

Case study 16 - audio-guide handsets

Using: Interpreter International

Royal Yacht Britannia

The Royal Yacht Britannia is a five-star visitor attraction in Edinburgh, which welcomes over 390 000 visitors from all over the world every year.

They have a self-led audio tour which takes the visitors around the 5 main decks of the ship. It is available in 37 languages as well as a visually impaired tour and a basic English version. They also have a British Sign Language tablet and printed braille scripts.

They are currently in the process of re-recording the tour - to bring it up to date and reflect the changes that have been made on board over the last 20 years - as well as adding American Sign Language.

Technology:

Their handsets are produced by a British based company called Interpreter International.

Timeline:

The tour was written within a couple of months of Britannia coming to Edinburgh (it opened as an attraction in 1998) and has changed very little. They are on the second version of the handset which they helped develop along with the owner of Interpreter International.

Maintenance and cleaning:

Over the years, they have built up expertise within the organisation so they are able to maintain the handsets and equipment themselves. Maintenance probably takes an hour or so a day.

Every handset is cleaned on return and going forward they will also be cleaning them in front of the visitor before they hand them out. They are also introducing a downloadable version of the tour for those visitors who wish to not take a handset.

Cost:

They have 750 handsets and related charges. They purchased these outright at a cost of approximately £300 per handset. With the cost of replacing lost handsets and spare parts they are probably looking at £250-300k in total.

Advice:

- Go for something that is easy to use and does just what you need, complexity adds cost and other things to go wrong.
- Their handset only does commentary as they believe that visitors want to look at Britannia, not pictures of Britannia on their handset.
- Also, with the increase in smart technology, look at having a version of your tour that visitors can access from their own devices.

