

TGAGNO Bylaws

As Amended 11/18/21

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Incorporated 5/7/93; Original Bylaws 4/1/85

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Tour Guides Association of Greater New Orleans is to represent, promote and protect the common interests of tour guides in the Greater New Orleans area by: 1. providing a forum through which members can continue their education and exchange information; 2. promoting private, public and governmental awareness locally of the tour guide's role, and 3. Establishing a channel of communications between tour guides and the tourism industry.

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Article I Name/Structure

1. The name of this association shall be Tour Guides Association of Greater New Orleans, Inc., hereafter known as "the Association." The Association was formed April 1, 1985.
2. The Association's rules & regulations will be known as "the Bylaws."
3. The Association is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization as defined by Louisiana and federal law.
4. The Association's calendar year is January 1 through December 31.

Article II Objectives

The objectives of the Association are:

1. To promote professionalism by providing a forum through which members can continue their education and exchange information.
2. To unite the tour guides of New Orleans in a responsive organization.
3. To establish a channel of communication between the Association and the tourism and hospitality industries.

Article III Membership

Full Membership is available to any tour guide who holds a current tour guide license issued by the city of New Orleans, subscribes to the objectives of the Association, and pays the annual dues. Only "full members" are eligible for elected or appointed office, and only full members shall have voting privileges.

Associate Membership is available to any individual interested in or associated with tourism who subscribes to the objectives of the Association and pays the annual dues.

Corporate Membership is available to any corporation that is presently in the tourism and hospitality industry, subscribes to the objectives of the Association, and pays annual dues. The corporate member may have two representatives in the Association.

Charter Membership is an honorary title given to the individuals who attended the first organizational meeting of the Association in March 1985. Their names are published annually in the Association's directory.

Guests may attend a maximum of two Association meetings or events in a calendar year (not counting the December meeting), after which they must apply for full or associate membership in the Association.

Article IV General Meetings

The general meetings of the Association are primarily educational forums and shall be held on the third Thursday of each month, with the exception of December. Members shall be notified of the date, time, location, and agenda for each meeting.

The Board can change the general meeting date to accommodate Association events, such as seminars and educational trips, and in exceptional circumstances. This change of date must be approved by a majority vote of the officers present at an Executive Board meeting.

Matters presented at meetings for approval shall be decided by a majority "yes" or "no" vote of the full members present. Officers will be elected biennially at the October general meeting

Article V Dues

The annual dues shall be fixed by the Executive Board. A two-thirds (2/3) vote is necessary by the Board to change the dues. Membership renewal applications will go out to all members in December, and dues shall be payable by December 1st of each year. Dues are non-refundable.

Only the names of the members whose dues have been received by February 28 will appear in the Association's directory. Those joining the Association as new members after August 1st will pay half dues for the remainder of the year.

Article VI Officers

There are nine (9) elected officers, enumerated below, in the Association. The term of office shall be for a period of two (2) years. Except for the Treasurer, no officer may serve two (2) consecutive terms in the same office.

Each officer shall update and maintain a notebook or binder that describes the role of the office held, chronicles Association activities taken in office, and notes suggestions, changes, or other important information regarding that role.

Each officer is responsible for providing quarterly reports to be published in the Association's official newsletter.

1. PRESIDENT

The President shall preside over and maintain order at all official gatherings of the Association. He/she shall assure that all meetings start and end on time. The President shall promote and safeguard the aims and purposes of the Association and shall be active in the tourism and hospitality industry of the community.

The President shall appoint all committees not otherwise provided for in the Bylaws and may appoint individuals as necessary to represent the Association at tourist-related functions. The President shall be an ex-officio member on all committees with the exception of the Nominating Committee.

The President may vote in the general election. However, at Executive Board meetings, the President may vote only to break a tie.

In January following the biannual election of officers, the new President will host a transitional meeting of the new Executive Board and the out-going Board. At that meeting, the outgoing officers will review their respective roles with the new officers and will turn over all important papers of the Association, including the officer notebooks/binders.

2. FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

The First Vice-President shall function as Parliamentarian. He/she should be thoroughly familiar with the Bylaws and any other rules of the Association and serves as final authority on interpretation of the Bylaws. The First Vice-President will be chairperson of the Bylaws committee and will follow procedures of Article XII for amendments to the Bylaws. He/she is responsible for reporting any changes in Bylaws for publication in the Association's official newsletter.

The First Vice-President will be responsible for planning the officer installation meeting in December. He/she is also responsible for planning an annual educational trip. The First Vice-President should coordinate and cooperate, when possible, with the Standards and Education Coordinator and the Second Vice President in the promotion of educational endeavors.

3. SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

The Second Vice-President shall be the Program chairperson and will be responsible for all planning, scheduling, and location of educational programs to be presented at the monthly general membership meetings, except the December meeting. He/she will coordinate hospitality, food and entertainment, etc., for the monthly meetings.

He/she is also responsible for giving to the Corresponding Secretary/Administrative Assistant, well in advance, all information concerning each general meeting so notice can go out to members.

The Second Vice-President should coordinate and cooperate, when possible, with the Standards and Education Coordinator and the First Vice President in the promotion of educational endeavors.

4. TREASURER

The Treasurer is entrusted with the custody of the Association's funds. All monies taken in by the Association must be directed to the Treasurer and designated to the appropriate category. The Treasurer is required to give a written report to the Executive Board each month on the income, expense, and balance in the accounts of the Association.

The Treasurer is required to follow the budget given to him/her at the beginning of the year (see Article XIV). Upon reasonable request, the records of the Treasurer will be made available for review by members.

The Treasurer is responsible for submitting the Federal IRS (Form 990), the State Annual Report, and any other regulatory reports that may be required by their respective due dates.

5. RECORDING SECRETARY

The Recording Secretary shall record and maintain the minutes of the Executive Board meetings and the General Membership Meetings. He/she must submit to the Board written minutes of each meeting for approval with corrections and omissions as needed.

The Recording Secretary shall be custodian of all appropriate papers and non-financial records of the Association. An appropriate paper is any paper written or received by any officer or member concerning Association matters. Following the biannual January transitional meeting, the outgoing and new recording secretaries may note the contents of and cull the appropriate papers and nonfinancial records.

The Recording Secretary is responsible for reporting to the general membership all nonrecurring motions (excludes minutes, treasurers report, etc.) approved by the Board.

6. CORRESPONDING SECRETARY/ ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Corresponding Secretary/Administrative Assistant shall assist the Executive Board and Committee Chairpersons in correspondence of all matters. He/she is to write all official correspondence of the Association and shall file copies with the Recording Secretary.

The Corresponding Secretary/Administrative Assistant will produce and send the monthly membership meeting notifications in accordance with Article XIII.

In October/November the Corresponding Secretary/Administrative Assistant shall send Membership Renewal Applications to all members.

He/she shall also be in charge of awards, gifts, and memorials.

7. MEMBERSHIP REGISTRAR

The Membership Registrar shall promote new and renewal membership through writings, phone calls, and other means approved by the Executive Board. He/she shall keep a record of all new and renewing members, their membership classifications, their payment of dues, and for full members, confirm that their Tour Guide licenses are current. He/she is responsible for updating the membership database to reflect all changes and for the printing of the Association's annual directory in April.

The Membership Registrar will record the attendance of members and guests at each general meeting. The Registrar shall inform the Recording Secretary of the number of members and guests in attendance. He/she also will introduce new members and acknowledge guests at the general membership meetings.

In November, the Membership Registrar shall provide to the Corresponding Secretary/Administrative Assistant any changes to the new/renewal membership application.

8. STANDARDS AND EDUCATION COORDINATOR

The Standards and Education Coordinator shall promote the professional and ethical standards of the Association through continuous educational programs. He/she should coordinate and cooperate, when possible, with the First and Second Vice Presidents in the promotion of educational endeavors.

The Standards and Education Coordinator shall plan an annual seminar, in accordance with the mission of the Association, to promote a higher degree of professionalism for all members.

The Standards and Education Coordinator is responsible for the Continuing Education Program (CEP) (see Article XV) and will maintain members' CEP records.

9. NEWSLETTER EDITOR

The Newsletter Editor shall prepare, publish, and send the newsletter, called "Guidelines." The primary function of the newsletter is to inform and educate the Association's members. The Guidelines shall be published in March, June, September, and December. The Editor may solicit members to write articles on upcoming events, meetings, seminars, tours, historical pieces, and activities of the tourism and hospitality industry.

Article VII Executive Board

The Executive Board of the Association, "the Board," shall consist of the nine (9) elected officers enumerated above. The Board shall have general supervision of the affairs of the Association; fix the hour, place, and agenda of meetings; make recommendations to the Association; and perform such other duties as specified in the Bylaws.

The Board shall meet monthly at an established time and place. Board meetings may be held by conference call or other electronic means. The President may call an emergency meeting of the Board and must notify all Board members of the time, place, and purpose of such meeting.

The President will preside over all Board meetings and will vote only to break a tie. If the President for any reason vacates the chair or is absent, the First Vice-President presides, and in his/her absence, the chain of command follows in the order of officers listed above.

Any business transacted at a Board meeting will require approval of a simple majority of those in attendance. Attendance by five Board members shall constitute a quorum. Without a quorum, the Board cannot take any action (i.e., entertain or vote on motions), even with a unanimous vote of those who are present.

If a Board member resigns for any reason, a letter of resignation to the Board is required. The Board shall be empowered to request the resignation of any Board member considered in dereliction of his/her duties. A Board member who resigns, regardless of the reason, is prohibited from running for the same office at the expiry of the term.

In the event of vacancy from office of any Board member, the un-expired term will be filled by a vote of the Board. The replacement officer shall complete the unexpired term of office. If a replacement cannot be found, the duties of that position will be reassigned to existing board members.

Unexpired terms: with regard to election/reelection of officers, if the unexpired term is less than one year, it will not count as a full term in office. If the unexpired term is more than one year, it will count as a full term in office

Article VIII Committees

The Association has three types of committees: Special (Ad Hoc), Support, and Nomination.

The President is by reason of office ("ex officio") a member of all Special and Support committees and has the same rights as other committee members. He/She must be notified of all meetings of such committees but is not obligated to attend committee meetings. Regardless of the President's attendance, the committee chairperson is in full charge of his/her committee's meetings.

1. SPECIAL COMMITTEE or "AD HOC"

The President appoints special committees; such as hospitality, city hall liaison, audit, historian, research, insurance, community services, public relations, book discussion, and any other committees deemed necessary. These committee members will be appointed by the President from the general membership and will be assigned a specific task. These committees will cease to exist, when the task is complete and findings are reported to the President.

2. SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Each Executive Board Member may appoint a committee from the general membership to assist in carrying out and performing their responsibilities. The Chairperson shall report to the Board on committee activities. Examples of these committees would be the following:

<u>COMMITTEE</u>	<u>CHAIRPERSON</u>
Bylaws	1st Vice President
Program	2nd Vice President
Newsletter	Newsletter Editor
Membership	Membership Registrar
Education	Standards and Education Coordinator

3. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

A Nominating Committee of not less than three (3) and no more than five (5) full members will be selected by the general membership to organize the election of Officers. (See Article IX for the functions and duties of this committee.)

Biannually, prior to the August membership meeting, the Executive Board shall solicit from members nominations for the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall be selected no later than the August membership meeting by a majority vote of the full members in attendance. If ballot votes are required, the ballots will be counted by 3 members of the Executive Board.

Article IX Nominating Committee

1. Function and Duties

Once the Nominating Committee is selected, its members will select who will act as chairperson. This committee is self-governing but must abide by the Bylaws of the Association. If a Nominating Committee member is derelict in his/her duties, the Nominating Committee Chairperson shall replace him/her if necessary to maintain the requisite minimum number of committee members.

The Nominating Committee is responsible for soliciting nominees for each Executive Board office and for submitting to the current Executive Board and to the membership qualified full-member nominees for each office. The Executive Board, as well as any full member present, may submit qualified names for nomination, but the Nominating Committee makes the final decision on nominees and qualifications. The Nominating Committee does not have to justify its reason for nomination.

A Nominating Committee member shall be ineligible to be a candidate for any board position for the upcoming term. Any Nominating Committee member who chooses to run for elected office must resign from the Nominating Committee prior to submission of the slate to the Executive Board in September.

2. Timeline

a. September EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING: The Nominating Committee shall submit the slate of candidates to the Executive Board. The Board shall present the Nominating Committee's slate of candidates to members at the September membership meeting.

b. October GENERAL MEETING: The election of officers will take place at the beginning of the October general meeting. Nominations may be accepted from the floor with approval by the nominee. No current Nominating Committee member may accept such nomination.

Article X Election and Installation

a. Election

The President will call for a vote in accordance with the Nominating Committee's instructions. Candidates without opposition will be declared elected by acclamation.

If there is more than one candidate for any office, the Nominating Committee may, at its discretion, elect to use a show of hands or ballot method of voting. Officers will be elected by a majority vote of full members present at the October meeting.

If the election is by ballot, there must be three tabulators: two Nominating Committee members and one Executive Board member appointed by the President. The Nominating Committee Chairperson must save any ballots for 30 days, in case of any discrepancy.

The President will announce the winners and call up all officers for recognition.

b. Installation of Officers

A formal installation ceremony will take place at the December meeting. The outgoing President may choose an Installation Officer to perform the ceremony.

The Installation Officer will present the outgoing President with the Presidential pin and then proceed with the Installation in reverse order ending with the new President.

Article XI Use of Association Property

No member of the Association may use any property, title of the Association, the logo, or the title of the organization's newsletter without the expressed agreement of the Board for the specified purpose.

Article XII Bylaws Amendments

The First Vice President will form a Bylaws committee when the Board deems it necessary. After the Bylaws committee agrees on proposed amendments, the amendments must be submitted to the Board for corrections or deletions and for approval.

Approved amendments shall be mailed to all full members at least thirty days before the General meeting. All amendments will be presented at the General meeting for approval and final ratification by majority "yes" or "no" vote of full members in attendance.

The Bylaws shall be published annually in the Association's Directory.

Article XIII Notices/Communications

All notices/communications will be provided to the membership via the USPS and via current tools/technology for communicating information. Members may opt out of USPS notices/communications by informing the corresponding secretary in writing.

Article XIV Budget

The Treasurer must create a new budget each year, which must be approved by the Board no later than the March board meeting. The budget shall be based on the previous year's income and expenses, adjusted for any extraordinary items that may have impacted the prior year's income and expenses. The Treasurer shall present this budget, together with the final financial report for the prior year, no later than the March general membership meeting.

Throughout the year, at the Treasurer's recommendation, the Board may amend the budget to match actual income or expenses. In addition, the Board may instruct the Treasurer to transfer unexpended funds among expense categories as necessary to manage the Association's activities.

Any changes in budget that would result in a reduction in budgeted income insufficient to meet expenses must be presented to the members. If a budget change results in a reduction of budgeted income insufficient to meet expenses by more than \$2,500, the new budget must be presented at a general meeting for approval.

If the Board should incur expenses of \$2,500 or more, this will be presented to the membership for approval. If the expense is less than \$2,500, only Board approval is needed.

Budgets for Association-sponsored events and other activities that are funded through participation fees (e.g., annual seminar, annual trip) will be developed by the event chairperson and Treasurer and submitted to the Board for approval.

Ways and means employed to raise funds for the Association shall be approved in advance by the Board as consistent with the Association's missions and tax-exempt purposes. The President will assign a Board member to manage the designated project activities, which are specific and finite. That Board member may enlist volunteers from the Board and/or general membership to help as needed.

The Executive Board shall schedule biannual audits of the Association's books and Treasurer's records by a neutral auditor or accountant.

Article XV Continuing Education Program

The purpose of the Continuing Education Program (CEP) is to offer an incentive to further the education and knowledge base of all categories of members in the areas relevant to our roles in the tourism industry. Participation in the CEP program is voluntary, and submissions are evaluated annually.

Each participating member must keep a record, with documentation of attendance, of lectures (and other related programs) attended. A minimum goal of 15 credits is required to qualify for a CEP recognition pin (for first qualifying year) or bar (for subsequent years). Qualifying members will be recognized at the December meeting.

In October of the current year, the Corresponding Secretary/Administrative Assistant will provide the membership with CEP reporting forms for the next calendar year (credits for November's general meeting attendance and other programs attended from November 1– December 31 may be included on the next year's form).

The deadline for submission of CEP forms is October 31 for consideration in the current year. Forms will be submitted to the Standards and Education Coordinator. Credits will be determined and each member will be notified of his/her credits earned.

Credit values are subject to change with Executive Board approval. Such changes will be announced and implemented for the new CEP year.

Examples of Credit Values

- TGAGNOI general meeting attendance (1 credit)
- TGAGNOI seminar attendance (6 credits)
- TGAGNOI trip attendance (6 credits)
- Attendance at lectures and other programs sponsored by CEP approved list (1 or more credits)
- Attendance at other relevant lectures and programs (TBD by Standards and Education Coordinator)

Handbook for Beginning Guides

Welcome to the Tour Guides Association of Greater New Orleans (TGAGNO). Our organization was basically founded as an educational association and serves as a liaison between professional tour guides and the tourism industry.

Our association offer it members the following:

1. Monthly meetings with guest speakers
2. Quarterly newsletter
3. Association sponsored field trips
4. An annual summer educational seminar
5. Book reviews
6. Networking
7. Continuing education programs (CEP)
8. Website
9. Optional liability insurance

NOW THAT YOU HAVE YOUR LICENSE, WHAT'S NEXT?

In most cases, new guides have taken the tour guide class from Delgado. If you have not, then you should consider it. It is a good overview of the field and includes the basics of walking tours, motor coach tours, and plantation tours.

The next option, and one we really recommend, is to join the Friends of the Cabildo. They offer a superb training class primarily dealing with the walking tours of the Vieux Carre. In return for this, you volunteer your services to them for 2 ears giving walking tours. Talk about experience.

The next step is to spend your money and take every tour you can imagine to familiarize yourself with all types of tours available. When visiting these venues, collect brochures and begin a file for future reference.

Assuming you took a class, then you have probably received a recommended book list. Begin reading and continue to READ, READ, READ! Generally, all the titles are available in the library. However, at some point you will want to build up your own reference library. Often venue gift shops, as well as the 1850 House are good sources for related topics.

Now that you have the information in your head, it's time to star learning the routes (walking, city, and plantation). Record your tour until you get "it down pat." Don't try to memorize it – just understand it. Take your family and friend along after a while a guinea pigs.

Then and only then, are you ready to knock on door and say "I'm a beginning tour guide looking for work." There are many who erroneously believe if you're a native, you can just get on a bus and "wing it!" Don't try this – you will be found out and your touring days will be numbered.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Tourists are our guests. We are ambassadors of our city and state. Remember – always be positive! First impressions are important. You need to be sincere and enthusiastic; if you're not, you're in the wrong profession. Experienced guide will tell you hat even though they've done the same tour hundreds of times, it's still fun!

Make sure to establish eye contact with everyone whether on foot or motor coach. Ask your group if they can year you. Project your voice using your diaphragm. You need to be aware of the rat at which you speak. Senior citizens often have hearing aids which makes a fate of rate of speech difficult to understand.

Under no circumstances should you smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, chew gum, or wear dark sunglasses while on tour.

Many companies require uniforms, usually navy or black suits (pants are acceptable for women). Also, several companies have summer uniforms of khaki. You'll need to check with the individual companies. Keep jewelry to a minimum. Remember that you are the company's representative.

A tour guide is a story teller, not a lecturer. It's the stories most often remembered, not the facts, dates, etc. Your goal is to try to weave the two together, not the facts, dates, etc. Your goal is to try and weave the two together. When telling a story, try not to interpret it in the middle; but if you must, then pick it up again with a statement such as "as I was saying..." etc.

Timing is an important element in giving any tour. Of course, this is much easier to control on foot than on the motor coach. On the coach, your goal is to complete the description jut a you arrive at the point of interest.

THIS IS SOMETHING THAT WILL COME WITH TIME.

Upon completing a tour, the guests will often ask the guide for suggestions – what to do, where to go, places to eat. So, familiarize yourself with this type of information. It is extremely helpful to keep a small alphabetized binder or some such thing, with names, addresses, phone number, day and hours of operation, and prices. (Most of this information is readily available online and in tourist magazines like Visitor, and the like.)

SO, WHAT'S OUT THERE FOR ME TO DO?

There are all kind of opportunities. We'll take you through the various types of tours you can be called upon to give. Following that, there are non-tour related jobs as well as business advice. No matter what kind of job, remember PRACTICE.

ACCEPTING THE JOB

You will probably receive your paperwork by email from the DMC (Destination Management Company). Review is carefully. If possible, try to fun out what kind of group it is. That way you'll be able to include special points of interest that would be of particular interest to the group. They will appreciate the effort.

If something unforeseen should occur and you must cancel the job, immediately call the company. Ask them if they would like for you to find a replacement. Some will, others will not. You NEVER want to cancel a job because something better comes along (although it is very tempting sometimes.) This could come back to haunt you.

On the morning of the tour, it is a good idea to check the newspaper to see what's going on in town that day that could possibly affect your route (i.e., 5K races can completely close off street necessitating your taking entirely different routes.) This is why you must know the city backwards and forwards.

Arrive on time. Generally, on your paperwork there will be a report time (sometimes called a spot time). This is always at least 15 minutes, but more often 30 minutes before the time the tour begins. You are not paid for this period, but it is a very important time to do the following: 1) in many cases, meet the representative of the DMC to discuss any last-minute change of plans, etc. and 2) meet your driver and discuss the itinerary.

You will need to have a generic name tag. In many cases the DMC will provide them.

THE WALKING TOUR

A walking tour is a unique three-dimensional tour. There is time for observation and for noting details, a luxury not available on the motor coach.

In many cases, when a company hires you, you will be given an itinerary. You need to read it carefully. Plan in your mind how you will do it and what route you will take. When you're first beginning, practice walking it many times. Often there will be specific times that you are go bring the group to different venues (ex., Hermann-Grima House at 10:00am, Ursuline Convent at 11:30am, etc.) You've got to know how you're going to get them there on time. Again, PRACTICE!

Quite often, particularly with conventions, there will be several groups going to these venues, each having their own time schedule. It is critical that you stick to your schedule.

Try not to deviate from your description. Confer with your fellow tour guides so that all are following the same basic plan. The reason for not deviating from a route is that the client wants all groups to have the same experiences.

So, you're beginning the tour: Gather the group around you and introduce yourself. Be energetic and enthusiastic. The first few minutes often set the tone for the entire tour.

Tell them what you're going to do. Remind them to stay with you. If for some reason they need to leave the group, make sure they let you know. You definitely need to make them aware of safety issues: traffic lights, right of way, sidewalk obstructions, etc.

This needs to be etched in stone – **GET A COUNT!**

As you walk along, keep in mind your pace. Obviously, you have to modify your pace to fit the needs of the group.

When you get to a point of interest, wait for the group to assemble around you. Always position your group with their backs to the sun whenever possible.

Make sure they can hear you. If a question is asked, make sure you repeat the question to the entire group before answering. Never walk and talk at the same time. People in the back will never hear you.

Ask your group to respect the residents of the neighborhood and their property. Equally important, do not block doorways to businesses or sidewalks for pedestrians.

In some cases, a group may have free time to shop, etc. Make sure they know when and where they are to meet you. **COUNT AND RECOUNT!**

THE MOTOR COACH TOUR

Begin this experience with the considerations as discussed in the walking tour. You need to know the city regulations for buses – where they can go and can't go, where to park and not to park. Don't ever assume a local driver knows the route. They may be brand new and say that they do know all these things, but in reality, they do not.

Also, remember that on many occasions, you will have an out-of-town driver who hasn't a clue. You are his road map and keeper of the rules (including the speed limits).

If, at some point, you will be leaving the bus and will rejoin it later; it's a **MUST** to get the cell phone number of the driver and/or dispatcher's phone number in the event you need to contact him.

After introducing yourself to the driver and discussing the itinerary, etc., board the bus and reserve the aisle seat behind the driver for you use your discretion whether to sit or stand. Test the microphone to see if it is working (don't assume that it is) and if the volume level needs adjusting. It is very helpful to carry rubber bands with you. Those thick broccoli bands are great so you don't have to concentrate on keeping the tab depressed for three hours talk about tired fingers.

As the guests begin to board the bus, you will sometimes be collecting tickets. Here's a helpful hint – as you count to 10 put the tickets in between your pinky and ring finger the next 10 between the next two fingers and so on that way it will be relatively easy for you to give a quick count. Note that before beginning the tour, get an actual body count. Some guides count bodies, other count empty seats. Do what works for you.

Now you are ready to begin. First and foremost, introduce your driver – he/she can make or break your tour! You are a team? It is really nice and appreciated if you include your driver in your narration, if possible. Most drivers will be listening to your tour, and you can provide directions by saying things such as “as the end of this block, Lionel will be turning to the right...” When giving visual directions while facing the passengers, remember your right is their left and vice versa.

When arriving at the destination, make sure the driver knows what's going on, how long you'll be there, when you'll be back, what to do with the bus, and if necessary, where to park the bus.

Likewise, before getting off the bus, make sure the group knows these same things including the bus number. For example, at the Café du Monde stop in City Park, there may be several buses that all look alike.

Before resuming the tour **COUNT** again!

In some instances, there will be a group leader on the bus with whom you'll need to discuss the itinerary. Quite often the itineraries will change – so prepare to “go with the flow.” Make sure you're on the same page, including that the entire group has the same time, according to your watch.

At the conclusion of the tour, ask everyone to check seats and overhead compartments, and thank the group, the leader, and the driver. When you act as a step-on guide for a group, the group leader may have an envelope for you. This is yours. Do not split it with the out-of-town driver.

It is customary that the guides and local drivers split tips down the middle. Do not try to cheat the driver; you will get a bad reputation.

ON-SITE TOURS

On site tours are venues to be visited where you will be turning your group over to a docent who will conduct a tour of the house, plantation, etc. It is a good idea for you to bring up the rear in these situations.

Again, the obvious, before disembarking the coach, make sure everyone (including the driver) is aware of the time to return, bus number, etc.

Upon meeting the docent, make her/him aware of your time frame. You will need to factor into this the restroom and the gift shop. As discussed earlier, you will have already visited the venue in your preparation period and are aware of the restroom locations, etc.

Unfortunately, at times problems come up that will make you late for an appointed time. If you encounter this situation, immediately call the venue and inform them (hence the reason that it is important to know the phone numbers of the places you're going to visit.) Likewise, it is also important that you do not arrive too early.

STUDENT GROUPS

Generally, around Sugar Bowl and in the spring, there will be large number of high school students in town. You will need to be prepared to modify your tour presentation. High school students obviously have different interests than adult groups. Whatever you do, **DO NOT TALK DOWN TO THE GROUP!**

Frequently there are students who many not be interested and begin to talk. This, of course, is extremely distracting to you and to those who are interested. You are going to have to figure out a way to “set them straight.” Talk to experienced guides to see how they do it. Whatever approach you take, you have to feel comfortable doing it.

If you should be leaving the bus area for a walk or whatever, make sure the chaperones know they are to bring up the rear and ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR GROUP. (This sounds ridiculous but sometimes the chaperones are worse than the students.)

Of course, the usual information about time, etc. needs to be made clear not only with the chaperones but with the students as well. Remember to talk to the whole group – not just to one or two as you walk around.

NON-SIGHTSEEING OPPORTUNITIES

Often, you can get your “feet wet” by working jobs other than being a guide. This is a good way for companies to get to know you and develop a sense of your commitment and professionalism. Such avenues for experience include those listed below. Each company has its own procedures for these different jobs. When in doubt, ask the company or call an experienced guide.

- Meet and greet – meeting groups and the airport, checking them off as they arrive, and bringing them to the awaiting motor coach.
- Hospitality desks – greet, inform, and in some cases, sell tours.
- Registration desks – register conference delegates
- Dine around – escort groups to restaurants

THE BUSINESS END OF OUR BUSINESS

As tour guides, we are generally contract workers which means we are “self-employed.” This has good points as well as bad. On the positive side, almost everything is tax-deductible: uniforms, cleaning, mileage to and from work, books, newspapers, parking, tour guide license, membership in related organizations, cell phones, office equipment, and other expenses related to the job. So, keep receipts and records. Of course, you will have to check with your tax professional to see how this applies to you. On the negative side, since no taxes are taken out of your checks, you generally have to report quarterly. Again, check with your tax professional.

Also, and this is very important, since you are an independent contractor, you can be used for injuries sustained by people on your tours. That is why it is critical that you consider taking out an insurance policy to protect yourself. Your homeowner’s generally does not cover you – again, check with a professional. Check with TGAGNOI for further information about coverage and the limitations of our policy.

You will definitely want to have business cards printed. It is flattering when a company is so pleased with you that they want to use you again. But it must be made clear that your booking must be through the DMC who originally hired you. It is unprofessional to do otherwise.

CONCLUSION

When you receive your directory, check the names of the officers. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to call any of them. When you come to the first meeting, make sure that you tell the person checking you in that you are new to our organization. We look forward to you joining our ranks.

Happy Touring!