



Friendship Ambassadors Foundation

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Dear Participants:

It was the best of times; it was the not-so-best of times

After years of rebuilding, it appears that cultural exchange programs and substantial, meaningful concert tours are back and in full swing this summer. FAF is facilitating some of the most interesting projects and concert tour exchanges in its 35-year history.

Frustrating these positive signs are the increases that many participants have felt recently across the country and across the board. As a nonprofit, FAF works hard to keep your costs reasonable, but in these cases we have had little sway – and they appear to be global in nature.

Understanding your frustrations at the unanticipated cost increases this year, I wanted share with you information impacting most of you: the euro to dollar exchange and the current, additional air fuel surcharge that all passengers are bound to now add to their total costs.

- This year, we have all witnessed the dramatic euro / dollar shift. This has been in the news regularly and one needs only to review the percentage changes since last Fall to understand how tour costs to any destination based on the euro have been negatively impacted. This year it has become necessary to bill for that difference in order to maintain proper facilitation and administration of the tour by our nonprofit organization. In fact, FAF went so far as to advise participants in advance so they might consider full payment last Fall, rather than the installment plan we normally offer – and several of our participant groups took full advantage of this option.

- Secondly, as many of you know through the general media, airlines have announced unilateral increases of more than \$100+pp for increased air costs. Follow is a representative release sent out by Carlson Wagonlit, the large travel firm. You may have seen this or other, similar ones:

Dear Valued Customers:

Air/France, KLM, British Airways, and other major carriers are and have been increasing fuel surcharges due to the high level of fuel costs.

PP fuel costs have gone from \$85 each way in September 2007 Re-assessed April 11, 2008 to \$115 each way and again April 28, 2008 to \$135 each way.

We understand how these increases may adversely affect ... passengers. (Remember) all base fares are protected, but fuel and taxes are always subject to change until date of ticketing. ~ Suzanne Carlson; Carlson Wagonlit

P.S. Delta announced a new fuel charge of \$35 over the above stated amount just last week.

Other additional costs may be frustrating but more understandable in the course of tour planning. Frequently, changes in cost come about when an ensemble's rate, which is based on numbers of participants, falls below certain expectations. This increase could be affected by hotel discount contracts, numbers on the bus, or fewer people paying for guide services, as well as other static costs.

We at Friendship Ambassadors Foundation remain committed to making your tour the best that can be imagined and know that once these issues are resolved, the rest, which is in our control, will meet with your utmost satisfaction. We thank you for remaining on schedule as best as possible with your final billing; it helps us avoid any further, unforeseen changes in 2008.

Patrick Sciarratta
Executive Director

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