

Tour Guide

Kaiārahi Rōpū Haere

Other names for this job

Adventure Tour Guide, Cultural Interpreter, Driver Guide, Host, Scenic Tour Guide, Tour Manager

What people in this job do

Tour guides escort people on sightseeing, educational or other tours and describe points of interest.

Tour guides may do some or all of the following:

- describe and explain points of interest of the tour
- arrange entry to places such as museums, government buildings and exhibitions
- answer questions and give out written information
- lead adventure tourism activities and ensure people are safe at all times
- maintain the equipment used during adventure tourism activities
- arrange accommodation and meals
- prepare meals
- check and store tourists' bags
- drive a vehicle such as a bus or coach
- act as an interpreter
- market the business if it is a privately-owned tour company.

Personal requirements

Tour guides need to have:

- knowledge of the route to be covered and its tourist attractions
- knowledge of New Zealand culture, history, society, geography, flora and fauna
- leadership skills
- communication and listening skills
- public speaking skills
- understanding of appropriate behaviour when dealing with people from other cultures
- knowledge of safety procedures and crisis management skills
- understanding of the Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992)
- planning and organisational ability
- time management skills
- observational skills
- problem-solving and conflict resolution skills
- sales skills
- basic maths skills.

If managing a tour company, tour guides need to have business skills.

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Tour guides need to be:

- friendly, outgoing and able to put people at ease
- polite and patient
- responsible and trustworthy
- helpful and perceptive of visitors' needs
- able to work well under pressure
- able to remain calm in an emergency
- able to pay attention to detail
- able to relate to people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds
- able to deal with people's complaints.

Tour guides need to have clear speech, good hearing and a neat and tidy appearance. They also need to be reasonably fit as there may be a lot of walking involved, and they may lift heavy luggage onto buses or coaches.

How to get into this job

There are no specific requirements to become a tour guide, as skills are gained on the job. However, many tour operators, particularly those providing bus tours or adventure tourism activities, prefer to employ people who are at least 23 years of age to work as tour guides. This is because of the level of responsibility that tour guides have for their customers' safety. Drivers of passenger vehicles, such as a bus or coach, need to have a Passenger Services Licence. They may also require a Class 2 or Class 4 driver's licence, depending on the size of the bus. Further information on driver licensing is available from Land Transport New Zealand.

Secondary education: Useful subjects include Māori, Asian or European languages, or physical education.

Tertiary education: There are no specific tertiary requirements for tour guides, but a National Certificate in Tourism (Tour Guiding) or an outdoor education qualification is preferred.

Pay and job outlook

Salaries vary, and are negotiated with the employer at the time of hiring. Some tour guides work on commission and many are self-employed. Salaries may be affected by the seasonal nature of the work.

The outlook for tour guides is good and the number of people employed in this occupation expected to remain stable over the next three to five years. Employment opportunities for tour guides are affected by the number of tourists booked on organised tours and/or visitors to tourist attractions.

Related jobs

Bus Driver, Inshore Launchmaster, Interpreter, Outdoor Recreation Guide, Receptionist, Tour Coach Driver

Further contacts

Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation (ATTO)
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www.atto.org.nz/