

Nimit Chowdhary • Monika Prakash

# Interpretation and Tour Leadership



*Principles and Practices  
of Tour Guiding*

(G)


# **Interpretation and Tour Leadership**

**Principles and Practices of  
Tour Guiding**

**Nimit Chowdhary and Monika Prakash**



**Goodfellow Publishers Ltd**

 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,  
26 Home Close, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8PS  
<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: on file.

ISBN: 978-1-911635-97-0

DOI: 10.23912/9781911635956-4986

Copyright © Nimit Chowdhary and Monika Prakash, 2022

All rights reserved. The text of this publication, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, storage in an information retrieval system, or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher or under licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited. Further details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited, of Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

All trademarks used herein are the property of their respective owners, The use of trademarks or brand names in this text does not imply any affiliation with or endorsement of this book by such owners.



Design and typesetting by P.K. McBride, [www.macbride.org.uk](http://www.macbride.org.uk)

Cover design by Cylinder

# Contents

	About the authors	v
	Preface	vi
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction to Tour Guiding</b>	<b>1</b>
	Travel is a basic human need	3
	Tour guide – the mediator	6
	A brief history of tour guiding	7
	Tour leader – guide, escort, or manager?	10
	What do guests want the tour guide to do?	13
	What do companies expect of a tour guide?	15
	The job description of a tour guide	16
	Technology and tour guides	18
	Compensating tour guides	21
<b>2</b>	<b>The Tourist</b>	<b>30</b>
	Types of tourism	32
	Travel stages and visitor concerns	34
	Challenges faced by international visitors	36
	Why do visitors need a tour guide?	38
	Tourists with disabilities	39
	Responsible tourism	43
<b>3</b>	<b>Communication for Tour Guides</b>	<b>54</b>
	Communication	54
	Understanding cultural differences	67
<b>4</b>	<b>The Art of Interpretation</b>	<b>81</b>
	Characteristics of a powerful interpretation	82
	Types of interpretation	84
	How to interpret?	87
	Techniques of interpretations	98
<b>5</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>106</b>
	Research	107
	Interpretation goals	116

Designing	117
Product development	120
Monitoring	125
Planning a career as a tour guide	127
<b>6 Basics of Tour Guiding</b>	<b>134</b>
Dos and Don'ts	135
Heritage walks	137
Guiding on a walking tour	140
Leading on a moving vehicle	145
Tools of the trade	149
Things to avoid	153
<b>7 Guiding Scenarios</b>	<b>157</b>
Cultural tourism	157
Guiding a group at an archaeological site	160
Guiding a group at a place of worship	164
Leading at a museum	172
The attraction of nature	179
Nature tours	182
<b>8 Professional Challenges while Guiding Tourists</b>	<b>191</b>
Demanding tourists and handling them	192
Handling emergencies	197
Handling questions	200
Leading tourists with responsibility	204
Tour leading	205
Leading in a post-Covid scenario	213
<b>9 The Business of Tour Guiding</b>	<b>218</b>
Setting up a business	219
Planning an itinerary	225
Partners in business	232
Legal considerations	239
Ethics and conduct	247
<b>Index</b>	<b>257</b>

---

## About the authors

### **Prof. Nimit Chowdhary**

Dr Nimit Chowdhary is an engineer with, MBA and PhD in Management. He is a professor and ex-Head of the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Jamia Millia Islamia (a Central University) who has more than 28 years of academic experience. He has been a full professor for 15 years. He has taught at Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (Gwalior, Noida, Nellore), Mizoram University (Aizawl), Jiwaji University (Gwalior), Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati University (Ajmer), Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (México) and Shaoxing University, (P.R. China). He has also taught in Sweden, Spain and Slovenia.

He is a recipient of the AICTE Career Award for Young Teachers; SIDA Fellowship, Sweden; Guest Scholarship, Sweden; Linnaeus Palme Exchange Programme Grants, Sweden; PIMG Research Excellence Award, Gwalior; Scholars' Grant (EMTM), Erasmus Mundus, Europe, among others. He was also chosen for the prestigious LEAP programme at Oxford University. He has supervised 15 PhDs, authored eight books, edited five books and contributed more than 155 papers.

### **Prof. Monika Prakash**

Dr Monika Prakash is a Professor at the North India Campus of Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM), Noida, with the additional charge of Head of the South India Campus of the institute. She is currently leading the prestigious Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Programme (IITFP) of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. In addition, she is a researcher, trainer, and academic administrator.

She has a double master's in Commerce (MCom) and Management (MBA) and a PhD in Commerce.

She has published more than 45 papers and eight books. She has supervised doctoral research and led funded research from the Ministry of Tourism and ICSSR. She has presented papers and moderated/ chaired national and international conferences sessions. She has travelled extensively in and outside of the country.

## Preface

This work stands on our more than total 30 years of experience of engaging with tour guides as trainers. We have had the opportunity to engage with the various governments that wanted to roll out training programmes for tour guides as a capacity-building initiative. However, each agency had a different perspective that needed to be included in the design of training programmes. As a result, we trained more than 4500 tour guides and spent time discussing the challenges they faced. These multiple perspectives enriched our understanding of the tour guiding phenomenon. The first author also supervised two doctoral research studies and published some research on tour guide training during this period. Looking to the need of trainees, the first author wrote the *Handbook for Tour Guides* in 2013, which is more like a training manual. This book deals with various tour guiding situations and practicalities like handling demanding customers or difficult situations. In addition, the book presents for the first time the dynamics and mechanics of tour guiding that bring to fore the essential communication techniques.

Along with other colleagues, we also engaged with tour operators and DMCs to train tour managers, most of whom were licensed tour guides in India. Their role involved enlarged responsibilities of logistics and service. However, not many readings were available to support this training which necessitated another book, *Tour Leadership and Management*, in 2018 with Dr Shailja Sharma. This project was also an opportunity to reflect on the earlier book, which was clinical but had little theory to explain the underlying phenomenon. With the vocationalisation of education, tour guiding has become a significant job role in tourism economies worldwide. As a result, many university and college programmes have introduced tour guiding as a course in their curriculum. They require textbooks. Several books are available, in any case.

Freeman Tilden (1883-1980) pioneered modern heritage interpretation. He worked with the United States National Park Service and collated his understanding in the book *Interpreting Our Heritage* in 1957, one of the discipline's most authoritative texts. He shaped the tour guiding profession by articulating his famous six principles of interpretation which suggested that interpretation is an art and not just sharing of information. Moreover, the primary purpose of interpretation is not instruction but provocation. He famously quoted, "Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection." In 1990, Marc Mancini made an early attempt to author a book that comprehensively covers the subject. He authored *Conducting Tours: A Practical Guide*. Divided into ten chapters, it begins with valuable information about guiding, escorting, and tour planning. Next, it

---

discusses subtler topics such as guide commentary, 'tricks' for effective touring, psychology of group behaviour, successful itineraries, and ethical challenges presented to tour leaders.

Another pioneer was Sam H Ham of the University of Idaho, who extended Professor William J. Lewis' (University of Vermont) concept of thematic interpretation to heritage interpretation. He formally presented the thematic approach in his 1992 book *Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose*. He introduced the famous TORE (Thematic, Organised, Relevant and Enjoyable) model. Since then, this book has been standard reading for many interpretations and interpretive tours guiding students.

However, the most popular book on tour guiding used like a textbook is Kathleen Lingle Pond's 1993 book *The Professional Guide: Dynamics of Tour Guiding*. This book, divided into 13 chapters, is more like a reference reading discussing the profession, role, and tour guiding techniques. It also dedicates discussion to the management of the tour guiding business. In 1998 Larry Beck authored *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture*. A revised edition was published in 2002. The book attempts to crystallise Tilden's principles in a handy format by highlighting 15 principles, like lighting a spark, interpreting in the information age, the importance of the story, provocation, holistic interpretation, passion, and modern tools of interpretation, among others.

As research on tour guiding became commonplace, Betty Weiler and Rosemary Black, in 2014, authored *Tour Guiding Research: Insights, Issues and Implications*. The book reviews tour guiding scholarship and research over the previous fifty years. This cogent and concise desk reference book fosters best practice and stimulates further study and research on tour guiding across various disciplines. In addition, it explores how tour-guiding theory and practice has evolved and what factors have contributed to this.

In 2020, Gulsun Yildirim, Ozlem Ozbek, Ceyhun Caglar Kilinc and Abdullah Tarinc edited *Cases on Tour Guide Practices for Alternative Tourism*. This work analyses emerging research exploring the theoretical and practical aspects of tour guides' occupational issues and their conduct in international tourism like cultural education, specialised learning, and international business. This recently published book deals with issues like branding, cultural education, gender inequality, specialised learning, sustainability, and tour guidance, among other topics.

For management of tours, *Handbook of Professional Tour Management* by Robert T. Reilly was published first in 1982. It provided professional literature covering all tour conducting and tour guiding by tour managers. A good handbook for



novice tour managers, it deals with planning, developing, and costing a tour, emphasising how to organise a tour from beginning to end.

*Interpretation and Tour Leadership: Principles and Practices of Tour Guiding* is positioned as a textbook to back teaching in tourism programmes. The book is intended to have a solid theoretical base. However, it will also be helpful for training programmes. While tour-guiding and tour-leadership are clinical courses, techniques need to be backed by relevant theory. Therefore, while most chapters have a sound theoretical base, some focus on transferable techniques and skills.

Like other vocations, tour guiding has also undergone many changes. Impacts of technology must be reckoned. Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic will have far-reaching impacts on the profession. Thus, a fresh look at the profession of tour guiding is imperative. This book focuses on the job of a tour guide whose role is often expanded to include the responsibilities of a tour escort. Often these are referred to as tour leaders. The terms tour guide, tour manager, tour escort and tour leaders are different but used interchangeably in practice and different contexts. The difference is highlighted in one of the discussions. This work, therefore, touches two dimensions of the role: one, interpretation and guiding techniques (strictly for tour guides); and two, aspects of tour management that the tour leader must understand and possess the necessary skills like handling transfers, leading on day tours, and even multiple day tours where the tour leader needs to liaison with the hotel, and attractions, among others.

The role of the tour guide is clinical. The book's purpose is to back practice with the theory so that the learners have the necessary theoretical foundation for the concepts related to tour guiding. The book begins by introducing a tour guide in Chapter 1. First, the importance of tour guides in a tourism context is established. Next, it is emphasised that visitors require a mediator in an unknown destination who is invariably the tour guide. Subsequently, a brief discussion on the historical evolution of a tour guide role is presented to set a premise. A critical analysis follows this discussion to put the seemingly similar roles in perspective. Expectations of guests and other stakeholders from tour guides are the basis for crystalising the guide's job description and job specification. The chapter also brings to light the role of technology in tour guiding. Finally, it deliberates on how tour guides make money.

After introducing the need, importance, and role of a tour guide, it is essential to discuss the most important stakeholder. Chapter 2 discusses the tourists. A tour guides role envisages spending much time with the visitors and servicing their expectations. In addition, tourists in different stages of travel require support from guides. Most significantly, they are in a different cultural setting

---

and seek guidance to negotiate. There is a discussion on responsible guiding, which deals with managing visitor impacts – environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Guides also need to remain aware of the requirements of the limited mobility guests. These visitors are a growing segment as tourism intends to turn more inclusive.

Tour guiding is essentially communication between the guide and the visitor. Chapter 3 lays the conceptual foundation for a meaningful discussion on communication and how tour guides need to consider and prepare for each stage of the process. Another crucial thing that tour guides must understand is that the visitors are often from different cultural settings, and cultural difference plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication – both verbal and nonverbal. The heart of this book is Chapter 4 that discusses the art of interpretation. It references Tilden's principles and Sam Ham's TORE model to offer practical tips to tour guides. One of the contributions of this chapter is identifying the tools and techniques that establish the TORE principles. These include ones that we have used training tour guides. Finally, it offers practical tips for tour guiding.

A tour guide is conceptually ready for action with a basic understanding of communication and interpretation. However, on-ground tour guiding needs much planning. Chapter 5 discusses planning for interpretation by a tour guide. It rolls out the planning required by a guide. It emphasises the need for proper research to identify interpretation goals and subsequent message design for the targeted audience. A detailed itinerary is the product of such an exercise. The product also includes customary introductions and briefings. Planning also entails anticipating and addressing visitor concerns. The chapter closes with a discussion on planning a tour guide career.

Having discussed the theoretical underpinnings for interpretation planning, interpretation and interpretive narratives, Chapter 6 presents action: how the tour guides should guide visitors. In the basic format, a tour guide accompanies guests around a monument or a natural site. At a practical level, the chapter details how to walk and talk. This chapter discusses the dos and don'ts of guiding. It also details guiding on a moving vehicle while a section is devoted to the tools that a guide would require while guiding. If Chapter 4 was the heart of the book, Chapter 7 is the soul, and details how to guide tourists in different scenarios – cultural and natural. The chapter discusses how to guide at an archaeological site, religious site, museum, or nature walk.

After discussing the nuances of tour guiding, Chapter 8 focuses on professional challenges faced by tour guides. It elaborates on handling demanding guests and difficult situations. One of the critical skills required by tour guides is to handle questions. This chapter explains this in detail. Additionally, this

chapter discusses leading guests in a post Covid scenario. A limiting case is leading a group of visitors on multi-day tours. Guide also have the onus of leading the group responsibly.

Finally, Chapter 9 is about institutionalising the tour guiding business. It presents the various options for creating a firm. It also discusses the important stakeholders and how a tour guide may associate with them. The chapter briefly sheds light on the relevant legal framework for guiding and ethical conduct by a tour guide.

Tour guiding involves much storytelling, so this book is dotted with examples, vignettes and stories. Each chapter begins with clearly delineating the learning objectives. Then, the text is presented in a free-flowing easy to understand language. Finally, the central learning is summarised as Key Points at the end of the chapter. Keywords that came up for discussion are also revisited at the end. In addition, there are chapter-end discussion questions and activities that are intended to help learners reflect on what was discussed in the chapter.

It is also pertinent to mention that we have used the term 'tour guide' more often in the book. However, the term 'tourist guide' is popular in Europe and some other parts of the world. The two are synonymous.

As agreed with the publisher, the chapters of this book will also be available independently to readers. Thus one can customise to address their learning needs. While the text is intended as essential reading for a course on tour guiding, a combination of chapters can be used as training material for tour guide training programmes.

Any academic work is, at best, a work in progress, and there is always room for improvement. We concede that. While we have made all efforts to make this work worthwhile, we seek feedback from readers and friends to improve it further. The same would be received with gratitude. This effort is just the beginning of a long journey to improving tour guiding and interpretation qualitatively.

Happy learning!

Prof Nimit Chowdhary  
*Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi*

Prof. Monika Prakash  
*Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Noida*

---

## Acknowledgements

We have always believed that any work of some significance is not possible without the support of known and unknown noble influences. The Indian tradition also mandates that there is no penance for ingratitude. Therefore, it is incumbent upon me to acknowledge all such stimuli, inspirations, and backing.

First and foremost, we must acknowledge the works of many great predecessors like Freeman Tilden and Sam Ham, KL Pond, Erik Cohen, Betty Weiler and her associate researchers and the like for laying the foundation for discussion on tourist guiding. Next, we acknowledge the tour guides and managers, those foot soldiers of the trade who have suffered the most during the Covid pandemic. We have had the opportunity to train more than three thousand tour guides and managers over the last 15 years, which returned those valuable insights into this vocation and helped a great deal when we write on the subject, including this work. Many of these professionals, often referred to as Regional Level Guides (RLGs) in India, are friends and swiftly answer our queries about the trade. Further, on occasions, they have reviewed our thoughts and notes.

We must also record our appreciation for colleagues from our organisations, Jamia Millia Islamia and the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management. Ramakrishna, Dr Ramesh Devrath and Dr Shailja Sharma from IITM – the last two being our scholars, colleagues, and co-trainers in many of the training programmes that we organised on campus and outdoors. These training programmes on the ground have allowed us to interact with numerous tour guides at different stages of their careers and understand their concerns. Their inputs came in handy as we worked to make this work more clinical.

We acknowledge our considerate colleagues who bore with us at our present organisations as we devoted time to this and other academic pursuits. When the families went into a huddle during Covid restrictions, we stole some family time to be on the table reading, researching, and writing. Our parents and sons deserve an apology from us.

We must also thank our team, especially scholars at Jamia Millia Islamia, who helped us with reviews, revisions, and editing. Rohan, Pinaz, Ashraf, Khaled, Arman and the entire team deserve mention. Snigdha deserves a special mention for helping with numerous rounds of manuscript reading. RLG colleagues Rajesh PR and Govind Agarwal quickly responded to our queries.

Finally, we acknowledge with gratitude the support from the publishing team, especially Sally North, for bearing with us when it got challenging to work on the manuscript due to Covid 19.

Prof Nimit Chowdhary, Prof Monika Prakash

## Dedication

To Anuj Saxena and Vineet Saxena, whom we lost in 2021, and the brethren in the tourism fraternity who faced countless hardships during the Covid 19 pandemic.