



friendship force

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Experience different views. Discover common ground.

SO! YOU HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO LEAD A JOURNEY?

Some ideas and guidelines as you begin the planning...

In most cases a 'Global' or 'Themed' journey will have been conceived by the person electing to develop and lead it, so you will already have some ideas, but this is a big project and the more information you have before beginning, the better prepared you will be.

By now, you will have decided on a destination (most often your own home town vicinity) or a theme, which has great potential for success.

The one thing which defines a journey is that **you**, are responsible for both aspects. YOU ARE BOTH INBOUND AND OUTBOUND COORDINATOR– be prepared for everything that this will mean to you.

- The first step, then, is to apply to FFI (planning department) for permission to proceed with the journey. They will forward a form for you to complete – a comprehensive outline of your plan, costs, timeline and proposed program.
- Once you have the 'go-ahead' and a number, you can begin serious planning. Some people find it easier to work alone, or with minimal assistance, but you may wish to assemble a committee so that duties can be shared.
- Mostly, the fees are paid direct to FFI because prices are always advertised in US dollars and payments are made to the office in Atlanta – and then disbursed to the hosting club, or any commercial operator involved. This avoids confusion. Of course, in some circumstances, this arrangement can be varied.
- Be careful to think of every possible contingency, go over and over the plan to ensure nothing is left to chance and every cost is accounted for. *** One word of caution – in a normal club to club journey, arrangements with any commercial suppliers/operators are made once numbers are clear, but in a Global Journey these are agreed before any recruitment. Be sure of the cancellation conditions or price increases when either reduced numbers are achieved, or cancellation occurs. Don't put yourself in a difficult situation.*
- Make sure your program has been realistically costed. Under-estimating the costs can be terminal, but, at the same time, making the price unrealistically high will stop people even enquiring. If there are any aspects of the program which are not covered by the program cost, make sure these are clearly defined so that ambassadors do not receive a nasty shock.

- Staff at FFI are always happy to give great assistance with advertising. However, you need to develop a great advertising 'blurb' which makes it impossible for the reader to resist the invitation to participate. Make your wording conjure up excitement and a great positive experience, while remembering to stop short of being untruthful. A descriptive program/itinerary is vital.
- Remember, if you are providing photographs, that copyright is very important to observe – choose pictures with high numbers of pixels, sourced from suitable providers. Your own photographs work well.

Once all these preliminaries have been set in place, and the advertising begun, the enquiries begin. To be ready for this, it is wise to think of all/any questions which might be posed by interested ambassadors. Remember, being a Global Coordinator means there is virtually no opportunity for you to address your ambassadors as a group – except by email or, perhaps, Skype or similar. This means that none of those individuals know what questions each of the others might be asking, leading to you having to answer the same question numerous times.

- Being prepared with FAQs/answers will save you much time and frustration. Develop a document which approaches common concerns with travel variations, arrival/departure requirements, activity levels, accommodation types (other than home hosting) temperature variations, clothing guidance, visa requirements for your country etc., and circulate it when answering initial enquiries.
- Once the application forms begin arriving, ensure that you follow up with obtaining a reference from either the club president, or a former Ambassador or Host Coordinator, to establish suitability of an applicant for the type of journey you envisage. Should a non-member apply to join, the best approach would be to either call, or Skype, the applicant to assess their suitability.
- Ensure that recruits have purchased Travel Insurance and ask for evidence of this.
- It is worth being aware of the airlines serving your country from departure points around the world, and times necessary for ambassadors to leave home to arrive in time for the commencement of the journey. Some cheaper airlines build in an overnight on longer routes and arrival can be negatively affected by this.
- Include information on any cultural differences which may affect a gathering of people from various countries.
- Keep the communication up – even in quieter times. A quick circular email, just to touch base is reassuring to your recruits.

A Global Coordinator will almost certainly find that their hopes for recruiting a suitable number of ambassadors will wax and wane during the recruitment period. It often happens that a most enthusiastic enquirer will put the Ambassador Coordinator through all the hoops, numerous emails and a host of questions, only to withdraw. Don't let this cause any despondency as it seems to be 'par for the course'.

- Once an applicant has been confirmed and has paid a substantial deposit, I like to ask each ambassador to provide a personal 'bio' (at least a half page) and a clear, head and shoulders photograph. I create a document with each of these and circulate them prior to the journey to speed up the 'get to know you' process at the beginning of the program.
- Being a slightly different type of journey a Global/themed program may include activities or expectations outside the norm. In these situations it could be advisable to develop a form which outlines the differences, and explains the reasons, so that there are no surprises. The type of information this would include would be the length and difficulty of a walk/hike, including any hills, etc. Think through your program and make sure you openly disclose those factors which may cause difficulty to an unsuspecting recruit. The ambassador should sign the form to indicate their understanding and agreement.

Congratulations on your willingness to take on the role of Global/Themed Coordinator. You are the very foundation of our wonderful organisation and just exactly what we need at this juncture of our development. You obviously have VISION and a willingness to think and act outside the square. Hopefully, you will also be ready to recruit by 'FISHING WITH A NET' and to dream of something just that little bit different which will attract new members and excite more new hosts to be involved.

If you are interested in more information please contact Matthew Nidek at matthew@friendshipforce.org.

Bobbie Mulholland
Adelaide-Australia

CHECK LIST FOR GLOBAL JOURNEYS

- Decide on Theme
- Apply to FFI Planning Dept for approval and get a Journey Number
- **Thoroughly** plan for an exciting and achievable journey.
- Remember not to fill in every moment with activities – free time is most important
- **Carefully** price out the program
- **Be clear** on any costs not included in the price, e.g. travel between phases
- Engage any service providers carefully, taking note of any cancellation penalties.
- Devise a catchy advertising regime – and have it regularly included in the journey catalogue. Not only the international listings, but locally, too.
- Advertisements should clearly outline any physical (or other) limitations
- Respond immediately to all enquiries.
- Check all references
- Be prepared to include recruits from outside FF membership – **Fishing with a Net** is an important aspect of building FF membership.
- Know the airlines that service your city – and the length of time necessary for ambassadors to travel from their home to you.
- Know Visa requirements for your country – and inform applicants.
- Be sure to ‘sight’ evidence of Travel Insurance
- Keep your Regional Support Manager (FFI) regularly updated on progress
- Keep clear and accurate records – a spreadsheet is ideal
- Keep all recruits informed – don’t leave long periods between correspondence
- Outline any cultural aspects of visiting your country from overseas
- Having a cohesive group of ambassadors as the basis of your journey is the greatest start to a successful program – do make an effort to ensure they see themselves as a group.

- Remember that, in a Global Journey, ambassadors will almost never arrive at the same time. Have a strategy for this. Either have them met individually – or – have them book into a hotel and begin the journey on the day following arrival.