



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL

Friendship Force of Sarasota, FL Q & A

WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP FORCE? Friendship Force of Sarasota (FF SRQ) is affiliated with Friendship Force International (FFI). FFI promotes global understanding through “journeys” that include home hosting, sharing meals and visiting local landmarks and off the beaten sites. We are a non-profit, non-political organization. We have over 300 clubs worldwide in over 55 countries including several clubs in Florida. Our Sarasota club has around 90 members, mostly from Sarasota and Manatee counties. Our members include both year-round residents and snowbirds. You can watch a short video about FF at:

<https://vimeo.com/207845443>

WHAT IS A JOURNEY? A journey is domestic or international travel in which our FF club participates each year. Travel can be an “inbound” (an FF club from the U.S. or another country visits us) or “outbound” (we visit other clubs). A journey is usually about a week. Other optional travel may be planned in conjunction with these journeys. The number traveling on each journey is around 10-15 FF members – not our whole club. Journeys provide our members an opportunity for unique travel through which they can experience different views and discover common ground with other FF members around the world.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A JOURNEY? The FF club that hosts a journey organizes various large group activities, including welcome and farewell dinners and group visits to area venues. Individual local FF members participate in a variety of ways in hosting our visitors (known as *ambassadors*), depending on their preferences. Members can serve as *home hosts*, essentially providing “bed and breakfast” for our ambassadors. If hosting people in one’s home is not preferred, there are other options for engaging in a journey and meeting interesting people. Members can accompany our visiting ambassadors on one or more of our group activities (*day host*) or host a small dinner party for ambassadors and their home hosts (*dinner host*) or participate on the committee that plans the inbound journey. The person chairing our local FF club committee that plans for hosting visitors to Sarasota on inbound journeys is called the *host coordinator*. For outbound journeys, we have *ambassador coordinators* who coordinate planning for our members who will be ambassadors to clubs in other states or countries.

IS MY TRAVEL LIMITED TO JOURNEYS PLANNED BY OUR LOCAL CLUB? FF clubs around the world plan journeys each year. You, as a member of FFI, can go on one of our local club’s journeys and/or you can choose to go on a journey with another club in the U.S. or another country. Once you are a member, you will see listings of the many journeys being planned by FF clubs worldwide and get info on how to contact that club to apply to go on a journey with them. This is a common practice and a great way to make friends around the world.

WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF A JOURNEY? In 2012, our club went on a journey to Albania with 21 FF members. Travelers included members from our club as well as members from other parts of the U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia – such interesting fellow travelers! We learned so much as a result of being home hosted and participating in varied and interesting activities their club had planned for the week. An FF journey is a cost-effective way to travel...but most importantly, it is a fabulous way to experience another country and culture at a level far superior to typical travel. Often, we add an extension for additional travel before or after our journeys. For example, after our week in Albania, 18 of us extended our trip by way of an 11-day commercial tour of Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia ending in Venice.

WHAT ARE RECENT and FUTURE JOURNEYS?

- 2017 - Inbound journeys from members worldwide to “Experience the Arts of Greater Sarasota” + from Wellington, New Zealand club. Outbound journey combining two 1-week trips to Cornwall and Isle of Wight, England.
- 2018 - Inbound journeys from Florianopolis, Brazil. Outbound journey to Xalapa and Mundo Maya de Tuxtla, Gutierrez, Mexico. Domestic journeys included a trip to Connecticut.
- 2019 - Outbound to Indonesia and inbound to Reno-Tahoe/Bay Area clubs
- 2022 - Outbound to Hamilton-Burlington & St Mary’s clubs in Ontario Canada, Outbound to Birmingham, AL, Outbound to Cedar Rapids/Iowa City.
- 2023 - Inbound from Calgary, Canada
- 2024 – We have both inbound & outbound journeys to Ft. Worth, TX + an outbound to Trujillo and Lima Peru + an inbound from Limburg, Belgium. A very exciting, full year.

WHEN and WHERE DOES FRIENDSHIP FORCE SARASOTA MEET? Our regular meetings are *September through June at the Fruitville Library, 100 Apex Rd, Sarasota, FL 34240. Our meetings are usually 6:00-7:00 followed by a casual after meeting gathering nearby.* For 2024, dates are the first Wednesday of the month. Meeting dates and locations are on our club website <https://ffsarasotafl.org>. At our meetings, we have presentations on local venues, travel, cultural or art related, and a business meeting where we discuss upcoming journeys and other club activities. We don’t have regular meetings in July and August, but usually have some type of non-travel “pop-up” activities, such as picnics, kayaking, museum tours, pizza parties, a Let’s Eat Out (LEO) event to a favorite local restaurant. We have small group activities to offer members a chance to get to know each other better in more casual settings. These include wine tasting groups, a book club and a movie group. And we’re starting a beginners bridge group.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS? 2024 annual dues are \$50 + \$15 for first-time members for membership badges. Because our journeys involve home stays and excursions planned by the host club, travel costs are typically very reasonable.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- Our club website <https://ffsarasotafl.org> has loads of information - ***pictures, newsletters, activities, calendar and more AND a membership application (scroll down to view)!***
- Our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FFSRQ>
- Friendship Force International (FFI), <https://friendshipforce.org/>