



friendship force

KNOXVILLE

Newsletter

Volume 1, No.6

June, 2015

Summer Meetings

No meetings are planned for the summer although there is an exploration of possibilities such as a picnic, going on. When something is definite we'll let you know what it is.

Friendship Force International Announces New Travel Options

FFI has announced a new partnership with Homestay.com.

Homestay.com brings together travelers and hosts, giving them the online tools to arrange homestays. Like Friendship Force, they believe that travel should bring people together, making the world a friendlier, more peaceful place.

Here are five reasons FFI is so excited to partner with Homestay.com!

1. More home hosting in more places in more cities and countries around the world. Homestay.com hosts can provide additional hosting alongside existing FFI clubs,

allowing us to grow our exchange capacity. All in all, the partnership with Homestay.com will mean more home stays and more friendship.

2. A shared commitment to safe, friendly, people-to-people travel. Like FFI, Homestay.com cares deeply about vetting, security, and orienting participants to a greater good; and FFI believes we will find a safe and satisfying partnership in our activities together. Additionally, unlike other home booking sites, Homestay.com hosts stay in the home with you, offering local connections at the personal level.
3. A private web platform for Friendship Force will be coming soon. In addition to their general services, the Homestay.com team is working on tools that will be available for Friendship Force members. You will be able to sign up there if you are willing to host other Friendship Force members on their private travels. And the next time you are traveling on your own, you can use

Homestay.com to find a Friendship force member to host you too!

4. More opportunities for you to travel and host in the way you love. If you choose to sign up as a host on Homestay.com, you will enjoy more opportunities to welcome visitors from around the world into your home, bridging cultures, generations and ideas.
5. Sharing the mission of friendship. Partnering with Homestay.com will allow Friendship Force members to make a connections with a whole new community of like-minded people, inviting them to join FFI's mission of creating a better world through global friendships. Homestay.com now has over 18,000 active hosts around the world who all love the personal connections they make through home hospitality

We will post more information in our newsletter and on our web-site as it becomes available. More announcements will be coming soon.

Pau Exchange

Panos and Renee Ioannides, Joanne Hayden and her sister who belongs to Friendship Force in Florida joined Richmond, VA members for a joint exchange to Pau, France earlier this month.

Before and after the exchange our members visited other locations in France as well as visiting other countries in Europe and England.

Upon their return we are looking forward to getting an overview of the Pau exchange from Joanne Hayden which will be published in this newsletter in coming months.

We wish them all a safe and enjoyable travels.

Adventure in Vietnam and Cambodia

A group of nine mostly retired international educators from different parts of the US and Australia went to Vietnam and Cambodia in February 2015. The travel committee had selected Travel Indochina as our tour agency, and our guide Nghia was fantastic. He was with us throughout Vietnam. We started in Hanoi where we visited the Ho Chi Minh quarter (Mausoleum, One Pillar Pagoda, and Royal Palace), the Temple of Literature, the Fine Arts Museum, Military History Museum and the "Hanoi Hilton." We also attended a Water Puppet performance. Although it wasn't a tour of the Vietnam War, it was difficult to do or see much without bringing into the equation the "American War" in Vietnam. Nghia was very forthcoming in describing the recent history (last 100 years), and no subject was unapproachable.

Next was a trip to Halong Bay. We spent the night on a junket boat. While on the Bay, we hiked through the caves and took a smaller boat into the lagoon. The fog never lifted, so it had an eerie feeling but absolutely beautiful and so peaceful. We returned to Hanoi the next day and enjoyed dinner with a local family and students from the University of Hanoi.

Then we flew to Danang and took the motorcoach to Hoi An, a small pedestrian, tourist town. We visited the Chinese Assembly Hall, Japanese Covered Bridge, Tan An Market, and Ancient House of Gia Dinh. After two nights in Hoi An, our bus took us by China Beach and Red Beach, back through Danang and over the Hai Van pass to Hue. Hue had seen a lot of action as the Communists took over. We visited the Citadel, tombs of several emperors, Thien Mu Pagoda, and then took a Dragon Boat along the Perfume River.

From Hue, we flew to Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City. All of us were questioning at this point just what was communistic about Vietnam. Supposedly it is one of the five Communist countries still in existence. It appeared that there was free enterprise, people owned their own businesses, there was no free education or health care, people voted in elections (even if there was only one party running), so what was it? Nghia had a difficult time explaining to us, but they cannot travel freely and there were still some restrictions on free press. Nghia has been to Cambodia but nowhere else in the world.

We had a fantastic walking tour of Saigon, then a Cyclo tour through the streets. A Cyclo is a bicycle with a carriage in the front. Our drivers would cycle out into the traffic with all the motorbikes, cars, trucks and buses. It felt like a carnival ride!

One day we went out to the Cu Chi Tunnels to see what life was like for the Viet Cong during the war. Can you imagine living for 4 years in a tunnel? They were quite cunning and inventive. Then the next day, we took a speedboat down the Mekong River, stopping at markets, temples, pagodas, and getting a feel for life on the river.

All too soon, we were saying good-bye to Nghia and flying to Siem Reap, Cambodia. In three days, we visited 11 temples, each just a little different but all spectacular. Everyone hears about Angkor Wat, but just as impressive were several others with intricate carving, statues, and seeing how they were taken over by the jungle but now reclaimed by man.

I've prepared a slide show to present at one of our meetings this fall. I hope you will all

join me that evening for an interesting peek at Vietnam and Cambodia.

Diana Lopez

Share Your Travel Experiences

In this month's Newsletter Diana Lopez has shared with us an overview of her recent trip to Vietnam and Cambodia. In the next month or so we will be reading Joanne Hayden's story about the adventures she and our club members experienced during the exchange to Pau, France.

We are looking for other members to share their travel stories with the club. Both Don Dougall and Ray Simko are willing to help you with a write-up for the Newsletter.

In October or November Diana Lopez will be doing a program on her trip. The club is always looking for members willing to share stories about their travels at club meetings.

Birthday and Anniversary Wishes

The Members of the Club send best wishes on their **Birthdays** to:-

**Roger Frey
Nancy Schowalter
Anne Jessup**

and to

Jon & Janet Murray

on their **Anniversary**.

Note: The Newsletter will be published monthly to bring you new information and opportunities.