committee) that will lead and manage the

involvement of members in the program, travel arrangements and safety. The ED liaises with FFI and the Host club about hosting arrangements and the program and payment of fees.

The Exchange Director organises meetings or workshops with all interested members to plan travel, costing and timetables for the upcoming exchange. The ED organises any group bookings with our preferred Travel Agent.

Ambassadors may wish to organise some private travel outside of the program schedules.

The Exchange Director is a club volunteer and not a paid person. Some clubs may seek a contribution to meet the travel costs of the Exchange Director.

The Exchange Director is your first person (and only person) to discuss any issues or concerns with during an Exchange. Do not harbour problems that may be rectified.

What fees will I have to pay for an exchange?

FFI FEES- FFI set an administration fee for each phase (one week) of exchanges. The current fee is US\$140.00 per week per person. This money goes directly to FFI in Atlanta USA.

HOSTING FEES— FFI have suggested that the Hosting fees be set at about US \$100 per week. This contribution is to cover some of the organised events by the Host club during the exchange. However, in reality, the amount varies according to the outgoing costs that the program includes. The Host club may include meals at restaurants and entry costs to other activities or attractions. The Exchange Directors agree on the hosting fee prior to the exchange. Most ambassadors are prepared to pay for any “special” activities or events (Theatre, ballet etc).

Your hosts provide many meals at their expense during your stay. One way that we reciprocate for the hospitality of our hosts is by inviting them to a meal at a restaurant.

What are my responsibilities as an Ambassador?

The term Ambassador indicates the type of commitment expected by each member to the program and exchange. Each ambassador is required to participate fully (and on time) in the organised program. Before each exchange ambassadors are provided with a Health and mobility checklist of what is expected of them during the exchange.

Ambassadors must have sufficient travel insurance to cover their travel and health management during travel. Each ambassador provides the ED with a sealed envelope with personal health management details that may be opened in case of an emergency.

Ambassadors are fully briefed before the commencement of each exchange on any expected “challenges” or cultural issues that need to be respected. Language difficulties are sometimes an issue, but experience has shown that these often lead to the most rewarding experiences as we all try harder to communicate.

Contacting hosts and ambassadors prior to exchange.

Ambassadors are provided with information and profiles about their Hosts prior to exchanges.

Each Ambassador and Host usually contact each other to share information about them and build a positive rapport before the exchange commences. One advantage of this communication is the knowledge about each other that simply grows when you meet face to face.

Courtesies to your Host.

By knowing family arrangements and other personal details beforehand may assist you in choosing the small gifts (Australian) you may wish to share with your Hosts.

Always remember you are a privileged guest and not a paying customer. Their hospitality is their gift to you. Be considerate and treat your Host as friends. Simple courtesies like assisting in the kitchen or preparing a meal are often well received.

Some of the friendships built in one week have grown to last a lifetime.

Why I should host?

As a member of Friendship Force we are committed to opening our homes and lifestyles to ambassadors from other places. This results in amazing outcomes and friendships. One day you meet a

stranger and one week later you say a tearful farewell as very good friends. The level of personal satisfaction is extraordinary.

The *primary reason* that our club exists is to provide a hosting service to our visitors. Each member is expected to contribute in some way with exchanges. There are many opportunities to assist.

What are the duties of a host?

Before each exchange the ED will hold workshops and briefings to discuss the program and timetable and costs. You will have details about your ambassadors who you can contact prior to their arrival.

The main duty is to host ambassadors (one, two or more) for the week by providing bed and some meals each day and organising participation in the week's program. You will need to provide transport to and from activities. You are encouraged to involve your guests in your family life and other organisations to share our Sunshine Coast with them. Find out what your ambassadors would like to do.

Co-host -- You are supported for the week by having other members as co-hosts who will assist you by sharing the driving and attendance at some events during the week. These arrangements allow you to plan for spare time (or commitments) during the exchange.

Dinner Hosts ---Other members invite you and your ambassadors to a dinner or lunch at their home. The ED organises these events.

Leisure Days – During an exchange there are days when there is no official program. This allows ambassadors to explore their interests or to take time out for personal matters. You may care to involve others in providing a unique experience for your guests.

Members participation -- During the week's program members are encouraged to participate in daily activities, particularly welcome and farewell events.

Dealing with Ambassadors.

Please ensure that your guests are made welcome and explain your house functions (meal times, dietary needs, bathrooms, their space etc.). Ensure that your guests know the program and times to be ready and what to wear. Sometimes language issues cause confusion. Be prepared by having a phrasebook or similar available.

While there are very few issues associated with such a friendly experience it is necessary to ensure that any matters are dealt with promptly. If for any reason you encounter a problem with your ambassadors **please contact your ED immediately**. Your ED is the only person you need to discuss issues with. Your ED will discuss matters with the Ambassador's ED.

You will find that ambassadors who have had many Friendship Force experiences are very tolerant and very appreciative of your hospitality. Please treat each new ambassador with the level personal respect that you would to your very best friend. The rewards are enormous.

Let us create a world of friends one person at a time.