

1

Introduction to Tour Guiding

Learning objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- That the importance and nature of tourism mandate a role for tour guides.
- That conducted tours require mediation.
- The historical evolution of the tour guiding vocation.
- The jargon used in guiding and interpretation, and appreciating the different roles.
- Guest expectations from tour guides, their job description and thus the typical job specification.
- How technology impacts tourist guiding and tour guides.
- How tour guides are compensated.

Neeraj felt deceived and at a loss as he relaxed in the hotel lobby and talked to other guests after a long day visit to the famous Chittorgarh Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Neeraj is a travel enthusiast and reads a lot about tourist places and visits them with his family, especially with his young son. His reading comes in handy as he shares his understanding of the place visited with the family. They had spent half a day at the fort. As he sat in the lobby, guests from another tour party sat there animatedly discussing their exciting visit to a small Village Nagari on their tour guide's advice. It was 12 km from the fort and had an archaeological park with a *Hathi-bada* complex where an inscription was found dated 300BCE. The inscription confirms the building of *Puja-Sila-Prakara*—a compound around the stone that's worth veneration. Thus, it is the oldest available Hindu temple compound. Any tourist travelling this far would never like to skip such an important cultural attraction which Neeraj had missed. The other party's guide had enriched their experience by improvising the standard itinerary and adding such marvels.

He recalled how a guide on their previous visit to Gwalior had helped them decipher the place. What appeared to be a creative pattern on stone was actually a *Shanmukha*. Placed on the southern wall of Man Mandir of Mansingh Palace,

Gwalior, it is a six-faced icon which is a union of two triangles – while one represents the *Shiva*, the inverted triangle represents *Shakti*. The combination of masculine and feminine generates a six-faced *Kartikeya (Shanmukha)*, the progeny of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, and was a good way of presenting the “Creation of Life” to the public.

Tour guides add meaning to what visitors see and do.

Figure 1.1: A Shanmukha on the wall of Gwalior Fort. Picture credit: Ramakrishna Kongalla



Introduction

Travel has become all the more important. The world has changed post-Covid-19 for us. Both internally and externally, we face a new world. Covid has forced individuals to stop and contemplate the issues of existence and our connection to this world. As a result, people look forward to travelling more, knowing more about the world and experiencing the various ways in which animate elements connect to the inanimate. Tourism has become a part of a lifestyle for people. Therefore, tourism is today one of the priorities of society.

The concept of tourism has phenomenally developed over the past four decades. It is being recognised as a vital economic force that has a significant potential to change the condition of a country or a destination. We are living in an experiential economy. Many activities and services nowadays aim to involve the consumer in some kind of live-through. People want to have new experiences, try different things, experiment with different ideas, and coexist in different possible ways. They travel for this reason. Everyone is a ‘tourist’ at one point or the other. Today, travelling has become a way of life for many. People are travelling, cutting across geographical and political boundaries. However, the reasons for travelling may be different. When people have more disposable time and money available, they try new ways to spend them. Travelling to many seems to be the obvious choice.

The term tourism has many connotations. To some, it may mean travelling for fun during leisure while for others it may mean holidaying, which involves some excitement, adventure, thrill, and challenge. For many, it is a journey towards the realisation of dreams. It is like one has yearned for years to be at their dream destination. Whatever it may be, the thrill of ‘unknown’ gives a kick to a person when they travel. The wholesome ‘experience’ that one wants to undergo while visiting a destination immerse themselves entirely into this feeling of thrill and fun, and later share their experiences with friends and