

# Friendship Force Ambassadors and Hosts

The goal for a Friendship Force exchange is to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. This is achieved by bringing together two groups of people: the ambassadors who travel to distant lands, and the hosts who open their homes. The hospitality provided by the host provides a unique setting for the exchange of ideas and culture at a very personal level. In a few days time, ambassadors and hosts become friends, despite their differences, and begin crossing the barriers that normally separate them.

## THE AMBASSADOR

A Friendship Force ambassador, traveling to another country, takes on three distinct roles: guest, ambassador, and traveler.

1. **Guest:** What makes travel with the Friendship Force unique is the opportunity to live for five to seven days with a local host family. The ambassador becomes part of the host family, sharing everyday responsibilities around the home while learning firsthand about the host culture. Living conditions vary around the world, and the ambassador should be physically able to meet the requirements of the host community. This may include walking to the market, traveling on public transportation and climbing stairs in the home. Lodging and meals in the home are provided by the host, and group activities, such as welcome parties and local sightseeing, are included in the basic Friendship Force fee. Other expenses outside the home are the responsibility of the ambassador: local transportation (or a tank of gas), admission costs to local attractions, and meals outside the home. Sometimes ambassadors like to share their culture by preparing a meal in the home—purchasing the items required at the local market. Being a good guest also means expressing gratitude in appropriate ways. Taking the host out to dinner and sending a thank you note (not just a quick email) after the exchange.
2. **Ambassador:** Those who travel as Friendship Force ambassadors go not just for their own personal goals but also to represent their home community and their country. This means that in addition to learning about the host culture, they can share about their own. As they make friends in the host community, ambassadors provide a very personal and unique connection on behalf of their country. They should go prepared to be a true ambassador, reflecting the best of their country.
3. **Traveler:** A Friendship Force experience is a great way to experience the world from a new and unique perspective. With local citizens as guides, the ambassador is introduced to the best attractions of the region. Interested in particular opportunities? Just ask! Ambassadors who enjoy exploring on their own will find ample time for it. Traveling as a FF ambassador is enjoyable and enriching, but it also requires special dedication and preparation. A spirit of adventure, flexibility, and being open to new experiences are all essentials for a successful Ambassador experience.

## THE HOST

The Friendship Force host also takes on three roles: host, cultural ambassador, and guide.

1. **Host:** The host provides home hospitality to the visiting ambassador(s) for 5-7 days, offering what is natural for them and their culture in the way of food and activities in the home and community. Each guest should be provided private sleeping quarters, but it is fine for guests to share bath and toilet facilities with members of the host family. The time spent in the home is used to establish a close personal friendship between the host and guests. This can be done without host and guest sharing the same language—but it helps to have someone available who does speak the ambassador’s language. At all times the host should be respectful of the culture of the ambassador. While the host may choose to invite the guest to participate in religious observances, these should always be optional. Meals in the home are the responsibility of the host, but the ambassador should be expected to pay for meals and activities outside the home. It is also customary for the ambassador to invite the host to dinner one night or to offer to prepare a meal in the home. The host should accept these offers as they help ensure the establishment of a mutual and balanced relationship. A good host also recognizes the visitors’ need for rest! After a long international trip or a busy day sightseeing, the visitor may need some time to rest and catch their breath, before another busy day.
2. **Ambassador:** Although the Friendship Force assigns the title “ambassador” to the visitor, in many respects the hosts are also ambassadors, representing their communities and cultures. The host should see this as an important and enjoyable aspect of serving as a Friendship Force host. As hosts get to know the visitors, they should look for ways to share their culture—through ordinary experiences in the home and through activities in the community that can help the visiting ambassador better understand the host culture. Hosts should also introduce their visitors to others in the community, finding opportunities for family and friends outside the home to meet the visiting ambassadors.
3. **Guide:** The visiting ambassadors are provided some formal cultural tours as part of the overall exchange program. They also may be traveling in the region separate from their Friendship Force experience. Even so, the host has a great opportunity to serve as a local guide, providing the visitor with insights into the local community and culture that normal tourists never see. To see a new community through the eyes of the local host rather than from the window of a tour bus is part of what attracts people to a Friendship Force exchange. On days when no formal activities are planned, the host can take the visitors into the community, sharing places of mutual interest. In some cases ambassadors may want to explore the community on their own. Hosts should recognize that this is part of the thrill of experiencing a new community. If ambassadors want to have time on their own, the hosts can arrange the best way for carrying out this goal.