



## The Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, DC

### Health & Safety Guidance for Guides During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The health and safety of guides and travelers is a paramount concern of the Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, DC. Toward that end, we encourage tour guides to establish practices that will reduce the risk of transmission of the Covid-19 virus. Recognizing that how we guide in the time of Covid-19 will evolve with time, the Guild offers guides the following considerations that guides might take before, during, and after small group tours.

As the pandemic enters different phases and health experts make additional recommendations this document may be amended. Please note that while the document does identify some vehicle transportation procedures, currently we do not focus on guiding large bus groups.

#### **I. Guide Considerations Before Giving A Tour**

1. Check the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Park Service (NPS), and your touring locality for current Covid-19 guidelines and any health warnings.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/public-health-update.htm>

2. Ask the tour company, hotel concierge, and the individual guest, as appropriate, about their policy with regard to the guide's responsibility in picking-up guests, and if guides must be tested; and if guides are expected to supply mask, face shield or other personal protection equipment (PPE), sanitizers, etc.
3. Establish what Covid-19 policies a tour operator has implemented based on state requirements/rules, and if the company expectations vary within a region due to state-specific regulations.
4. Determine if daily health checks of guests will be required on multi-day tours, and who will conduct and verify the tests; and who in the company will inform guests of results.
5. Clarify with the tour company, hotel concierge, or the individual guest your expectations with regard to guests wearing a mask, physical distancing, or statement of health. If conducting your own tour, determine if your promotional materials will contain your health and safety polices/practices and your expectations that the guests will bring with them such items as a cloth mask, face shield or PPE, sanitizer, or water bottle.

6. Decide if you want guests to sign a form that states they will comply with your health and safety expectations (i.e., wearing masks, face shield or other PPE, hand washing, physical distancing, etc).
7. Request from limo/van rental or motor coach companies their practices regarding scheduled cleaning of vehicles, and sanitation practices, particularly microphone, door handles, seats, and if applicable the plexiglass shield between visitor and guide.
8. Determine when guiding in a vehicle whether you want to bring your own microphone,
9. Verify Metrorail's hygiene and distancing practices.
10. Think about what kind of isolation and transportation plan might be needed when dealing with a sick guest and anticipate how the sickness might impact the completion of the tour.
11. Contact the local health agency for advice if you are concerned that a person on your tour may have Covid-19, and if working for a tour operator inform them of the situation to determine the appropriate next steps.
12. Consider only conducting walking tours, no bus tours; or for persons with a compromised immune system or age 60 and above, determine if you want to delay giving tours until a vaccine is available.

## **II. Guide Considerations During A Tour**

1. Set clear expectations for the respiratory etiquette and health and safety practices that will be observed during the tour.
2. Explain how you will handle a guest who does not follow established health and safety guidelines.
3. Manage the group if a site requires physically distancing, set schedules for staggering visits, and identify meet-up time and place.
4. Check with the driver of your rental vehicle to ensure sanitization of interior and exterior door handles, seats, consoles, and microphone is occurring on a routine basis.
5. Consider if you want to carry your own microphone on tour and/or use a microphone covering that can be removed and washed.

### **A. Suggested Protection While Giving a Tour:**

- a. Wear cloth face mask, face shield or other recommended PPE always. (Please note that guidance on face coverings may change at various stages of the pandemic. Regularly check the CDC guidance on face masks at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html> )
  - i. Carry an extra cloth mask for yourself (masks can get sweaty and soiled)
  - ii. Bring a few disposable masks - for use by anyone over two years in age - who forgot theirs (note: the CDC warns that masks are not to be used by anyone under the age of two years old)
  - iii. Have on hand different size plastic bags to carry used masks or other items in which you don't want surfaces touching

- b. Keep 6 feet away from others
  - i. Consider keeping farther distance if you are speaking loudly
- c. Carry hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes
  - i. Consider carrying extra sanitizer for others on your tour
- d. Wash or sanitize your hands frequently and encourage those on your tour to do the same
- e. Do not touch your face
- f. Communicate your expectations with everyone on your tour
- g. Consider carrying a non-contact thermometer for temperature checks
- h. Find a replacement guide and stay home if you have any symptoms of illness

**B. Additional Considerations While Guiding:**

- a. Wearing face masks or face shields gets extremely hot
  - i. Consider shorter tours rather than 4+ hours
  - ii. Be mindful that your guests are also wearing face masks or shields
  - iii. Recognize signs of heat stress/stroke or any guest struggling with the heat
- b. Stay well hydrated in the heat
- c. Encourage guests to stay hydrated
- d. Know where the open restrooms and hand sanitation stations are located

**C. Devices and Apps That May Assist the Guide on Tour:**

- a. Free Conference Call – an App that the guide and guests use with their own phones and headphones. Encourage visitors to have an extra battery pack or solar pack to charge phones during tour.
- b. Quietvox – this equipment is mailed to your home via Fed Ex. Everyone on tour receives personal sanitized Quietvox to hear the guide; at the end of each tour, the guide returns equipment to Quietvox via FedEx pre-paid postage. Factor in the cost of rental into the price of your tour.
- c. Whisper, Orpheo, Listen, Uniti, Vox and other companies also offer audio apps that can be downloaded.
- d. “Next Door” – An app offering the exchange of helpful information as well as exchange of goods and services (i.e., advertising for tours).
- e. A voice amplifier may help to increase the volume of your speech.

Important note: The Guild does **not endorse nor provide technical support** for any above-listed product. Guides should research available apps and equipment to: ascertain price, payment plans, and fee structures for recouping incurred costs; to determine which products best meet their needs with regards to available features and functionality; and to familiarize themselves with the technology needed in order for each product to provide service while on tour (i.e. telephone carrier network, internet access, WiFi access, Bluetooth functionality, equipment battery life, etc.).

### **III. Considerations Guides Can Take After a Tour:**

1. Clean masks and face shields as well as sanitize/disinfect materials like backpack and shared materials such as handouts, photos, etc.
2. Stay alert to signs and symptoms of Covid-19.

**PREPARE – PROTECT – PREVENT**