



friendship force
international

2024-25 Policies and Guidelines for Journeys

A Friendship Force Journey (formerly known as an *Exchange*) is a cultural experience between travelers (ambassadors) and hosts. The hosts introduce the ambassadors to their culture through organized activities and sightseeing tours, but especially through home hosting and sharing of everyday experiences. Friendship Force Journeys are assigned each year by FFI based on a variety of factors, including the club's travel and hosting history, destination and date preferences, and availability of counterpart clubs. The goal is for each journey to take place with a full complement of ambassadors, and that number is dictated by the host club's hosting capacity.

Each journey operates under the leadership of volunteer ambassadors and host coordinators appointed by the clubs and in accordance with the policies set by Friendship Force International. Acceptance as an ambassador on a journey is by application to an Ambassador Coordinator. All accepted ambassadors must be members, either via their local club or directly to FFI. The Ambassador Coordinator is responsible for recruiting and preparing ambassadors and hosts for the journey experience.

Any person who is unable to move around or care for themselves independently while in a host's home or while traveling must have a designated travel companion to assist them.

Journey Types

Journeys with Friendship Force can take many different forms, from traditional club-to-club home-hosted journeys, to educational journeys where there is no home-hosting but instead a culturally rich experience. Although the naming for these kinds of journeys may change slightly from time-to-time, the core purpose of a journey remains the same: to explore and interact with cultures different from your own.

Club-to-Club Journey



A Club-to-Club Journey is a journey program that takes place between two or more Friendship Force clubs. It can be 1-7 nights in length and typically, but not always, involves home hosting. A multiphase journey is when two or occasionally three club-to-club stays are scheduled back-to-back.

Special Journey

A Special Journey (*formerly called “Global Journey”*) will often have a specific theme or a focus on cultural understanding. Special Journey durations can vary, and may not always include home-hosting.

FFI Ambassador Fee Schedule

The FFI Journey fee is crucial to Friendship Force International’s ability to sustain its global operations, expand its reach, and advance its mission. Throughout the year, FFI invests in various initiatives, including developing new clubs, matching clubs for inbound and outbound journeys, promoting unfilled and special journeys, providing financial and logistical assistance to Journey Coordinators, and expanding its mission to new markets around the world.

Since the organization's inception in 1977, the nominal FFI fee charged to ambassadors has been the lifeblood of the network. Without it, the organization would not exist. Therefore, it is essential to assess the fee based on the value it provides to the organization as a whole, rather than comparing it to the cost of a specific journey.

Whether FFI plays a significant role in a particular journey or merely provides the initial club match, the FFI fee remains the primary way the mission is sustained through member activity. Members are reminded that payment of these fees is due to FFI headquarters 60 days before the journey departure.

Journey Type	2024-25 FFI Fees (US Dollars)
FFI Club-to-Club Journeys*	\$25 per person per night*
FFI Independent Journeys	\$25 per person per night*
FFI Special Journeys	Fees vary
FFI Day Journey	Fees vary per day

**Whether home-hosted or in other accommodations, calculated by night.*

A Note About Day Journeys

FFI fees should be assessed on any organized event that takes place on one day, within the FFI network. An FFI event number will be allocated.

FFI fees will not be charged for social activities within a club.

Day Journey is defined as two or more clubs that come together with a planned program. Some activities, such as gathering over lunch or tea while traveling through a city, are exempt. Please consult with FFI to determine if your activity is a qualified Day Journey event.

Youth Ambassadors

Youth ambassadors accompanying parents or other family members participating in the regular Friendship Force Journeys listed above will receive a discount of 50% off the Ambassador Fee Schedule. The discount does not apply to journeys designed specifically for youth ambassadors, which will have their own fees. A youth ambassador is defined as someone who is 18 years of age or younger or a full-time student 26 years of age or younger. Children under the age of two years who participate on a journey with a parent will not be charged any FFI Ambassador Fee or Host Club Program Fee.

Fill-the-Seat Policy

If a journey is not full at 100 days prior to departure, the journey will be listed on the FFI online Journey Marketplace. A full journey is one in which the number of ambassadors matches the capacity of the host club or a total of twenty, including the Ambassador Coordinator. For multi-phase journeys, once the capacity of the smaller club is reached, the Ambassador Coordinator will continue advertising each phase until they are filled. A record of efforts made to attain maximum capacity should be kept by the Ambassador Coordinator and submitted to the RSM they are working with on that journey.

FFI Ambassador Coordinator Discount

The Ambassador Coordinator will receive a prorated discount of the FFI Fee. The percentage of discount is based upon the number of agreed upon seats for each phase of the journey, and will be coordinated in cooperation with the RSM and the Fill the Seat Policy. FFI prorates the coordinator discount per phase according to the following schedule:

- 100% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives a 100% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

- 95% of hosting capacity coordinator receives a 95% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 90% of hosting capacity. Coordinator receives a 90% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 85% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives an 85% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 80% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives an 80% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 75% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives a 75% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

Please Note: The FFI Ambassador Coordinator Discount is contingent upon compliance with the **Fill-the-Seat policy**.

Host Club Program Fee

To pay the cost of the group activities planned by the host club, FFI recommends that host clubs receive a Host Club Program Fee that will be determined by the Host Coordinator and Ambassador Coordinator and paid by each ambassador (including the Ambassador Coordinator) for all journeys. The fee can be used to pay for welcome and farewell parties or dinners, and for other group activities that provide the ambassadors with a cultural orientation to the host city and region. The fee can also be used, at the host club's discretion, to enable the hosts to participate in these activities. The costs of activities outside of the group's program (those not planned by the host club) should be paid directly by the ambassadors and not calculated in the Host Club Program Fee. Following the journey, if requested, the Host Coordinator will present a post-journey accounting of the actual expenses to FFI and the Ambassador Coordinator.

Host Club Gifts

It has been a long-standing tradition during Friendship Force journeys that traveling ambassadors give their hosts a gift from their home country. The gift does not need to be expensive or extravagant, just meaningful.

Another custom is for the ambassador to take their hosts out to dinner one night. This is both to express thanks and also to offer a break from hosting responsibilities.

Host Club Budget

The Host Club program budget should be presented to the Ambassador Coordinator and FFI prior to the journey with sufficient time for the Ambassador Coordinator to market the journey. A detailed budget shall be available for all members of the journey upon request. Any money collected and dispensed to third parties should include copies of the invoice with the budget.



What Hosts Provide to Their Ambassadors

It is generally understood that a host will provide breakfast and evening meals to the ambassadors. Ambassadors will buy their own lunch each day. There may be exceptions if some of those meals are provided as part of the agreed group program. It is important that these exceptions are agreed and understood by ambassadors and hosts.

Host Club Transportation

The Host Club Program Fee should not cover the cost of transporting ambassadors from their arrival site to the host community and returning them to their departure sites or for any tour arrangements prior to or following the journey week. If the Host Coordinator is asked by the Ambassador Coordinator to assist in these arrangements, the costs should be agreed to in advance and should be designated “transfer and/or tour costs.” Transfer and tour costs are not considered part of the Host Club Program Fee, and should be treated separately with payment and accounting details arranged between the Ambassador and Host Coordinators.

Transfer of Funds

Host club fees are transferred to the host club by mutually agreed method and timeline. Methods for doing this are indicated in this document under Payment Procedures. If the host club requests the fee in cash, it is acceptable for the ambassadors to bring their host fee with them. Ambassador Coordinators are discouraged from carrying the total for all ambassadors with them personally but have each ambassador carry their own fee to be collected upon arrival at the destination club. In the event that the ambassador club fails to pay for all confirmed ambassadors, FFI will advance the fees to the host club and collect them from the ambassador club.

Journey Cancellation

Ambassador Cancellation

If an ambassador cancels more than 60 days before departure, FFI will refund all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees. There is no refund of the FFI Ambassador Program Fees or Host Club Program Fees if an ambassador cancels less than 60 days before the journey. Ambassadors are encouraged to file for a refund through their travel insurance; FFI will assist ambassadors with this process and provide any necessary documentation.

FFI Cancellation

FFI reserves the right to cancel a journey if it believes that conducting the journey could lead to unnecessary risk or danger on the part of the ambassadors. In some cases cancellation may be due to the failure of the host club to provide an adequate program for the visiting ambassadors. In such cases, FFI will work with the Ambassador

Coordinator to develop a suitable alternative itinerary for the ambassador delegation. In addition, if FFI cancels any journey, all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees will be fully refunded to the ambassadors.

Travel Insurance

All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their journeys. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel
- through the policy offered by FFI
- by purchasing a separate travel insurance package.

Additionally, it may become necessary to quarantine at a local hotel or motel at the ambassador's own expense to prevent the spread of sickness amongst the group.

The [Ambassador Application and Agreement](#) form includes the following statement: "I hereby agree to secure adequate travel and medical insurance for the duration of the journey."

Payment Procedures

All transactions must include full information to identify both the source (club name or journey name) and the purpose (host club fees, ambassador program fees, etc.) of the payment.

Payments must be made in US dollars (USD) and can be made one of four ways:

1. Physical Check

Payment may be made by check on a US account in US dollars and sent to the following mailing address:

Friendship Force International
Attn: Finance Department
279 West Crogan Street
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

2. Wire Transfer



Bank wire transfers may also be used. Contact your FFI Regional Support Manager for further information if you would like to make a wire transfer.

3. Credit Card

Payment may be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express) on the FFI website. Please note an extra fee of 3% applies to payments made by credit card. This fee is charged by the bank for credit card transactions. This 3% processing fee applies to credit card payments of fees related to participation in all types of journeys as well as participation in FFI World Conferences (but does not apply to credit card payments for Annual Fund-donations or Club Affiliation fees).

4. Regional Banking Arrangements

In Japan, Australia and New Zealand, separate banking arrangements have been made, and payments should be made according to the procedures established by FFI for these countries. There is also a way to pay in Euros. Please check with your FFI Regional Support Manager for details.

5. Electronic Check

Clubs in the US may use E-Check to make payments. All you need is the routing and account number on your check. Nothing needs to be set up at your bank in advance. There is no additional charge to pay by electronic check. This is the preferred method of payment for US clubs.

Journey Evaluation

Within 30 days of the completion of the journey, each Ambassador Coordinator and Host Coordinator shall complete a journey evaluation using a [form](#) provided by FFI. If there are substantial negative comments, FFI will contact the club(s) involved and will work with them to implement corrective action.

The results of the evaluation may be taken into account by FFI in determining future assignments for the club. Clubs with consistently excellent journeys will be given priority in their choice of future journeys. On the other hand, clubs with consistently poor evaluations will be closely monitored by FFI. If the issues are not resolved, FFI may suspend journey activity until such time as the club can demonstrate its ability to carry out Friendship Force activities.

Journey Monitoring and Oversight

To ensure that Friendship Force Journeys provide high quality cultural experiences for

all ambassadors and hosts, FFI will monitor each journey's planning and recruiting. This includes:

- the timely appointment of all Coordinators and selection of journey dates,
- the timely confirmation of a final itinerary and price,
- recruitment of qualified ambassadors and hosts, and
- payment of fees according to FFI guidelines.

Eight and six months prior to the journey, Ambassador Coordinators will be asked to submit to FFI current information regarding journey details, recruiting progress, names and ages of the prospective ambassadors, and the status of the payment of fees.

This information can be useful in determining if the journey is progressing properly or if additional support is needed from the ambassador club, other clubs and leaders in the region, or from FFI. In most cases, early intervention for a journey experiencing difficulty can lead to a successful journey.

If, however, it is determined that the ambassador recruiting is not satisfactory, FFI may cancel or reschedule the journey and reassign the hosting assignment to another club from the waiting list that is maintained by FFI.

If at any time you have any questions you can always visit the [FFI Help Center](#) in my.friendshipforce.org or email us at support@friendshipforce.org

Earned Seat for the Ambassador Coordinator

An Ambassador Coordinator will “earn” part or all of the basic cost of the Friendship Force Journey (including supplemental journeys) that he or she is leading. Providing some or all of the journey cost as an “earned seat” (discount) recognizes the responsibility associated with leading a journey and can also motivate the Coordinator to recruit a full journey. Each club should adopt a written policy regarding the “earned seat.” This policy should be publicized within the club so that all members are aware of the policy. Coordinators should price their journeys in accordance with the club policy. Any member of one club that joins another club's journey will be expected to accept the governing policy of the Ambassador Coordinator's club. An “earned seat” can include some or all of the following:

- travel costs to and from the host community,
- travel and tour costs that are a required part of the journey,
- Host club program fees.

Ambassador and Host Coordinators

Ambassador and Host Coordinators provide the leadership required for successful journeys. The Coordinator(s) for club journeys are selected by the local club and report

to FFI for journey planning purposes. Coordinators for specialized journeys are appointed by the clubs or by FFI. An Ambassador and Host Coordinator Manual is provided by FFI to guide the planning and leading of the journey. Clubs should take the appointment process very seriously, as the success of the journey depends primarily on the quality of journey leadership. Preference should be given to individuals with proven leadership ability and prior experience in journey planning.

Responsibilities of the Ambassador and Host Coordinators are:

- Both the Ambassador and Host Coordinators should work with the FFI staff to list the journey on the FFI online Journey Marketplace. The Ambassador Coordinator should request advertisement of a journey on the Journey Marketplace as soon as they become aware that the club(s) cannot fill the journey with their own membership.
- The Ambassador Coordinator must receive and respond to inquiries and applications that come from the Journey Marketplace.
- The Ambassador Coordinator should accept or reject applicants according to his/her own judgment.
- The Ambassador Coordinator is not required to fill every space, only to make an effort toward that end by listing the journey on the Journey Marketplace, as in accordance with the Fill the Seat policy.
- Should an Ambassador or Host Coordinator decide to cancel the journey, he or she is free to do so but must contact in writing FFI first, before canceling the journey on his/her own. An acceptable reason for an Ambassador Coordinator to cancel would be a safety concern. Insufficient ambassadors or the inability to recruit a Coordinator are not acceptable reasons. These issues should be reported to the Regional Support Manager as soon as possible so that they can attempt to reassign the journey to another club.

Ambassadors and Hosts

Recruitment Deadline and Forms

A list of ambassadors should be sent to the host club(s) and FFI 60 days before the journey departs. The Ambassador and Host Application and Agreement forms must be completed and signed by each ambassador and host. The respective Coordinators retain these forms. Full payment is also due 60 days prior to departure and becomes non-refundable at that time.

Recruitment and Selection

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 Marketplace on my.friendshipforce.org where Coordinators can publicize their journey openings if they choose. The outbound Coordinator should request advertisement of a journey on the Journey Marketplace 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.

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 emphasize an “application process”, thereby avoiding a “sign-up” process that might suggest to applicants that acceptance on journeys is automatic. Every Ambassador must be a member of Friendship Force either through local club or by membership directly to FFI. (Click [here](#) for more information on Membership)

Filling a Journey

Coordinators are encouraged to set definite dates and confirm program activities early in their planning process well ahead of the 100 days deadline of the Fill-the-Seat policy. Applicants will be more likely to commit when they can see an itinerary of activities. Ambassador Coordinators are encouraged to promote their journey regionally and are welcome to give top priority to applicants from their own region if they choose. Contact your field representative or Regional Support Manager (RSM) for more information.

Accepting Ambassadors from Other Communities

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 video chat, such as Zoom. 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 my.friendshipforce.org in the FFI Help Center.

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.

The Coordinator should provide applicants from outside his/her community with all of the same material that is provided to 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 or a WhatsApp group) with all the ambassadors participating in the journey.

Meeting the Hosting Capacity

The Ambassador Coordinator is not required to fill every space, only to make a bona fide effort toward that end by listing the journey on the Journey Marketplace, as in accordance with the Fill the Seat policy. However, if early in the planning process the ambassador club believes that meeting the host club's capacity, or reaching a total of 20 ambassadors will be difficult or impossible, the assigned Ambassador Coordinator or club president should contact the RSM so the journey can be reassigned or paired with another club. If this is not done then the club should keep in mind that there is no minimum number of ambassadors. If you fall short, remember that the mission of *breaking down barriers that separate people* can be accomplished with a small delegation as well as with a larger one, and even three or four ambassadors can have a great time with new friends.

Minimums Set by Host Clubs

It is recommended that no club set a minimum number of ambassadors that it will host. However, due to cost-sharing around group activities, the investment of time and materials by the club while hosting and third-party minimums that might be required, setting a minimum number of incoming ambassadors may become necessary otherwise it may become too expensive for the club to host. Below a certain number, some clubs may be uncomfortable hosting a small delegation.

Action Plan for Low Numbers

Should either of the Journey Coordinators decide to cancel the journey, he or she is free to do so but must contact FFI first in writing, and not cancel the journey on his/her

own. An acceptable reason for an Ambassador Coordinator to cancel would be a safety concern. A low number of ambassadors or the inability to recruit a Journey Coordinator are not acceptable reasons for a journey to cancel. These issues should be reported to the Regional Support Manager as soon as possible in the planning process so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Health and Mobility

Friendship Force Journeys are intended to be inclusive, welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds to participate. This includes children, adolescents, elderly participants and those with disabilities. However, applicants with special requirements can be accepted only if the Host Coordinator agrees in advance that the host club can meet those requirements. This is to protect the safety and comfort of the ambassador as well as the host.

It is important to recognize that the level of physical activity required for a Friendship Force Journey according to the hosting situation as well as the program itinerary. Therefore, the Ambassador Coordinator shall abide by the following guidelines to ensure that he/she accepts only those candidates who can meet the physical requirements of the journey. If a Coordinator has any questions regarding these policies, he/she should discuss them with the appropriate RSM for clarification and guidance.

The Host Coordinator shall provide the Ambassador Coordinator information describing the level of physical activity that will be required during the journey, including the amount of walking as well as the living conditions and type of transportation that will be used during the journey. (FFI provides a checklist in our [Help Center](#) to assist in this process.)

The Ambassador Coordinator will provide this information to the applicants in writing prior to their acceptance on the journey. The Coordinator shall consider each applicant's ability to perform the physical requirements of the journey when deciding whether or not to accept that applicant on the journey.

If the Ambassador Coordinator wants to accept an applicant who cannot meet the physical requirements or who has special needs, the Ambassador Coordinator must first consult with the Host Coordinator. If the Host Coordinator agrees that the host club can accommodate that applicant safely and comfortably, then the Ambassador Coordinator may accept the applicant.

The Ambassador Coordinator shall remind all applicants to take seriously the questions

on the ambassador application regarding their health. These questions are for their own safety and must be completed honestly. If a Coordinator discovers that an ambassador did not provide full and truthful information, that person may be removed from the journey at his/her own expense.

Because journeys have differing physical requirements, the Ambassador Coordinator shall not automatically accept club members for a journey. Only applicants who are able to demonstrate to the Coordinator their ability to fulfill the physical requirements of the journey shall be accepted.

If the Ambassador Coordinator has concerns regarding an applicant's ability to fulfill the physical requirements of a journey, he or she may ask the applicant to provide references pertaining to their physical abilities. At the discretion of the Coordinator, this could include a requirement to provide a doctor's statement supporting the applicant's ability to carry out the requirements of the journey. In such cases, the Coordinator should provide the doctor with an accurate statement regarding the type of activities and the expected living conditions on the journey. NOTE: This provision is to protect the health and safety of the ambassador applicant.

Host Capabilities: While the question of physical activity applies primarily to the ambassador applicants, Host Coordinators shall also ensure that only qualified hosts are selected for the journey. Since hosts are often expected to participate in various journey activities, as well as provide a variety of individual activities for the ambassadors, only those capable of performing these activities shall be selected as hosts. Furthermore, if the host is required to drive the ambassador during the journey it is essential that only those who are fully qualified to carry out this responsibility are accepted. Host clubs are encouraged to use day hosts and other support as needed to assist hosts who may have limitations.

Any person who is unable to move around or care for themselves independently while in a host's home or while traveling must have a designated travel companion to assist them.

Visas

Clubs in some countries encounter difficulties obtaining visas for their outbound journeys. As a result, the regular FFI planning procedures may need to be modified for their journeys. It is important for the host club to recognize that these difficult situations are often the ones where the Friendship Force mission is most needed. Therefore, host clubs are encouraged to accept journeys with clubs from these countries and to work with FFI and the ambassador club to carry out the journey.

It is the responsibility of the Ambassador Coordinator to determine what visas will be required, if any, to travel to the host club(s). This should be done as soon as the journey is assigned. If there is the expectation that obtaining visas will be a problem, the following steps should be followed:

The Ambassador Coordinator should meet with Embassy or Consular officials of the host country as soon as possible to determine what steps are required to apply for visas.

FFI and the host clubs should respond promptly to any requests for documentation regarding the Friendship Force experience. However, the ambassador club should not expect that individual host families will be able to issue private invitations that include guarantees of financial support.

The Ambassador Coordinator should thoroughly screen all applicants for the journey and reject any who may be a risk for not returning home. This is very important because any violations will make it difficult or impossible for future Friendship Force ambassadors to receive visas for that country.

The Ambassador Coordinator should ensure that all qualified applicants apply for their visa interview as soon as possible in order to avoid last-minute decisions.

Host clubs should recognize that visa decisions are beyond the control of the ambassador club and that often the decision is made at the last minute. In such situations, the host club is encouraged to keep open the possibility of hosting the journey but to avoid making firm financial commitments (such as booking group events or excursions) until the visas have been issued. In some cases this may mean waiting until just before the journey to make the final hosting and program arrangements.