

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF TOURIST GUIDE**

### **PART 1**

#### **HELLO VIEWERS**

A tour guide is a person who plays a significant role in promoting attractions, culture and tradition of a destination. He is in the frontline when it comes to providing needed services to the tourists apart from just guiding at the attractions. Friends, I welcome you to the episode on roles and responsibilities of tourist guide in making such promotions. For better understanding, this episode is divided into five parts;

- Meaning of tour guide
- Categories of tourist guides in India
- Types of tourist guides
- Need for tourist guide training
- Guiding at various tourist attractions

Let us understand the meaning of tourist guide;

#### **MEANING OF TOUR GUIDE**

A Tour guide is a multi tasking individual and a professional who represents all the people living in the country, reflecting the attitudes, traditions and ideas they hold. They are the only liaison between the tourism companies, tourism transportation companies, restaurants, hotels and other tourism facilities and the tourist. Tour guides are the persons who spend most of the time with the tourist and consequently, they are to understand the specific needs of tourists, work to fulfill these needs combined with the ability to present the different issues in an interesting manner for tourists.

#### ***Definitions:***

World Federation of Tourist Guide Association defined a tourist guide as, “A person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and/or recognized by the appropriate authority”.

In the words of Kathleen Lingle Pond, “A tourist guide is in varying degrees a business person - often freelance, sometimes employee; a travel industry representative; a public relations representative for his or her site, city, region, and country - as well as an educator, an entertainer, and a public speaker, among other roles”.

#### **PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF TOURIST GUIDES AS PER WORLD FEDERATION OF TOURIST GUIDE ASSOCIATIONS**

- To provide a professional service to visitors, professional in care and commitment, and professional in providing an objective understanding of the place visited, free from prejudice or propaganda.

- To ensure that as far as possible what is presented as fact is true, and that a clear distinction is made between this truth and stories, legends, traditions, or opinions.
- To act fairly and reasonable in all dealings with all those who engage the services of guides and with colleagues working in all aspects of tourism.
- To protect the reputation of tourism in the country by making every endeavor to ensure that guided groups treat with respect the environment, wildlife, sights and monuments, and also local customs and sensitivities.
- As representatives of the host country to welcome visitors and act in such a way as to bring credit to the country visited and promotes it as a tourist destination.

## **PART 2**

### **CATEGORIES OF TOURIST GUIDES IN INDIA**

The tourist guides can be divided into three different categories:

- 'A' Class Tourist Guide
- 'B' Class Tourist Guide
- 'C' Class Tourist Guide

The Department of Tourism and its tourist offices select 'A' grade tourist guides according to their requirement. At present graduates having history as one of their subjects in the degree course and the knowledge of one or more modern foreign languages are preferred. Candidates selected have to undergo three months training. During this period, they are told about the followings:

1. Indian monuments, their origin, history and other features
2. Classification of hotels and other features of hotel industry
3. Functioning and running of travel industry.
4. Special features on Indian customs and costumes; social ethics, brief history of India.
5. Economic development in various segments after Independence.
6. Wildlife sanctuaries
7. Classical folk dances . ,
8. Tourist formalities for disembarkation in India
9. Passport as one of their subjects in the degree course and the knowledge of one or more modern foreign languages are preferred
10. Functioning and visa
11. Customs regulations
12. Mode of transport
13. Air travel and IATA regulations
14. Sea and rail travel
15. Special concessions for tourists
16. Indian food and beverages.

The candidates are taken around the tourist monuments, local, sightseeing and excursion to nearby places. In addition, documentation on slides is used to acquaint them about the far off places of tourist interest.

On successful completion of three months training, candidates have to appear in an examination. Those who qualify the examination are kept on permanent panel of approved guides. They are awarded certificates and issued identity cards and badges. Every tourist guide must carry the cards and badge at the time of conducting the sightseeing.

The Department of Tourism also organizes three weeks refresher courses for approved guides and information assistants through its field offices in India. There are facilities for language courses for the approved guides.

Grade 'B' and 'C' guides are approved by the Department of Archaeology, Government of India. These guides are stationed at the monuments. They are authorized in the limited area or in a particular monument or a few monuments situated in the vicinity. They are not allowed to take the tourists around the country.

### **PART 3**

#### **TYPES OF TOURIST GUIDES**

Tourist guides are categorized on the basis of the nature of Tourist place they guide about. E.g. Anna, who is a guide at the WHS Sun temple at Konark, gives information of the art and architecture of the temples; hence she is an Architecture Guide, similarly a guide found at a Kaziranga National Park, who gives information on the wildlife present in the park, is a Forest / Wilderness Guide Similarly we have the below classifications

Classification of Guides on the basis of the nature of the tourist destination

1. Heritage: The guides of these destinations are;

- a. History guide: One who gives information of the past, moreover found at Palaces, Forts, Museums, Battlefields, Tombs / Mausoleums, Temples, Churches etc
- b. Archeological guide: One who gives information on the ancient civilizations and the bygone era, found at museums and archeological sites like the Giza Pyramid s, Harappa & Mohenjo-Daro, Nalanda University, Machu Picchu etc.
- c. Architecture Guide: One who gives information of the art and construction strategy of the monuments and masterpieces from the past, found especially outside Temples, Palaces, Tombs / Mausoleums, Towers etc.

2. Cultural Guide: culture guide is the one who gives information on the lifestyle pattern on the native society of that particular Tourist destination. They are further classified as;

- a. Cuisine Guide: One who gives information on the Agriculture, cultivation, and staple diet of a place, delicacies of that region and where to eat what and when. He /she takes the guest

around the city making them taste specialties prepared at different food shops and restaurants. Places visited are Farms, Restaurants, Sweet Shops, Chocolate Factory, Cheese Factory, Vineyards, Orchards etc

b. Religious Guide / Temple Guide / Pilgrim Guide: One who gives information on the religion, gods & goddesses, mythology, traditions, rituals etc, such guides are hired especially during festival times, they are found at temples, and other shrines

3. Adventure Guide: The persons involving in guiding adventure based tourism activities are called as adventure guides. They can be;

- Mountaineering Guide
- Trekking Guide
- Skiing Guide
- Surfing Guide
- Scuba Diving / Snorkeling Guide

4. Forest / Wilderness Guide: These guides are well versed with the wildlife of a particular region. They are also classified as;

- Hunting Guide
- Safari Guide

5. Coach Guide

- City Tour Guide

6. Nature Guide

- Desert Guide
- Hill Station Guide
- Botanical Garden Guide

7. Special Interest Guide

- Cruise Guide
- Golf Guide
- Shopping Guide
- Hotel Guide
- Wedding Guide etc

Considering the above factors, we find that to be a perfect guide one need to have broad range of knowledge, understanding and insights in order to discourse and answer questions on all

possible tours. For example, a group of farmers from Spain visiting India were to tour a number of the best dairy farms in Southern India. It was impossible to locate a Spanish speaking guide with a wide knowledge of the methods and terms associated with animal husbandry.

This leads to the conclusion that there is a need for two categories of guides—general and specialized one. The general category includes such tours as town visits while the specialized one would cover visits to archaeological or historical sites requiring much particularized knowledge. Specialized guides should also be needed for such visits as industrial centres, factories, farms, educational institutions, and health facilities.

General tours are of two types—it is either standard or custom built. The standard tour is designed and advertised and can be purchased by any one. On a custom built tour the tour leader is consulted before hand about the composition of his group, the background of his members, types of interest, level of education and so on. A tour is then put together to meet the specific needs of the group and the tour guide chosen can be briefed accordingly.

For the general tour which is a specific type, specific programmes and dialogues can be developed. This creates the means for better quality control over the product which the tourist buys. The programme for tours should be searched and standardized according to the best sequence of visits and other factors. Standard dialogues for the visits, in different languages, can be prepared, but they would not be intended to eliminate the guide's creativity and personal touch. Every guide will develop his/her own particular style and delivery but the tour will remain essentially the same. Well developed and standardized tours also make the training of guides very straightforward.

In preparing programmes and dialogues for tours, the principle of the general and specific should be followed. For example, it can be confusing to the listener when an isolated event in history is described without first of all giving the broad historical context in which the event took place.

When the comprehension of different languages is mixed within one group it may create a guiding problem. If, for example, there is a need for a commentary in three languages it is very testing for the guide. It also involves a lot of lost time. Every effort should be made so as to assemble groups according to language. It will also be better to bring homogeneity in the group as regards to age, level of education and background.

With specialized visits to such places as archaeological sites or museums, it is often difficult to match the number of guides available with fluctuations in the volume of visitors. Printed programmes with cassette players and earphones, containing pre-recorded commentary could be prepared and used. This will enable the visitors to guide themselves round taking as much time as they please. A central information service can complement this approach, where visitors will be able to ask expert questions which may have arisen in the course of their self-conducted tour.

A general tour of a town or city will always include visits to shops or commercial enterprises to view and to purchase arts and handicraft products. To avoid controlling of guides and the practice of commission to guides, an approval list of such establishments could be prepared. The

guide will have no discretion in the matter and is directed to what shops to visit on a particular day.

In order to monitor acceptance and satisfaction on the part of the visitors a feedback system could be created. The guide should fill out a brief report on completion of each tour. Guide should also meet periodically to discuss their various experiences and to recommend improvements to the service. A sample of visitors can also be asked to comment on the tour, for which a well draft questionnaire could be used.

## **PART 4**

### **NEED FOR TOURIST GUIDE TRAINING**

Lack of proper training is the biggest handicap in the field of tourism. We do not have a proper and systematic system for the training of tourist guides in India. Specialized training in tourism is available in various Colleges and Universities. Most of the courses are at the post-graduate level. One has the option of degree courses or a one-year diploma course in tourism or a post-graduate course is also available. These courses train individuals as tourist guides and for managing trekking and tour operations.

Basic qualification is a prerequisite. Command over one or more language is a must. Extroversion is self-understood. The rest depends on how you look at yourself and others against the backdrop of a historical monument or from behind one of the information counters.

On the other hand, tourist guides could be trained in approximately four to six months. The training session should include classroom teaching, practical application and development of knowledge and skills, etc. The course should cover languages, tourism, history and geography, contemporary studies and pedagogical techniques.

For specialized guides a short course could be introduced, as the demand for such services is periodic only and guides should be part-time and available as required. These specialized guides could be full-time employees in other type of work with related governmental, non-governmental bodies of or professional institutions.

An example of the professional knowledge required by a tour guide is mentioned in the guidelines issued by International Guides Academy, Baltimore USA, which is as follows;

- a. Knowledge and Terminology of travel industry.
- b. Business trend in the industry.
- c. Art of public speaking.
- d. Pre-tour departure preparations.
- e. Airlines and Airport procedure- baggage handling-Baggage lost.
- f. Knowledge of passport, Visa and other related issue.
- g. Destination Knowledge-local-national-international.
- h. Cultural practices-local-national-tourists' culture.
- i. Local food availability –place- time- quality and price.

- j. Group psychology- option tour.
- k. Special items of the location.
- l. Emergency handling-Health-police-safety and security.
- m. Accommodation availability- Check in and Checkout times.
- n. Motor coach commentary.

## **PART 5**

### **GUIDING AT VARIOUS TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

A tourist guide is supposed to work for eight hours for full day sightseeing. During these hours, he is supposed to tell the tourists about the places visited. It has been observed that he has an unlimited scope for his work. His work multiplies from the situation to situation. He has to do many works for his clients. His duties can be explained as follows.

#### **1. *Guiding in Monuments***

Before taking a tourist party to monuments, a guide must know the country of origin of his guests and their profession. The past and cultural heritage of the concerning countries must be compared. A guide must remember some similar monuments. Similarly, comparisons are very much needed while explaining the various monuments to the tourists. At the monuments, he appraises his visitors the proper nook and corner for getting best shots, sometimes he handles the camera himself.

A tourist guide must give the following details of monuments for a clear understanding of the tourist:

- ✓ The years of construction of the building;
- ✓ The prominent builders of the monuments;
- ✓ The history of the monument;
- ✓ Causes of delay of the monuments;
- ✓ Dimensions, heights, etc. of the buildings;
- ✓ Architectural features —like Gandhara; Mathura or Dravid —School of Architecture and Sculpture.
- ✓ Historical evolution—the inspiration which a particular monument has given to similar construction.
- ✓ Aesthetic appreciation—beauty, symmetry, harmony and balance for which the monument is famous for
- ✓ Decoration features

#### **2. *Guiding in Wildlife Parks***

Guiding in wildlife sanctuaries also demand knowledge and cautious approach. A tourist guide should tell the following points to the visitors.

- ✓ Name, location and history of the sanctuary;
- ✓ The identification of species;
- ✓ The animals or birds, one is likely to encounter;

- ✓ Their distribution in space;
- ✓ Their migratory habits;
- ✓ What do they eat?
- ✓ Where do they live?
- ✓ How are they tamed?

### ***3. Miscellaneous***

1. For excursion, he advises his guests for carrying cold drinks in the ice box and pack lunch in their vehicle.
2. Helping tourists in the selection of good food, drinks, and typical restaurant for particular dishes.
3. Offering tips to waiters, drivers, etc.
4. In the dancing hall, he explains the mythological background or significance of the different poses.
5. Purchase of souvenirs, picture post cards, books, postal stamps, films, cigarettes etc.
6. Choosing other places of interests in the tour in the vicinity;
7. Informing tourists about evening dance shows, exhibition, sound and light programmes etc.
8. Suggesting an itinerary for visiting other distance tourists' places even for the next trips.
9. Looking after the confirmation of flights or booking in the hotels with or without the help of handling travel agents.

### ***To sum up,***

Tour guides are the professionals involved in guiding the visitors in their own language and interprets the cultural, heritage and natural legacy of a particular region. They need to provide all needed facilities as desired by their clients with amicable dealings and also protect the reputation of the tourism business of that region.

There are three categories of tourist guides in India namely, A, B and C and the guides are mandated to undergo necessary training to obtain the license and to equip themselves to handle the tourists.

There are many types of tourist guides namely, heritage guides, cultural guides, adventure guides, wilderness or forest guides, coach guide, nature guide, special interest guide, etc. Guiding at various tourist attractions includes guiding in monuments, guiding in wildlife and others.