

Friendship Force of Lethbridge

FAQs

What forms the basis of FF activity?

People befriending people within and across cultures in the context of a week-long visit; club(s) visiting a club and being hosted in members' homes; those travelling acting as ambassadors for their home club and country, those receiving acting as hosts and proud displayers of their milieu, country and culture.

How large a group travels together?

Each visit has from 10 to 24 ambassadors, depending on interest and on hosting capabilities.

How many visits occur?

Generally, our club has two inbound and two outbound visits per year.

What other club activities are there?

Our club has a monthly meeting which often features a travelogue or travel-related presentation, an opportunity to get together once a month called Let's Eat Out and two annual conferences.

What are some of the benefits of travelling with FF?

- development of life-long friendships with people in other countries
- exposure to things beyond the usual tourist fare
- seeing a country/culture through local eyes
- hosts often assist with language differences & translation
- companions for the trip and opportunity to form in-club friendships 🏠 safety in numbers
- group-negotiated flight costs may be arranged where appropriate
- gifts and a restaurant meal for hosts instead of hotel costs
- planning is done and most costs covered ahead of time

Do I have to travel?

No. Constraints of work, health or finances may preclude travelling. However, hosting or getting involved with inbound hosting activities can give you another and valuable insight to other countries and cultures, and give you an opportunity to build international friendships without leaving home.

What are the membership costs?

\$55CAN per person per year plus participation activities as you chose.

How far ahead do you plan?

Club choices of countries to visit is made 18 months ahead; FFI headquarters matching is done a year ahead; coordinators are chosen and dates/details planned six to eight months ahead.

What are the costs of travelling with FF?

Per journey costs include:

- travel, travel insurance & travel-related costs (e.g. visas)
- inoculations
- \$140 US/person to FFI, Atlanta
- \$150 US/person to the host club to cover activity costs

- a gift for each person hosting
- taking your hosts out for one meal
- any extra costs agreed to ahead of time

How do you deal with language barriers?

It's surprising how often some English is available to permit a modicum of communication. Often, someone in the club has a pertinent second language or a working knowledge of same. Where needed, translators are part of the scheduled activity. Some of the more adventurous members of our club learn some of the language ahead of time.

How do you deal with culture shock?

The degree of culture shock is a matter of preparation and mindset. Whatever you can learn ahead of time about the country and culture you are going to will help. Ambassadors should go to another country and culture with the expectations that things will differ from home and that there will be surprises. That is part of the experience. A flexibility and willingness to accommodate others goes a long way to minimize any culture shock.

Is everything too organized?

Coordinators on both sides plan a set of day and evening activities, but free time is set aside for ambassadors or ambassadors plus hosts to do their own thing.

How do you deal with host-ambassador conflicts?

Coordinators try to prevent some of these by looking at profiles of individuals and trying to match ambassadors to hosts on the basis of age, interests, background, etc. However, when conflicts do arise, they usually stem from failure to communicate, unmet expectations or cultural differences. Ultimately, your coordinator is the person who should resolve these problems.

What about unplanned emergencies?

Before you leave on an, you provide our outbound coordinator with detailed (and confidential) health and emergency contact information in case of an emergency.

What if I do/don't like strenuous activities?

The coordinators for each journey develop a set of activities to match the overall age and activity level of the incoming group as a whole. That information is made available before the group departs. Once you arrive, opportunities may be available to get involved in more strenuous activity as you choose.

If I'm single and new to the club, am I matched with another club member for a home stay?

This may be a compromise between your choice and the openings and limitations in the hosting club.

What if the club has scheduled outbound journeys to countries that don't interest me?

There may be opportunities in some subsequent year. Sometimes, our members tag on travel (at their own expense and planning) in a neighboring country before or after an journey. Sometimes, some other Canadian or US club is planning an journey to that country of interest and may have openings to join them. Also, FFI is developing other options: international journeys where people come from a variety of clubs to one host club location, and thematic journeys where there is a common interest or activity, e.g. ecology, history, biking, gardening, etc.

For inbound journeys, how can I get involved if I can't host?

There are often possibilities to act as day hosts, driver, guide or event organizer. Also, it may be possible to act as host for a mix and match activity one evening.