

## **Report about Exchange #11541 Discover France –April/May 2013**

Seventeen ambassadors from Friendship Force Sunshine Coast participated in Discovering France. This was a very new form of exchange and a wonderful way to learn and experience the culture, lifestyles and history of each place visited. We were very fortunate to have Ambassador Patricia Barry with us as she is very fluent with the French language. Patricia was able to be our interpreter and translator at our formal functions. Patricia designed our daily programs in Paris and Lyon. Her input made the whole exchange very successful.

The exchange included five separate experiences.

1. Six days of private travel exploring Paris.
2. Four days of touring the battlefields of Northern France to visit war graves and memorials to Australian soldiers who fought and died in World War I (1916 to 1918).
3. Home hosting by Friendship Force of Leuven, Belgium.
4. Two days of private travel exploring Lyon, France
5. Home hosting by a group of friends in Goyrans, France.
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### **1. Paris-17 to 23 April**

Ambassadors stayed in a Boutique hotel with very good access to transport. This facilitated easy access to travel and the optional daily program. Ambassadors “discovered” many fascinating places and highlights in Paris.

***Meet and Greet*** – Eleven Sunshine Coast Ambassadors attended a morning meeting on 19 April with a group of people in Versailles at the City Hall to discuss Friendship Force and its purpose, objectives and our experiences. The meeting was facilitated by Annie Sabrie who is President of The Association Versailles-Yvelines. The meeting was chaired by Marie-Annick Duchene, Senator of Versailles and First Deputy Mayor of Versailles. Several other very interested persons attended. Exchange Director, Ray Troyahn presented an outline of the purpose and role of Friendship Force and shared the new FF Brochure and our Club brochure with those attending. Many questions were asked by our French hosts. Ambassadors shared their experiences and presented a very positive message about the cultural and social benefits of travel with Friendship Force.

Ray invited those in attendance to consider the merits of forming a Friendship Force club in Versailles. Contact details for Mary Mwambay were handed to those in attendance. ***Mary, please follow up with Annie Sabrie and also Dominique Matton- Pujos from FF Biarritz (who was unable to attend the meeting).***

### **2. Battlefields of World War I, France- 23 to 26 April**

A private tour to the battlefields of Northern France was organised to visit war graves and memorials to the thousands of Australian soldiers who fought and died in conflicts during World War I. The highlight was the Dawn Service held at Villiers- Bretonneau to commemorate ANZAC day on 25 April. Five thousand Australians attended the service.

Some ambassadors were able to locate grave sites of relatives. It was a very emotional experience for all ambassadors.

### **3. Friendship Force Leuven, Belgium- 26 April to 1May**

This exchange was a return visit to the Leuven club. Sunshine Coast hosted Leuven in 2009. The Friendship Force Leuven provided a very complete and busy program. Guided tours to Brugge, Brussels and Leuven provided a very interesting and informative understanding of the history and culture of Belgium. The day visit to a beer village provided a better understanding of Belgian culture and its world dominance in the production of beer. Our hosts were very generous with their time and wonderful hospitality. Ambassadors were very impressed with the efficiency and smooth operation of the daily program. Special thanks go to our Host Exchange Directors Dany and Greta Vandembroeck for their hands on approach to our needs and program. In summary, it was a memorable exchange.

### **4. Lyon, France 1and 2 May**

Ambassadors enjoyed a “fast” train trip to Lyon from Brussels. Two days of exploring and trying French food and learning history was enjoyed by our ambassadors.

### **5. Goyrans, France – 3 to 8 May**

What a delightful and fun loving group of friends. Ambassadors experienced a hosting like nothing that they had enjoyed in previous exchanges. The hosting was arranged as an invitation to forming a Friendship Force club. The daily program was well organised and provided a wealth of new experiences. The major highlight was the French hospitality and the food was extraordinary. Ambassadors complain about their waistlines. The friendships formed were very warm and in true Friendship Force way will be long lasting. A special thank you to Exchange Director Annie Duvert and to Grant and Sarah Knochenmus who provided much of the communication and organisation.

Ambassadors were very impressed with the willingness of their hosts to participate and learn about Friendship Force. Exchange Director Ray Troyahn provided our Goyrans hosts with a folder containing relevant information about forming a club and the necessary FFI contacts. In summary, This was a most memorable experience and an exchange of first class quality.

*Mary, please follow up with Grant and Annie as they review their hosting experiences. We left them with an understanding that their level of interest in Friendship Force was high and that they may need to form a working group to foster future actions.*

*We would like to host them in Australia as soon as it is practicable.*

***Ray Troyahn***

***Exchange Director***

