



## **EDINBURGH FESTIVAL VOLUNTARY GUIDES ASSOCIATION**

### **Hints for Guides – 2023**

#### **Tour Start**

Tours start at 10 30 am and 2 pm. We aim for tours to last about 1.5 hours, but there is flexibility to extend that if your group is willing.

#### **Arriving at the City Chambers**

On the day of your tour, plan to arrive at the City Chambers at least 20 minutes before the relevant start time. Dress as you think appropriate and be sure to wear your EFVGA badge and your name badge. Look for our big Fringe banner near the entrance to the City Chambers and report to the coordinator (committee member) on duty there.

Since the introduction of the pre-booking system by the Fringe, the majority of visitors will have made a booking via the Fringe website or app. However we still are happy to take people who have not booked. So, before your tour starts, the coordinator may ask you to take up position on the pavement in front of the City Chambers to direct customers to our meeting point. Keep in mind that most of our customers will already have decided to join our tour when they arrive at the City Chambers but will find it difficult to identify us amid the crowds. So stand close to the entrance to the Quadrangle and keep an eye open for anyone who looks like they might be looking for us. This is just as important as handing out leaflets or trying to persuade passers-by to join a tour.

Return to the meeting-point and join your group in time to start your tour. It may be that the co-ordinator will decide to send a tour off early, depending on circumstances.

#### **Jackets and umbrellas**

To help customers find us, please consider wearing one of our distinctive blue jackets, which carry our logo and name. These have proved very effective in promoting our "brand" and helping us to stand out from the crowd. You may also wear one on your tour if you wish, provided you can return it to our box at the City Chambers at the end of your tour, if you do not already own one.

We also have some distinctive branded umbrellas which will help make us more visible, these are not to be taken away from the meeting-point.

#### **Safety briefing**

At the start of your tour, give a short safety briefing. Warn your group about uneven surfaces, narrow steps, low doorways, etc. Mention that although parts of the route are traffic-free, other parts are not, so they should take care when stepping off the kerb. And remind them that where there are crowds there are thieves, so they should keep an eye on their valuables. It may be that the co-ordinator has already given a safety briefing, if you are sure that they have, you do not need to duplicate it, but it is important and must not be omitted.

## Your route

Don't worry if you feel you can't cover the whole of the Royal Mile in the time. The important thing is to show your visitors the sites that you consider to be the most interesting. It is not essential to end the tour at Holyrood. You should also be prepared to take into account any special requests by your visitors, e.g. in 2023 we know, from other guides, that there is a lot of interest in the late Queen's final journey in Edinburgh.

Neither is it essential to stay in the Royal Mile. While the Royal Mile will, for most visitors, be their main reason for taking our tour, you might prefer to include other, quieter, areas, such as the Grassmarket, Greyfriars or even parts of the New Town. If so, give your group that option at the start of the tour.

## Specific places on the route

- **Parliament Hall.** Warn your group that they will have to go through airport-style security; any sharp objects might be retained by staff until after the visit (bottles of water are OK). Also, photography is not allowed.
- **St Giles.** Visits to St Giles are now possible with the following restrictions. No visits are possible on Sundays. There must be fewer than 10 in the group, the guide must announce themselves to the staff member or volunteer at front desk, and groups cannot tour during the midday service from 12 - 12:15pm, Mon - Fri, as it can be disruptive to service. Additionally, St Giles would appreciate if you suggest to the attendees that donations can be made at any of the boxes around the building, if they enjoyed their visit.

## Finishing the tour

We now expect that all our tours will last 1.5 hours, that is, that they will finish at 12 pm or 3.30 pm. Some flexibility is possible (for example, if you have a group that particularly asks for a slightly longer, or shorter, tour), but keep in mind that customers will often have other Fringe events to go to and will be anxious to maintain their schedule. You might consider giving your tour an option to continue after 1.5 hours, to give those interested enough to continue the opportunity to do so, while others will be moving on to their next appointment.

On finishing the tour, check that everyone in your group knows where they are and how to reach their next destination. Point out nearby toilets, bus stops, cafés, etc.

The increasing importance of online reviews means it is important to encourage guests to post reviews on TripAdvisor (cards with the relevant details are available for you to hand out).

## Donations

The co-ordinator should have told the tour about our donations policy, but if anyone in your group offers you money, politely point out that our guides don't accept tips, but we are happy to accept donations to the Association's funds. If you receive cash, as soon as possible you should either deposit the equivalent amount from your own bank to the EFVGA and keep the cash, or give it to a Committee member when you are next on duty (who will do exactly the same). If you do it yourself please enter your own name as the reference. You should have the banking details on the back of your name badge.

- Sort Code: 83-19-10;
- Account number: 00283754.
- Name: Edinburgh Festival Voluntary Guides Association (in full).