

Friendship Force of Manitoba Newsletter January 2026

Manitoba to Terê-Rio and Nor Peru

South America was the destination for the out-bound journey in 2025, with a week in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil followed by a week in Trujillo Peru. The 10 ambassadors from FF Manitoba – Journey Coordinators Christine and Francis Hanlon, Susan Finlay, Rose Gerbasi, Gisele Hansen, Gail Keeley, Doug Jackson, Marilyn Ouimet, Peggy Smith, and Teresa Tacchi – were joined by Donna Voutsinos from FF Lethbridge.

Because they had just come off a G-Adventure tour that ended in Rio de Janeiro on November 11, five of the ambassadors (Christine, Francis, Peggy, Susan, and Teresa) arrived a day early and were kindly accommodated by the friendly 'Cariocas' – the local name for people from Rio. Our hosts treated us to Rodízio at a Churrascaria, where gauchos (meat waiters) serve unlimited helpings from skewers of various fire-roasted meats.

After settling in to our various homes, we regrouped at Arpoador, a large stone peninsula from which to watch the sunset over Ipanema Beach. The next morning, a visit to Palácio do Catete, the former presidential residence, and the adjacent art museum was followed by a visit to Flamengo Beach, one of the city's many beaches. Peggy, Teresa, Christine and Francis then joined hosts Sonia and Leander on a steep climb up Urca Mountain, one of several hills that dot the city. Susan visited the Museum of Modern Art.



In the evening, a splendid Welcome Reception brought together nine of the ambassadors and all the Carioca day and home hosts for a festive night of dining and dancing. Unfortunately, a flight delay meant Gail and Doug were unable to join in, but they arrived the following afternoon.

The next day, an early morning bus tour started with a visit to Christ the Redeemer, the 30-metre art deco statue that overlooks the entire city from Corcovado's mountaintop. Other highlights included the Selaron Steps, the Lapa Arches, and the modern Metropolitan cathedral. A sunset cable-car ride up Sugar Loaf Mountain closed the day.





In the morning, all the ambassadors agreed they could have spent more time at the fascinating Museum of Tomorrow but, across the city, a buffet lunch soon wowed us with its delicious abundance of Brazilian specialties. In the evening, further culinary delights awaited us as Tere Rio members hosted the ambassadors to dinner in their homes.

After a late night with our Carioca friends, everyone appreciated the leisurely start the following day, perusing art, food, and handicraft stalls at the Saturday fair. Then, at Rio Scenarium we lunched on Feijoada, Brazil's iconic national dish of slow-cooked black beans simmered with pork and beef, served with white rice, sautéed collard greens and farofa (toasted manioc flour). Only a few had the energy to dance to the live samba band, while others were eager for a walk or rest with their home hosts.



On Sunday, it was time for the Hippy Fair street market in Ipanema, followed by a boat tour of the harbour and, finally, some much welcomed free time with our hosts. It was good to take a breath after several jam-packed days.

The pace picked up again the following day with a whirlwind visit of the Botanical Gardens followed by a tram ride up into the arty Santa Teresa neighbourhood. Fortunately, the evening was left open for packing and informal visiting. A 7 am flight to Trujillo on November 19 meant a stay at the airport hotel the night before. So, after a farewell lunch that lingered into the afternoon, the Manitoba ambassadors said their final goodbye to FF Terê Rio.

A warm welcome awaited the FF Manitoba ambassadors after a long day of travel. The Nor-Peru hosts were waiting at the Trujillo airport with a banner, eager for one of many 'foto group' sessions that punctuated our visit to this coastal area.



The Welcome Dinner was held at a local 'polleria,' where we enjoyed the popular 'pollo a la brasa,' a tasty roasted chicken dish, washed down with 'chicha morada,' a mixture of fruit juice and purple corn. It was an early night for the weary travelers, who were eager to settle in with their hosts.

Next morning, after a hearty Peruvian breakfast, the group boarded a mini-van and headed for the archeological remains of Chan Chan, the largest mud-brick city in the world, built by the Chimu culture 1,100 years ago. Our guide, Dilser, delivered a fascinating tour in excellent English. Several ambassadors had the opportunity to don a gold headdress and pose with a masked Chimu noble.





Lunch was in Huanchaco, a seaside town known for its Caballitos de totora one-person reed fishing boats designed by the Chimu and still used today. After lunch, we were treated to an unexpected display of competing marching bands on the street below. The day wound up with a visit to a 500-year-old church, followed by dinner at home with our hosts.



The following day started with a tour of Trujillo's colonial city-centre, including Plaza de Armas, Santa Maria Cathedral and former mansions now serving as museums. The ambassadors rested in the afternoon while our hosts busily prepared snacks for a Karaoke night that started as a competition between Canadian and Peruvian songs then turned into a dance party.

A late night meant a leisurely start to Huaca del Sol y Luna, the temple of the Moon and the Sun Archeological Site. Once again, we were blown away by the elaborate art and architecture of pre-Incan cultures, this time the Moche, who preceded the Chimu. and were known for their colourful painted ceramics, gold work, monumental constructions (huacas), and irrigation systems.

On the way back to town, we stopped at a local ceramic workshop whose artisan worked in the Moche style and painted a temporary tattoo on everyone's face. We then took turns sitting on a Moche throne.



A surprise awaited us at the home of Jaime Carril, the president of the Nor-Peru Club. The sumptuous garden party included a bountiful buffet of typical North Peruvian dishes, all clearly labeled. After lunch, we had the opportunity to explore a display featuring all the unique local vegetables, fruit and spices used in preparing the food. Then the music started and our hosts dressed us in traditional folkloric costumes so they could teach us how to dance the 'Marinara.' It was a fast-stepping, handkerchief-waving, fun-filled afternoon!



Good thing we got to bed early that night. The next day, we were up at dawn heading for yet another surprise! Our hosts had requested – and secured – the participation of both clubs in the weekly Sunday civic ceremony. After the flag raising at Plaza de Armas, we marched around the square with the FF Nor-Peru banner and the Canadian Flag.





Then we had lunch while being entertained by the renowned Peruvian Paso horses, known for their 'dancing.' Rosemary knew them well as she once owned several

Peruvian pasos! Rounding out the day was a visit to the pier followed by some free time exploring the area with our hosts.

The next day was devoted to the Lady of Cao, a Moche high priestess whose mummy was discovered at the archeological site of El Brujo, 45 km north of Trujillo. The ambassadors all enjoyed the museum and ceremonial grounds tremendously. As a bonus, we even had the chance to see a hairless Peruvian dog.



Our final day in Trujillo was spent on another city tour, this time to see El Mosaico, a 1-km wall where 30 million mosaic tiles were used to tell the history of Northern Peru. We didn't walk the entire wall but enough to need a rest before the elegant farewell dinner. Once again, we enjoyed delicious food and dancing, surrounded by our dear Peruvian friends. It was an evening – and a journey – that we will never forget.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner



The Guess Who is Coming to Dinner Event is held in January instead of our usual club meeting. The hosts are matched with guests who have signed up for the event. The hosts along with the guests decide the date (preferably in January) and the time. Each guest is asked to bring a dish.

Ideally each guest does not know who the other guests are. It is a great opportunity for members to get to know one another better and enjoy the company over a meal.



This year there were three hosts: Rose Gerbasi, Kristina Ryan and Guy and Janet McKenzie- Smith along with seventeen guests. Thank you all for participating.

**If you haven't already...
don't forget to renew
your membership!**

Journey Coordinator's Report

Things have changed dramatically since my last Journey Coordinator's newsletter report!

Let's start with the good news.

FF Manitoba's first outbound choice for 2026 was Germany. Our journey to Varel is scheduled from September 22-29.

Unfortunately, the original Varel host coordinator, Birgit Kessens, passed away suddenly last year. Varel is a small club. With the loss of one of their long-term members, it is unclear whether the club will still be able to host 15 ambassadors or a smaller number, but the journey is still on as scheduled.

Our new host coordinators, another Birgit and her husband, Heiner, will be working with our FF MB ambassador coordinator, Denise Lawson, to arrive at a consensus about capacity and other details. FF Manitoba members are very interested in the journey, so we anticipate it will be filled to the host club's capacity. Varel recommends going by train to Oldenburg from Bremen airport, or by Flixbus from Amsterdam.

Varel's usual weather in September has highs of 16 to 20 C and lows of 8 to 11 C, with 11 days of rain. Since our journey falls at the end of the month, temperatures are likely to be on the lower end, but still pleasant. Its location on the North Sea coast provides a moderating climate for the surrounding agricultural areas. The oldest building in Varel is believed to have been built in 1144.

Unfortunately, both the FF Cheyenne and FF Lincoln clubs have cancelled their June 8-15, 2026 journey to FF Manitoba and FF Niagara. FF Wairarapa, New Zealand's proposed journey to FF Manitoba July 24-31, 2026 has also been cancelled. Despite advertising to other clubs Down Under, Wairarapa felt their small numbers weren't enough for a viable journey.

FF Manitoba is in negotiation with FF Denver about a potential inbound from their club in June or late August. We don't expect to hear from them one way or the other until sometime in February. We have also asked FFI if there is another inbound journey available.

In the meantime, Donna Voutsinos, journey coordinator for FF Lethbridge, has enquired about an inbound journey from their club. Donna joined our outbound journey to South America in November, so we do have a connection with their club. It's too early to tell if this journey possibility will come to fruition.

FF Manitoba did have a 2026 inbound request from FF Western Kentucky, which had previously been assigned to visit two clubs in southern Ontario. Sadly, one of the Ontario clubs has folded, leaving the Western Kentucky club looking for a journey either before or after their time with FF Toronto. Unfortunately, we had to turn them down as their dates overlapped with our outbound to Varel.

Our 2027 Inbound journey hosting availability of two weeks was sent to FFI back in November. The deadline for sending requests for 2027 outbound journeys to FFI has been delayed until mid-February 2026. The 2027 list of 195 host clubs and 269 weeks available for 2027 was forwarded to all members via email.

Although the largest number of clubs is in the US, there are many clubs in other parts of the world. As we were awarded a journey to Europe in 2026, we are not eligible for Europe again until 2029. However, clubs in Latin America – in Mexico, Guadeloupe, Costa Rica, etc. are close to our time zone. Many locations have direct flights from Winnipeg. (I just saw a direct Westjet flight on February 20 from Winnipeg to Costa Rica for \$271 CAD. Flight time is listed at just over 6 hours.)

We could also request a domestic journey to another club in Canada. If the Lethbridge

inbound becomes a reality, we might be able to arrange a reciprocal journey with them. And if not, there are multiple other Canadian clubs, from Quebec in the east to Victoria in the west.

Peggy Smith will be leading the journeys discussion at the February meeting in my absence.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Finlay

Program Committee Report

Our committee looks forward to a new year, committed to the FFI vision of connecting people who value and respect diversity and believe peace can be built one friendship at a time.

In January we have celebrated our member friendships with 'Guess who's coming to Dinner', one of our favourite activities, organized by Gail Keeley. Sincere thank you to Gail and the dinner/lunch hosts.

At our February meeting we'll enjoy the highlights of the November journeys to Peru and Brazil by the journey coordinators, Christine and Francis Hanlon, and the ambassadors.

International Friendship Day will be celebrated in March with the Winnipeg and possibly Brandon Clubs. The Winnipeg Club will choose the presenter. Our club has chosen the venue, the Caboto Centre.

Our April meeting will feature the travels of our members Gisele Hansen and Rose Gerbasi to Cusco, Machu Picchu and the Amazon.

We thank everyone for their leadership and participation. As the year continues our respect for inclusion, diversity, peace and justice will be celebrated.

In friendship,

Helen Whetter, for the Program Committee

President's Report

Winter can be a difficult season for everyone, especially after the holiday season is over. The shorter daylight hours, the ice-covered roads and sidewalks make it difficult to get out and about to visit friends and family.

However, Winnipeg has a lot to offer in terms of the arts, sports, and music. For example, The Leaf is a world class facility which has just opened a wonderful display called Fleurs de Villes WONDER.

And to warm our hearts, our Friendship Force Manitoba once again organized a great way to get together with friends called Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. Anyone who has participated in this event has had a great time. It is a unique way to become better acquainted with other members of the club. For further camaraderie, be sure to come out to our monthly meetings – and bring a friend!

For those who want to travel further afield, there is the FFI website which lists all of the outbound journeys of other clubs around the world. Nothing chases away the winter blues than planning for a trip!

Doug Jackson



friendship force
international

Check out the all group and independent journeys at:

<https://friendshipforce.myshopify.com/collections/public>

FF Basics

Membership renewals:

Memberships run from January to December.

Renewing member: \$70

New member: \$70

Associate member: \$40

All members are being asked to complete a membership renewal form at the time they pay their membership.

Address changes:

Have you changed your address, email, or phone number? Please tell our incoming President Doug Jackson right away so he can update our membership list.

Club website: friendshipforcemanitoba.org

FF Canada website: friendshipforce.ca

FF International: Go to friendshipforce.org for up-to-date information.

My.friendshipforce.org gives you access to the latest new messages and allows you to pay journey fees.

Newsletter:

To contribute to the Keystone Klippings, contact either

Gail at gailke@hotmail.ca or

Christine at christinekhanlon@gmail.com

Board Members 2026

President: Doug Jackson

Vice President: Guy McKenzie-Smith

Secretary: Rose Gerbasi

Treasurer: Denise Lawson

Committee Chairs and Members

Journey Coordinator: Susan Finlay

Past President: Denise Lawson

Program Committee: Helen Whetter (chair), Dallas Bagby, Kathy Lesyk and Doug Jackson

Newsletter Editor: Gail Keeley/Christine Hanlon

Website: Marilyn Ouimet

Historian: vacant

Upcoming Events

February 4, 2026 - Club Meeting

Brazil/Peru Journey Highlights

World Friendship Day - March 4

Caboto Centre; Details TBA

April 2026 Club Meeting

Cusco, Machu Picchu and the Amazon
Gisele Hansen and Rose Gerbasi

With thanks to the Program Committee for organizing the above events