



FRIENDLY FAMILIARIZATION GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

In the tourism sector, friends, family and other trusted individuals are one of the primary source of information when people make their travel decisions. Travelers trust recommendations from those with firsthand experience of the place. Familiarization (FAM) Tours provide this by organizing specialized immersive tours for travel agents, media, and influencers, giving them greater knowledge and a personal connection of the area. These tours highlight the destination's unique experiences, including both popular sites and lesser known local attractions.

The core belief driving these tours is simple: You can't sell or support what you don't know.

It's also important to engage local community stakeholders. Internal 'friendly' Fam Tours for local officials, media, businesses and residents offer a change for people to better understand what is available locally, ensuring everyone is familiar with these assets and therefore able to promote and support the sector better.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how to organize and run a 'friendly' FAM tour for local stakeholders and friends in your community. Through the tour, participants will understand what is on offer in the area better and can support the efforts of those promoting the destination in attracting more visitors from the area and from outside.

BENEFITS

Hosting Friendly Fam Tours offers a unique opportunity to boost local economies by providing intimate, hands-on experiences. These tours inspire authentic stories that showcase a community's distinctive features while fostering connections among local stakeholders. By focusing on Friendly Fam Tours, rural counties can leverage the power of personal storytelling to enhance visibility, attract visitors, build community pride, and stimulate economic growth. While organizing a Friendly Fam Tour requires effort, the rewards are substantial. Below is a list of potential benefits gained from hosting Friendly Fam Tours.

- Inspire cross marketing
- Establish a sense of community
- Encourage Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) Market
- Encourage visitation from neighboring counties
- Inspire community pride
- Helps local sites and businesses connect their story to the story of the larger region
- Provides a safe space to receive real-time feedback
- Encourages cohesive sense of identity (translates to a cohesive image that the visitor sees)
- Boosts morale
- Serves as a trial run/practice for “real” familiarization tour
- Allows the destination leadership organization to provide education to the site
- A replicable model (and guide) for future friendly/real Fams

USING THIS GUIDE

UPLIFT's goal with this guide is to support destinations in creating engaging and informative FAM tours that build stronger connections between visitors, tourism professionals, and residents in local communities. We hope that this guide will ensure that your FAM tours not only highlight your area's strengths but also leave a lasting impression on participants. Together, we aim to foster long-term tourism growth by sharing authentic, memorable experiences.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to make organizing and implementing FAM tours as smooth as possible. In the next pages you'll find an overview of best practices for hosting FAM tours, tips on how to highlight your destination's unique features, and itineraries that can be customized based on your specific needs. Whether you are new to FAM tours or looking to refine your approach, this guide will be a helpful resource along the way.

Questions or Need Assistance?

If you have any questions or need further assistance in planning your FAM tour, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

Contact Information:

UPLIFT NC Support Team

Phone: 704-942-6338

Email: jennifer@cltqueens.com

UPLIFT FRIENDLY FAM TIMELINE

Conduct two initial interest meetings with DMOs; gather initial impressions via questionnaire

Nov-Dec
2024

Work one-on-one with DMOs to identify the specifics of their Tour. Assist with local media invitations if desired.

Nov-Jan
2024

Schedule each Friendly Fam. Incorporate Friendly Fams into UPLIFT calendar.

Dec-Jan
2025

Hold webinars for Fam participants. Provide support as needed to DMOs.

Jan
2025

Attend & support all Friendly Fam Tours.

Feb 2025
& Beyond

PLANNING CHECKLIST

Below are several activities to help “get our hands around” what the Friendly Fam will encompass. In general, planning includes sketching out ideas for the Fam trip, checking with all relevant parties and community calendars, and reaching out to necessary vendors in anticipation of food, transportation, & other services and merchandise.

- ☐ Convene some colleagues/partners and brainstorm what might be included on your friendly Fam tour. Feel free to use UPLIFT itinerary tools at the link [here](#)
- ☐ Coordinate with your sites/businesses to find the optimal date, time and time frame of your Friendly Fam
- ☐ Cross check with community calendar to avoid conflicting events
- ☐ Check all sites are ready to host Fam tour visitors
- ☐ Determine the maximum number of participants that you can host on the tour (and if applicable a minimum)
- ☐ Compile a guest list including local officials, media, partners and residents
- ☐ Establish a final itinerary, being sure to include breaks and where applicable ‘rainy day’ alternatives
- ☐ Determine the food options; be sure to consider allergies and restrictions
- ☐ Coordinate transportation needs

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

The activities on this list move the planning along to implementation, building capacity of all the participants, and ensuring their confidence about executing the Fam trip day.

- ☐ Ensure each individual site is ready to host the Fam tour visitors and understand their role, logistics, etc. (see Appendix)
- ☐ Create RSVP with deadline and organizer's contact information; send to participating sites and to guest list (ask for social media handle of participants as well as contact info)
- ☐ Set scheduled email reminders to guests to RSVP before due date
- ☐ Offer any needed training or coaching to participating sites
- ☐ Ensure that site has a plan for restroom needs and that they are regularly serviced and supplied
- ☐ Determine accessibility and dietary needs are known for participants
- ☐ Determine site boundaries (i.e. where can visitors go, what they can touch, signage)
- ☐ Check you have the contact list for emergency and local contacts
- ☐ Create name tags, itineraries, and gift bags (local products) where applicable as well as a 'what to bring' list (e.g. hat, sunscreen, etc.)
- ☐ Assign a team member to social media efforts

PR CHECKLIST

Steps to increase the reach and impact of your FAM tour by highlighting the trip through local media and your social channels.

- ☐ Develop a brief communications plan, including how to organize the content (gathered by team or shared by partners), including filing system and a strategy for utilizing the content created
- ☐ Identify target local media and influencers for specific destinations
- ☐ Onsite social media/ content manager should be ready to take photos/videos during tour
- ☐ Put together local goodies and fun extras for each person to enjoy on their trip
- ☐ Compile all site contact information and other relevant information into one document that can be shared with participants
- ☐ Ensure that each destination is Fam-Tour-ready with exclusive access, photography/video opportunities, etc.
- ☐ Ensure you have the social media handles of all participating sites (and ideally participants)
- ☐ Monitor media coverage, be ready to share, respond, and track
- ☐ Prepare a feedback form for participants and sites

DAY OF CHECKLIST (HOST)

Below is a list of things for the coordinator to consider before the tour starts.

- ☐ Check the weather forecast and adjust schedule if needed
- ☐ Confirm all is a go with tour schedule (inform participants/sites if there are changes)
- ☐ Ensure any materials you will share with participants are ready (e.g. schedule, contact lists, brochures/maps of the county, etc.)
- ☐ Verify transport is on time and clean
- ☐ Ensure you have some spare water bottles and other needs (sunscreen, etc.)
- ☐ Confirm you have the contact list for emergency and local contacts
- ☐ Brief team and driver on roles, timing, and key site details

DAY OF CHECKLIST (HOST)

Below is a list of things for the coordinator to consider while running and concluding the tour.

Running the Tour

- ☐ Greet participants with name tags, itineraries, and gift bags (local products) where applicable
- ☐ Ensure participants are aware of meet-up points and timings at each stop
- ☐ Keep track of the number of people in your group (periodic head count)
- ☐ Ensure that a team member is taking photos/video for social media efforts
- ☐ Keep track of timing between stops
- ☐ Confirm lunch/snack breaks with local eateries (pre-arranged)

End of Tour

- ☐ Collect brief and immediate feedback from participants
- ☐ Thank participants, providing follow-up contacts if needed
- ☐ Share contacts of stops and businesses on the tour
- ☐ Collect feedback from sites that were on the tour
- ☐ Organize and upload social media content

DAY OF CHECKLIST (SITE)

Below is a list of things for the tour sites to consider before their tour.

Pre-Arrival

- ☐ Ensure your team is prepared before the tour arrives
- ☐ Inform the local host of any delays or issues

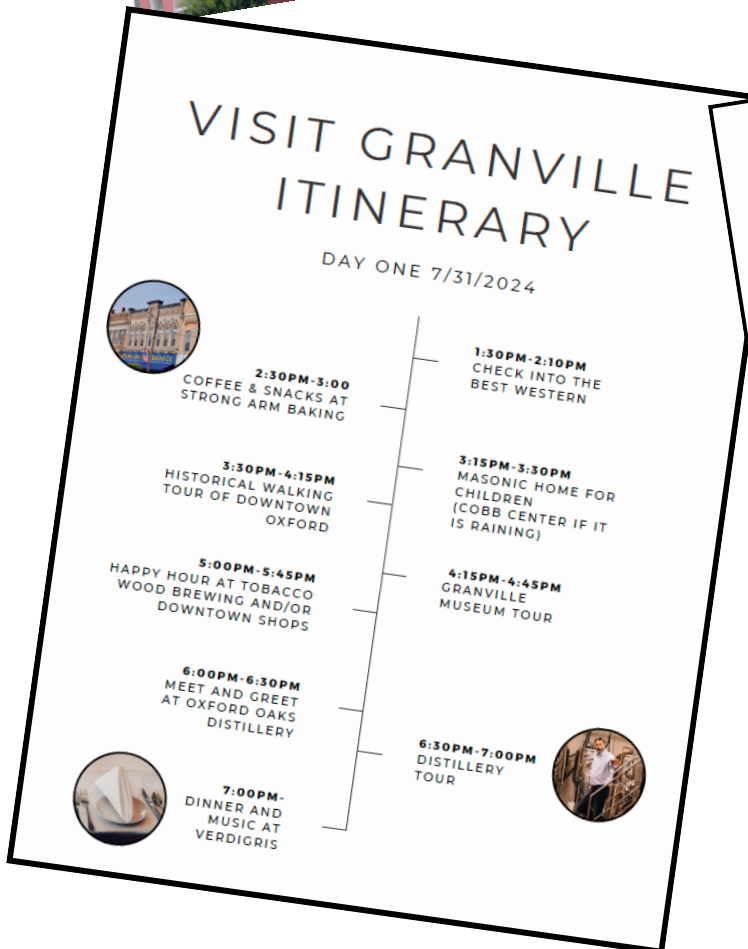
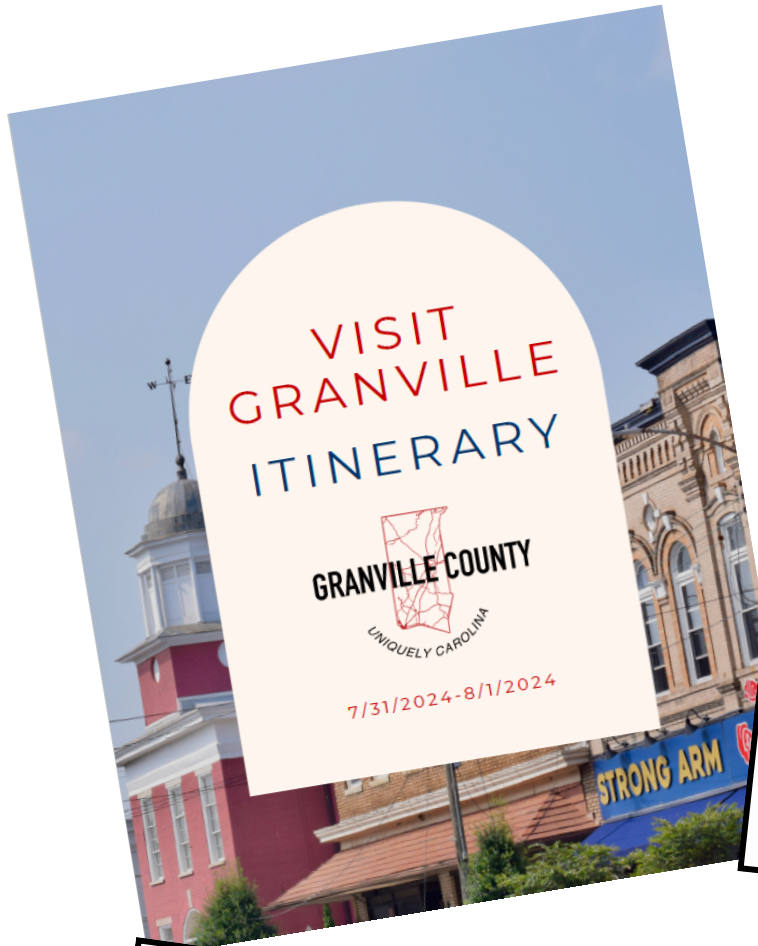
While Hosting

- ☐ Provide a brief introduction of your location and its significance to the county
- ☐ Keep track of available time and schedule
- ☐ Give a 5-minute warning before leaving each stop
- ☐ Conduct a quick headcount before moving to the next location (if applicable)
- ☐ Thank everyone who participated
- ☐ Ask participants to follow you on social media & share your contact information (social, website, phone, etc.)

Post-Stop

- ☐ Share any photos or videos collected with host
- ☐ Share, tag, and use any branded hashtags in your own post

EXAMPLE TOUR



NEXT STEPS

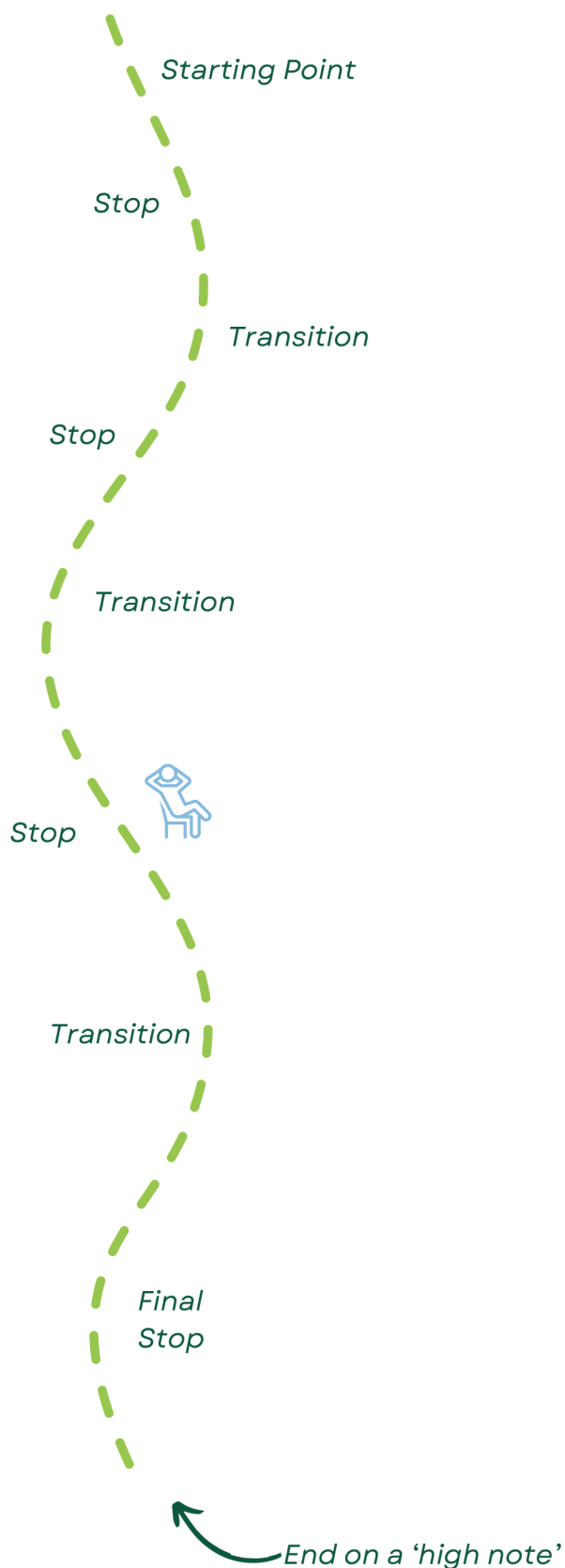
Once you are ready to put on a Friendly FAM tour, here are a couple of next steps:

- ☐ Contact UPLIFT if you have any questions or would like to work together to put on a 'Friendly Fam Tour'
- ☐ Talk with UPLIFT about your ideas for a 'Friendly Fam Tour' and we can brainstorm together
- ☐ Convene some colleagues/partners and brainstorm what might be included on your Friendly Fam Tour
- ☐ Refer to the 'Planning' checklist

APPENDICES



Building Your Itinerary



Starting & Stopping points

Where is each stop?
What do we do?
How long does it take?

Transitions

How do we move from A-B?
What can we do during that move?
How long does it take?

Wow: What are 1-2 highlights?

Rest: Where do people relax?

End: Whats the final 'high note'?



Itinerary Building Worksheet

Theme
(Inspiration & Story)

Target Market

Anchors
(1-2 sites that are the main reason people will come)

Itinerary Name:

Itinerary Length: 1/2 day Full day
(circle one) Multi day: _____ days
(use 1 worksheet/day)

Itinerary Components:
(each site/experience/activity is a 'stop')

Time for
each stop?

What Images represent this itinerary?

Who should be the contact?

Where does it start?

What should visitors bring?

SITE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Does your site legally exist, have the necessary licenses, permits, and insurance to operate?
- ☐ Does your site engage in some marketing efforts?
- ☐ Does your site have consistent, posted operating hours/seasons?
- ☐ Does your site have a plan for restroom needs? Are the restrooms regularly serviced and supplied?
- ☐ Do you maintain a basic website that is mobile responsive and/or social media listing with up to date information and contact information?
- ☐ Do you provide a visitor experience/service that is based on a defined geographic area, is time bound (know how long it takes), has safety systems in place, and tells a story for visitors?
- ☐ Does your staff have the capacity to lead the activity and can easily articulate what the experience is to visitors?
- ☐ Have you determined: Where can visitors go, where can they not go? Are these areas clearly marked? What can they touch? What can they not touch?
- ☐ Does your site provide a selection of seating or rest points at regular intervals internally and externally (if applicable to your operation). Are there areas to access shade?
- ☐ Is your site accessible to wheelchairs, mobility scooters, etc?

RSVP FORM

Sample RSVP questions

1. Please enter your full name.
2. What organization do you represent?
3. What is your current role or position?
4. Please provide your email address.
5. Please provide your phone number in case we need to contact you regarding trip details.
6. Preferred Mode of Communication: Phone, Email, Text, Other (please specify)
7. Do you have any dietary restrictions or allergies?
8. Do you have any physical restrictions or special accommodations we should be aware of?
9. Will you require transportation assistance?
10. What is your social media handle (Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.)?
11. Are you interested in sharing your experience from the trip on social media?
12. Do you have any other special requests or additional information you'd like us to know?

Feel free to share anything that will help us make this a great experience for you!

RSVP FORM

Please click our sample form below to view a list of questions that could be included in your RSVP form.

RSVP for Familiarization Trip

Welcome! Please fill out the form below to RSVP for our upcoming familiarization trip. This will help us tailor the experience to your needs. (Please make a copy of this form then make changes)

upliftnclocal@gmail.com [Switch account](#)



Not shared

* Indicates required question

Please enter your full name *

Your answer

Which county do you represent? *

Your answer

FEEDBACK FORM

Post-FAM trip sample feedback questions.

1. Full Name
2. Which county do you represent?
3. How would you rate your overall experience on the trip?
4. What did you enjoy most about the trip?
5. What aspect of the trip could be improved?
6. How was the communication before and during the trip?
7. Did the trip meet your expectations in showcasing rural tourism opportunities?
8. Were there any activities or locations you feel should be added or removed from future trips?
9. Did you find the accommodations (if any) comfortable?
10. How was the food and dining experience during the trip?
11. Did you feel the trip was well-organized?
12. Did the trip provide useful insights for promoting your county's tourism?
13. Would you participate in another familiarization trip?
14. Are you willing to share photos or social media posts from the trip with us?
15. Any additional comments or suggestions?

FEEDBACK FORM

Please click our sample form below to view a list of questions that could be included in your Feedback form.

Post-Trip Feedback for Familiarization Tour

Thank you for joining us on the familiarization trip! Your feedback is valuable and will help us improve future tours

upliftnclocal@gmail.com [Switch account](#)



Not shared

Please enter your full name

Your answer

Which county do you represent?

Your answer

How would you rate your overall experience on the trip?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Excellent