

Home Host Guide



friendship force
FLORIDA SUNCOAST

Thank You

Thank you for choosing to be a home host for our upcoming Friendship Force exchange.

This is a very special opportunity for you and your family to make friends with someone from another part of the world and to share what life is like here in Florida. By living together under one roof for a few days, sharing meals and exchanging ideas, people become friends and learn how much we have in common despite our different cultures.

This booklet provides you some background information about exchanges and some general guidelines for home hosting. You will also find information specific to the country of our guests and their customs and culture. The official exchange schedule and important contact information is also provided in this folder.

Our intent is to help make your guests stay more enjoyable and make your week as a home host a fun and enriching experience for both you and your guest.

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The Friendship Force History & Mission

Friendship Force International was founded by Wayne Smith and was introduced to the world by President Jimmy Carter in a White House ceremony in 1977. Friendship Force has earned recognition for its people-to-people diplomacy with a Nobel Peace prize nomination, and has gained the respect of governments around the world for its ground-breaking home hospitality program as an effective means for promoting international understanding. There are now over 350 chapters around the world who believe you can change the world one friend at a time.

Mission

To promote world peace and understanding by creating an environment where individual friendships can be established across the barriers that separate people.

Our Vision is simply that a world of friends is a world of peace, and we aspire to explore, understand and serve the world.

How Exchanges Work

Each year Friendship Force clubs around the world submit to our International office in Atlanta their top three destination choices for clubs they would like to visit the following year. Based on each club's choices and the number of weeks they are willing to host each year, the FFI staff matches up clubs to participate in exchanges. Once both clubs agree to their match, each club assigns an exchange director and these two exchange directors select the dates and create the itinerary through months of planning. The heart of these exchanges is the home stay that allows members to see a culture up-close by staying with local residents who are also Friendship Force members.

It is called an exchange because you exchange the way you currently see the world for an entirely new perspective. Although all exchanges include some sightseeing unique to that destination, the true focus of the exchange is to introduce people at the personal level through the powerful tool of home hospitality.

The travelers we welcome from another Friendship Force club are called ambassadors because they represent their country abroad. Friendship Force members who accommodate the ambassadors in their home are called home hosts.

The typical exchange includes 5-7 days of home stay and there are usually 15-20 ambassadors on an exchange. The club that hosts usually receives \$100 per ambassador to cover the costs of the exchange.

**CHANGING THE
WAY YOU SEE
THE WORLD**

General Guidelines for Home Hosting

Matching and Self-Introductions

Part of the exchange planning is to match each ambassador with a suitable home host, and a number of factors are considered such as age, gender, profession, interests, hobbies, etc. Once you are asked to host a guest, you will get that information as well as the guest's e-mail address and other contact info. We encourage you to contact your guest before his/her departure date and begin the process of making a new friend. Tell them about yourself and perhaps include a picture. Your welcome will mean a lot and possibly relieve some of the anxiety if this is your guest's first experience staying in someone's home.

Names are important. It will mean a lot to your guest if you have learned how to pronounce their name correctly. Some guests adopt an American name to make it easier for their host family. Always ask your guest what name they prefer to use, and tell them what name you want to be called. Also, it's best not to hug your guest or be too physically affectionate right away as that may not be the custom in their country.

Airport Arrival & Departure

Initially, you should plan on welcoming your guest at the airport and taking them to the airport for their flight home. We like to have a welcome group at the airport holding our Friendship Force banner and give the ambassadors a warm welcome when we introduce them to you and the other home hosts. We have an exchange transportation coordinator who will help coordinate these transportation runs. Please let the coordinator know your availability and if you have a van or large vehicle that can accommodate a few guests.

Home Orientation

Once your guest is settled in your home, give them a tour of the areas where they are free to roam. Your guest probably won't ask, so you should tell them if they can go into the refrigerator for a snack or beverage. Show them how the microwave works as they are not common in many countries and explain how the ceiling fans, light fixtures and TV work. If you plan on involving your guest in kitchen detail, you might also explain the dishwasher, microwave and garbage disposal. Many visitors, even those who are quite affluent, do not have those appliances in their own home. Even if they won't be using them personally, it is an insight into American lifestyles. It's best to explain any house rules you may have, especially if you have any areas that are off limits for any reason. Because your guest will always be with you or a day host during the exchange, it is not necessary to provide them a key to your house. However, if circumstances warrant, you want to make sure they can get in so a key would be appropriate or possibly have a neighbor available for help. Use your discretion.



Computers & Laundry

Tell your guest if you will allow them to use your computer to access the Internet. Many would like to send an occasional e-mail message to their family and they would appreciate you allowing them to use your computer during their stay. Some actually travel with their personal computer and use Skype during their visit so, if you are lucky, you will actually get to meet their family back home. After a day or so you should also discuss their laundry needs. Show them how to work the washer and dryer or consider offering to do a few loads of laundry for them before they depart.

Sleeping Arrangements

Your guest should have a private place to sleep and it will make them more comfortable to have a space of their own. Hosts and ambassadors never share the same room, even if single beds are used. However, guests that are couples and of the same sex often share a room. The exchange director or home host coordinator will help you determine appropriate arrangements prior to your guest's arrival. Be sure the room has an alarm clock and show your guest how to work it. Also show them where to store their clothing and suitcase. It's great if you have some vacant drawer space for them, but not necessary.

Bedding

Visitors from other countries may be unfamiliar with some American bedding such as pillow shams, decorative pillows, duvets and even double sheeting. Use your judgment; your guest might appreciate knowing what the appropriate use of those items is. If such items are to be removed from the bed before going to sleep, tell your guest where they can be stored. If you have extra blankets or pillows available for their use, point that out too.

Bathroom

Toilet, sink and bathing facilities are quite different around the world, sometimes split into different areas. Give your guest a quick orientation to the bathroom. Show them how to turn the shower on, adjust the water temperature and work the drain stopper. Make sure there are clean dry towels and wash clothes available and tell your guest where to put their wet or soiled ones.

Pets

If you have pets, you won't be matched with a guest who has allergies or a fear of animals but be careful to introduce your pet gradually and keep it out of the guest's bedroom.

Meals

You are expected to provide all your guest's meals except for those that are part of the official exchange. You will be informed about any special food allergies they may have and special food/dining customs of their country prior to your guest's arrival. Remember, they have come to learn our culture and ways, including what we eat. You might ask if there is anything special they would like to eat, but also offer to introduce them to new foods, take them to the fruit stand or grocery store, and invite them to help you in the kitchen.

Speaking about eating, ambassadors always like learning about the dining traditions in America. If they don't use eating utensils like we do, explain how to use and hold the knife and fork. Talk about your crock pot and when you use paper plates and napkins. It's everyday stuff to you but interesting to visitors from other countries. Introduce them to your dining traditions, including prayer before meals. Offer them to say the blessing as they do in their homes. It will be quite an experience for all of you. Just consider them as family.

Language

If your guest speaks English there will be no problems and they will surely enjoy learning American slang and idioms. If the guest speaks some English you may find a few problems, and there will be an even greater challenge if they do not speak English at all (which is very infrequent). Don't worry though because hand signals, facial expressions and drawings go a long way and there is always a translator on the exchange to offer assistance. If English is not your guest's native language, try to speak slowly in a relaxed voice. Your guests may struggle understanding you if you talk too fast like you do when speaking to your family and friends.



Transportation During the Exchange

Home hosts are expected to transport their guests and participate in the official exchange activities unless a Day Host plans to pick them up and spend the day with them. Day host assignments are arranged before the ambassadors arrive, so make sure you talk to the exchange director or home host coordinator about any days you will not be available to transport and accompany your guests. If an unexpected situation arises during the week due to a true emergency that prohibits you from fulfilling your transportation commitment, contact the Home Host coordinator as soon as possible so alternate transportation for your guest can be arranged. You will receive a contact sheet with names and phone numbers prior to when the guests arrived. Even if you are unable to attend all the activities, it is very important that you escort your guest to any welcome or farewell parties.

Day Hosts

Day hosts are usually club members who are not home hosting but they want to spend personal time with the ambassadors. Day hosts usually will pick up your guest for a day's activities and then return him/her to your home at the end of the day. Day hosts can relieve you of some of the responsibility of being with your guests for every official activity of the exchange, but arrangements must be made before the visitors arrive. To request that a day host be assigned for your guest, it is important to talk to the exchange director or home host coordinator ahead of time.

Emergencies

All Friendship Force ambassadors carry medical insurance for travel emergencies, and you will receive information ahead of the stay about any medical conditions, allergies or food issues your guest may have. If your guest gets ill, check and see if he/she has brought medicine from home and contact the exchange directors for both the incoming group and our club. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, seek immediate medical assistance as you would for any family member by calling 911 or going to the hospital nearest to your home. Make it clear that you are not related and are not personally responsible for any medical bills.

Free Time Activities & Dining Out

All official activities of the exchange are noted on the exchange schedule that you will receive in advance of your guest's arrival. The free time is yours to plan. Talk to your guest about how they would like to spend their time with you. Sometimes they have specific requests such as a shopping excursion or time at the beach, but more often you will suggest some activities that might be new and different experiences than they would have at home. Consider a picnic at a local park, walking or biking the Pinellas Trail, seeing manatees or alligators, visiting your family and friends, running household errands with you or even visiting the local library or even a day care center. If your guest requests an activity that is expensive, such as renting a boat or visiting a theme park, explain the cost they would need to pay.

Dining out is fun, but we cannot expect our guests to pay for meals out unless they know ahead of time and it has been agreed upon before going out. All the guests have paid a \$100 fee to our club before arriving and they have been told that money pays for most of their official exchange activities. When they are expected to pay for their own meal or admission during official exchange activities that information will be on their official activity schedule they receive before the exchange. If you or a Day Host is planning a free time outing, it is best to tell the guest what out-of-pocket expenses they will incur.



For adult exchanges, it is customary for Friendship Force ambassadors to take the host family out for dinner one evening during their home stay, and usually they will ask the host to select a restaurant. Sometimes a few home host families and their guests will opt to dine out together or an ambassador will offer to prepare his/her ethnic meal at home rather than going to a restaurant. Do whatever is most fun for you and your guests.

On occasion, a guest will offer to help pay for gas or buy the host a snack or even pay for the host's meal during an outing. This is not expected, seldom occurs and is not to be encouraged, but hosts should use their own discretion to avoid offending the guest or creating an awkward situation.

Gifts

It is customary for Friendship Force ambassadors to bring you a gift from their home country to express their appreciation for your hospitality. In return we suggest you consider a gift for them that represents the uniqueness that is Florida, one that won't take up much room or weight in their suitcase. It doesn't need to be expensive but rather a reminder of their visit here.



Relax and Enjoy

Don't feel you need to be entertaining your guest or talking all the time. Just relax and make them feel part of the family. Show them your family photos and scrapbooks as they are good ways to learn about our culture, take a walk together or make popcorn and watch TV. It's all about making new friends!