

Friendship Force Columbia Cascade History

by Larry Spiegel, FFCC Historian



FFCC 2025 Officers

Friendship Force had its beginning in 1977 when Wayne Smith presented to then President Jimmy Carter and Roselyn Carter the idea of citizens traveling and establishing personal friendships. That same year, Friendship Force was chartered in the State of Washington, under the leadership of Marijane Brown and Eleanor Van Tilburg.

Early journeys were done in large groups, the first ones of 150 to 400, traveling to a foreign country, and a similar large group from the same country traveling to the United States in return. These group members were from all over the country—the idea of local clubs came a few years later. Members were not told of what country they had signed up for until three months prior to departure, curtailing the time they had to anticipate and read up on their destination.

During the 1970's 80's and early 90's, local and national exchanges were done with Korea, Germany, Soviet Union, England, New Zealand, Brazil, Finland, China, Brazil, Ireland, Austria and Yugoslavia, Netherlands, Taiwan, Lithuania, Uzbekistan, Moldova, Mexico, Kenya, Australia, Japan and Taiwan.



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL

It became realized that it would be advantageous for Friendship Force to consist of local clubs, each having their own exchanges—journeys of smaller size, greater flexibility, and opportunity for local club members to meet and interact. The Washington State charter was terminated, and the Friendship Force of Southwest Washington Club was chartered in 1982. It was one of the first to be chartered. As the club attracted members from the Oregon side of the Columbia as well as Washington, the name was soon changed to Friendship Force Columbia Cascade. We

have had outgoing and incoming international exchanges since even before our club was chartered, and domestic exchanges since 1993. While we have always had occasional picnics and potlucks, these local activities increased in the late 1990's.

We have had many fun and meaningful activities over the years and we are always welcoming new members to enjoy future experiences with us.

The Columbia Cascade club of Friendship Force has taken journeys to:

1992 MOSCOW, RUSSIA & BERLIN, GERANY

After some time in Berlin, we departed on a 30-hour long train ride to Moscow. The price of food being extremely expensive, we each brought 70 pounds of food for our hosts and their friends. Living with hosts in Moscow builds friendships and showed us something of the reality of Russian life that tourists do not get. It was fascinating to experience Russia in this period of rapid change.

1992 Hosted: Berlin-Brandenburg, Germany & England Community Exchange.

1992 CALI, COLOMBIA & BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

"Being met by strangers in an airport in a foreign country is always an unsure feeling. But when they meet you with big smiles, open arms, bouquets of flowers and banners welcoming you, that feeling immediately disappears". In Bogota, we visited an underground salt cathedral and an amazing museum of pre-Columbian gold artifacts. Cali is known for its pleasant weather.

1992 BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA

Ambassadors from seven other clubs joined us in Prague and we traveled to Bratislava, then part of Czechoslovakia. Our hosts took us to historical buildings, memorials, castles, and cathedrals in that city. One day we took a hydrofoil up the Danube for a day in Vienna. Many of our hosts accompanied us to the Carpathians for an overnight stay in a mountain chalet.

1992 PETERSHAM (RICHMOND) ENGLAND

This is the home of Captain George Vancouver. We attended a church service in his honor, and afterwards laid a wreath on his grave, accompanied by the mayor and other dignitaries.

1993 MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

This was our first domestic exchange. We enjoyed seeing Milwaukee, having a local beer, and getting to know our hosts—both when we went there and when they came to visit us.

1993 Hosted: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1994 GERMANY & NETHERLANDS

We were welcomed by mayors in both Arnhem, Netherlands and Herne, Germany, and had delightful stays with our hosts in Herne. Visits were made to The Hague and Delft in Netherlands, and Muenster and Cologne in Germany, as well as open air museums in both countries.

1993 Hosted: Tokai, Japan. 17 teenagers and 9 adults.

1994 Hosted: Kapiti Coast, New Zealand

1995 OTTAWA, CANADA

We experienced beautiful early fall colors and nice weather on our visit to Canada's capitol. Ottawa is an underrated city, with its spectacular Parliament building, marvelous museums and lovely setting with its river, falls and canal. It was wonderful to reconnect with members from their club who visited us the previous year. Hosted: Christchurch, New Zealand, Brazil and Knoxville, Tennessee.

1997 HAMBURG & LUEBECK, GERMANY

We stayed with hosts, who became friends, in two great port cities in northern Germany, with much of historic and cultural interest. A great way to experience what life is really like in Germany.

1997 Hosted: Shelby, North Carolina & Jena, Germany & Sussex, England

1998 BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Followed by one week in Austria. It was wonderful to experience these two cities, with their grand buildings, castles, imperial residences, cathedrals, museums, and concert halls. Our hosts knew just where to take us, and we thoroughly enjoyed getting to know them.

1999 HOROWHENUA & MARLBOROUGH, NEW ZEALAND

Our first week was spent with hosts around Levin in the Horowhenua district near Wellington on the North Island. This is agricultural country. We tried our hand at sheep shearing. We then took a ferry to the South Island and traveled to our hosts in the rural Marlborough Country, halfway down the island. We had a good time in spite of the rain. Some of us concluded our journey with a week's tour of the South Island, where we were awe struck by the incredible beauty.

2000 HARTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Twenty-two members of our club and the Lower Columbia (Longview) club spent a week in August in Hertfordshire, England, not far from London. In addition to tourist sites like Windsor Castle and St. Albans Cathedral, we saw a bustling street market and Roman ruins. We went to the St. Albans Council Chamber, met with the Deputy Mayor, and were impressed with the elaborate robes and historic symbolism of their attire. We made day visits to London, a city which Samuel Johnson said in 1777, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life".

2000 Hosted: Wanganui, New Zealand, Wolfsburg, Germany & Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

2001 HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA & CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

While in Harrisburg, we visited the Hershey chocolate factory (free samples?), a working Amish farm, the Gettysburg Battlefield and the home of Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower. From Charlottesville, we saw the University of Virginia, Jefferson's Monticello, Appomattox, Monument Row in Richmond, and drove part of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

2001 Hosted: Kumamoto, Japan.

2002 HELENA, MONTANA

The main street here is Last Chance Gulch. We visited the Montana Capitol, old governor's mansion, Helena Cathedral, went to Great Falls with its Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Charlie Russell Art Museum, buffalo jump and large gathering of Hell's Angels. As is so often with Friendship Force exchanges, our hosts were the real angels.

2002 Hosted: Des Moines, Iowa

2003 CASTERTON, AUSTRALIA

We experienced something of the real Australia by staying in homes in Casterton, a small agricultural city in the State of Victoria. Casterton is known as the birthplace of the kelpie, a breed of working dog.

2003 Hosted: Birmingham, Alabama

2004 BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA & HARTWELL, GEORGIA

We were happy to reconnect with friends we had made when the Birmingham club visited us the previous year. We got a taste of “Old Alabama” and the Civil Right movement. From Birmingham, members did an overnight trip to Montgomery, Alabama. Our second week was with the Hartwell Club; some of us stayed with Hartwell hosts, others in nearby Anderson, South Carolina. In between lies a large man-made lake, which we cruised. Southern cooking and hospitality were enjoyed by all.

2004 Hosted: Helena, Montana & Ottawa, Canada & Gold Coast, Australia

2005 OTTAWA, CANADA

The weather was pleasantly warm and our friends in Ottawa could have not received us more warmly. We boated by and visited the Canadian Parliament, toured wonderful museums, and enjoyed the gorgeous fall colors.

2005 Hosted: Christchurch, New Zealand & Knoxville, Tennessee.

2009 CANBERRA & PERTH, AUSTRALIA

We enjoyed stays in Canberra, the expansive and planned capital of Australia, and Perth, which is about as long of a flight from Portland as can be had.



2010 BANGKOK, THAILAND

Buddhist temples, imperial palace, floating market, delicious food and friendships with our hosts.

2010 Hosted: Southwest Florida

2011 SAO MIGUEL DO IGUACU & CURITIBA, BRAZIL

Iguacu Falls, on the border of Brazil and Argentina, is the largest waterfall system in the world—twice as high and wide as Niagara. What better way to experience it with our newly made friends in Brazil.

2012 CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

We started our journey with a homestay in Cape Town, with most welcoming hosts, and visited Robbins Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, rode to the top of Table Mountain, went to the Cape of Good Hope, a penguin colony, a botanical garden, wine country and two schools. Following our week in Cape Town, we flew to and visited Johannesburg, with a tour of Soweto, Pretoria, did a safari in Krueger National Park, and concluded our trip at Victoria Falls. A most amazing trip.

2012 TWIN CITIES, MINNESOTA & MADISON, WISCONSIN

Two state capitol, Mississippi River flowing through Twin Cities and two lakes bordering Madison, a wealth of culture in both cities, and friendly hosts in both cities —who could ask for more.

2013 Hosted: Sydney, Australia & Los Angeles, California.



2013 WELLINGTON & COROMANDEL, NEW ZEALAND & SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

We began our journey with a nine days tour of New Zealand's gorgeous South Island. This was followed by a stay in Wellington, where we renewed friendships made from their visit to Portland three years ago, as well as making new friends. We were impressed by the amount of interaction and cultural exchange we had with the native Maori (Polynesian) population. Next, we went to Rotorua with its

geysers, hot springs, mud pots and Maori culture. Our next homestay was in the Themes/ the Coromandel area, not far from Auckland. Rounding off our journey was a homestay in Sydney, Australia—enjoying the hospitality of our hosts and enabling us the chance to see something of this fascinating city.

2013 Hosted: San Diego, California & Manitoba, Canada

2014 NANJING, CHINA

After visiting Beijing, Xian and cruising the Yangtze River (where we witnessed a large but peaceful crowd protesting the relocation of thousands who were flooded out by the Three Gorges Dam), we traveled to Nanjing, where we were warmly welcomed by our hosts. We visited an elementary school, where we had an opportunity to talk with the children and give them an opportunity to practice their English. We then had a chance to try out writing Chinese calligraphy. Other Nanjing highlights included the

mausoleum of Sun Yat Sen, Confucian tombs, a ride through the canals of Nanjing, and a museum showing the horrors suffered by the city during WWII.

2014 LOS ANGELES & SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Southern California in January seemed like a pleasant alternative to our dreary winters. We reconnected with ambassadors who had stayed with us in recent years. While just about all of us had been to Los Angeles and San Diego before, there is always something new to see and experience.



2014 Hosted: Dallas Texas & Sydney, Australia

2015 KAYSERI, TURKEY

We started our trip in Istanbul—originally the ancient Greek city of Byzantium, then the Roman Christian city of Constantinople, now the Islamic city of Istanbul. From there we flew to Ankara, Turkey’s capitol, and home of the Museum of Anatolian Civilization, with exhibits on the 26 civilizations that lived in the area over the ages. Next stop was Cappadocia, with its protruding rock formations and caves that served as homes and churches. The weather was perfect for our early morning balloon ride there. We went on to Kayseri—a modern city of 1.2 million inhabitants, for a four-day homestay. Our hosts were wonderful, showing us the area, feeding us with delicious Turkish food and wonderful hospitality. Continuing, we visited Konya, where we witnessed a Sufi dance, Antalya, on the southern coast and Pamukkale, with its carbonate hot springs and Greco-Roman ruins. We concluded our journey in Kusadasi, visiting the nearby Roman city of Ephesus and the farm home of our tour guide.

2015 Hosted: Global Exchange—Gardens & Lincoln, Nebraska

2016 SOLO-SURAKARTA, INDONESIA

Our gracious hosts took us to Borobudur which is the world’s largest Buddhist temple, and the ancient Hindu temple at Prambanan. We climbed 1,250 steps to a beautiful waterfall, followed by lunch at a tea plantation. Visiting a batik factory, we made a try at batik making. On our last homestay day we visited an orphanage, contributing money to the orphanage and gifts to the children. Best of all, we enjoyed the hospitality of our hosts and experienced real life in Indonesia. Afterwards we did a ten-day tour of East Java and Bali. Many of us spent a couple of days in Singapore as well.



2016 DALLAS, TEXAS WITH A TOUR OF HAVANA, CUBA

Politics made a Cuban homestay impossible, but otherwise U.S. State Department restrictions limited us to the kinds of activities we would want to do anyway—people to people rather than standard tourist. We delivered educational supplies to a local charity, walked the old part of Havana, had meals with local artists, had educational history and art lessons, visited

art museums, the Colon Cemetery and the Ernest Hemingway Estate and enjoyed music and dance performances. In Dallas we did a walking arts tour of downtown, saw the former Texas School Book Depository, went to nearby Fort Worth and visited the Stockyards.

2016 Hosted: Tuxtla, Chiapas, Mexico

2017 MT. BARKER & GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA

We first flew to Hobart, Tasmania, for a week-long tour of the island. The beauty of the island belies the fact that it was once a most wretched penal colony for British convicts. On the Australian mainland we had two homestays. Our first was at Mt. Barker, not far from Adelaide. There we got to see a botanical garden and wildlife park and visit the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, notable for its amazing architecture and research on Aboriginal health issues. Our second homestay was on the Gold Coast, a very popular beach resort area south of Brisbane.

2017 Hosted: Shelby, North Carolina & Global Total Solar Eclipse Viewing.

2018 SHELBY, NORTH CAROLINA

Our hosts provided us plenty of southern hospitality and perfect Appalachian Spring weather. They showed us much—the plane that crashed into the Hudson River (Miracle on the Hudson), the Schiele Museum with exhibits on local animals and plants, the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, Kings Mountain where a Revolutionary War battle was won, Earl Scruggs House and Victoria Banks Museum. The Cleveland County Commissioners greeted us and made us honorary commissioners.

2018 WINNIPEG, MANITOBA & OTTAWA, ONTARIO

Two weeks with two hosts in two Canadian cities. While we had snow flurries in both cities, our welcome by our hosts could not be warmer. In Winnipeg there is so much to

see and do. Our hosts took us to the zoo, famous for its polar bear research, and saw a statue of Winnie the Pooh—named after Winnipeg. A Mennonite village with an authentic Dutch windmill, the Royal Canadian Mint, which produces coins for 77 countries, the Canadian Human Rights Museum in a striking new building, a walking tour of St. Boniface which is the francophone side of the city, a stretch of unplowed prairie and a special illuminated ice sculpture show. Leaving our Winnipeg friends, we flew to Ottawa. Our hosts there were francophone but spoke perfect English. Ottawa offers much fascination. Our hosts took us on electric boats (no noise, no pollution) on the Gatineau River, past Parliament, to the Canadian History Museum. Outside were amazing, but temporary sculptures made from trees and shrubs. We also visited the Royal Canadian Mounted Police stables, the Cumberland Heritage Village, and the MacKenzie King Estate, outside the city and through beautiful fall colors.

2018 Hosted: Wichita, Kansas

2019 WICHITA, KANSAS & THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA

Kansas may be considered a “flyover state”, but there is much of interest, and we took delight in what our friends there showed us. Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Hutchison Cosmosphere & Space Center. Amish farm. Salt mine. Old Cowtown Museum. Art museum. Chisholm Trail speaker. A chance to give back by volunteering at a food bank. Kansas is not boring. Next, we flew to The Villages, Florida, a retirement community of 157,000 residents, where people usually drive around in golf carts rather than cars. While The Villages offers plenty of activities to keep its residents occupied, we ventured out to see Weeki Wachee Springs with its mermaids, Silver Springs State Park with its alligators, birds and manatees swimming under our glass bottom boat, a museum with the world’s largest collection of Tiffany glass and still time to play bocci and shuffleboard with our new Florida friends.



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2019 Hosted: Krems, Austria & Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

2020 & 2022 COVID

What is a travel club to do when there is no travel due to Covid? When were all journeys postponed indefinitely? We are about friendships. We are friends with our

local club members and with members of other clubs around the world. As Friendship Force International took a financial hit, we helped raise funds to keep the organization going. We learned how to use Zoom (unmute yourself before talking). We get together on Zoom and later through local activities before it is safe to travel again. Past travel experiences were shared through our newsletter. Between the Seattle club we had virtual visits and journeys. We collected small suitcases, duffel bags and backpacks for foster children. Our first local activity was a picnic—safer to gather outside than inside. Christmas ship viewing was done outdoors (brrr). Our club survived because of our friendships.

2022 SEATTLE

It was becoming safer to venture out, and we were ready. Our first venture was to Seattle, (no airplane, no airports) where we were happy to see friends who we had met on Zoom. Although April weather is not the most pleasant, we concentrated on outdoor attractions, to be safe. Later in the year, we hosted the Seattle club. We also had a delightful day with our own members on the Long Beach Peninsula. Along with the Seattle, Olympia, and Longview clubs, we co-hosted a global exchange—visitors from around the world.



2023 SAPPORO, JAPAN

At long last it felt safe for our club to travel abroad. CDC no longer required that we be tested for Covid abroad before returning to the United States—leaving us stranded should we test positive. Our first post-Covid journey was to Sapporo, on the northern island of Hokkaido, Portland's first sister city. Our hosts were happy to see us and treated us with warm hospitality. We were the first Friendship Force in Sapporo and were warmly received in City Hall. We walked along the canal in historic Oturo, lovely blocks of park in the center of town, ascended the Olympic (1972) ski lift, saw a recreated traditional town, and sampled beer at the Sapporo brewery. From there we did a tour of southern Hokkaido, staying at Onsen (hot springs, visiting an Ainu cultural center, cooking fresh seafood from the steam of a hot spring, and picking asparagus on a farm (fresh thin asparagus raw is delicious. We concluded our tour in Hakodate and took the shinkansen (bullet train) to Tokyo.

2023 BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

We got off to a good start with delicious southern food and Zydeco music and dance lesson. Let the good times roll. Our wonderful hosts showed us a swamp with

allegators, fort Hudson, the Governor's Mansion, a plantation, an above cemetery, and Audubon State Park, where the artist painted many of his birds. The cultural mix was fascinating—Native American, French, Spanish, African. We concluded with a visit to New Orleans.

2023 Hosted: Central Ohio

2024 COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

Our hosts were gracious, welcoming, and generous with their time and food. They showed us the Garden of the Gods, Cripple Creek gold and copper mines, the Air Force Academy, took us to the Pirates of the Carabiner melodrama and rode with us on the cog railway to the summit of Pikes Peak.



2024 KREMS, AUSTRIA

After a long delay due to Covid, we were finally able to reconnect with Austrian friends who visited us five years earlier. Our hosts lived in small towns between Krems and St. Polten, twenty miles apart. The week prior Central Europe experienced record rainfall, drenching members who came early to experience something of central Europe. We walked through the charming old town of Krems.

In St. Polten, the regional capital, we visited the historical museum and walked through the recently developed civic center and the old central area. We toured a large monastery at Melk. We were there in late September—wine harvest season, so we visited a winery (the grapes were delicious). Our group went to Vienna for day—one hour train ride away.

2024 Hosted: Montreal, Canada & Sapporo, Japan

2025 LINCOLN, NEBRASKA (planned)

2025 MT. BARKER & PERTH AUSTRALIA (planned)

2025 Hosting: Colorado Springs, Colorado & Winnipeg, Canada

LOCAL ACTIVITIES

We are a group of friends, always happy to have new members join us. When not traveling, we engage in a multitude of activities at home. Over the years, these have included:

Taste Travelers - a meal together at an ethnic restaurant.

Annual Picnic - sometimes with Longview or Mid-Willamette club.

Mini-exchanges with other Northwest Friendship Force clubs.

Peace & Justice Fair

Crafting Day

Wine & Cheese social.

Annual Meeting Potluck

Chocolate Fantasy Festival

World Friendship Day.

Music & theatric performances.

Rose Festival Grand Floral Parade

Christmas ship viewing

Winery tour & tastings.

Bird watching.

Bowling & pizza.

Display in Vancouver Library.

Winery tour & tastings.

Volunteering: Food banks, Suitcases/backpacks for foster children, Toys for Tots,

Overnight Outings:

Mt. Rainier

Lake Chelan

Long Beach Peninsula

Northwest Trek

Ashland

Leavenworth

Newport

Olympia

Malheur Wildlife National Refuge

Visits to Local Attractions:

Columbia River Gorge

Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood

Oregon/Washington Coast

Pittock Mansion

Portland Japanese Garden

Sauvie Island

Pomeroy Farm Grist Mill

World Forestry Center

Hulda Klager Lilac Garden

Oregon Historical Society Museum

Portland Art Museum

Guide Dog for the Blind Training Center

Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden

Oregon Historical Museum

Frito Lay Plant

Portland Post Office tour

Lan Su Chinese Garden

Silver Falls State Park

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| Oregon Garden | Oregon Zoo |
| Mt. Hood Railroad | Columbia Gorge Sternwheeler |
| Vancouver Waterfront | Fort Vancouver |
| Pearson Airfield Museum | Old Town Portland walk |
| Silverton Murals walk | Lake Oswego walking tour |
| Tryon Life Community Farm | Lacamas Lake hike |
| Vedanta Retreat | Portland Roasting Coffee Tour |
| Columbia Springs | Valley of the Giants Trail hike |
| Sandy River Delta hike | Willamette Esplanade walk |
| Bilal Masjid Mosque | Mt. St. Helens |
| PT 658 Heritage—WWII wooden boat | Quilt show & social |
| Japanese Internment Camp talk | Chief Lalooska Center |
| Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge | |
| South Portland walking tour | Greek (Hellenic-American) Cultural Center |
| End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center | |
| Spruce Goose. Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum | |

