

Tour Guide Training

Module 1: Professionalism

Trainer Manual

Table of Contents

- Introduction 3
- Helping the participants with change! 3
- 1. Topic 1: Professional Behaviour 4
 - 1.1. Introduction 4
 - 1.2. General Behaviour..... 4
- 2. Topic 2: Responsible Tourism 8
 - 2.1. The Environment 9
 - 2.2. The People 10
 - 2.2.1. Cultural host..... 11
 - 2.2.2. Need to respect local culture..... 11
 - 1.3. The Economy 12
- 2. Topic 3: Research Skills 13
 - 3.1 Ways to Update Guiding Knowledge 13
 - 7.1.1. Talk and listen 14
 - 7.1.2. Read 15
 - 7.1.3. Field Research 16
 - 7.1.4. Monitor Media and Current Events..... 16
 - 7.1.5. Other activities to upskill yourself as a guide 17
- 8. Topic 4: Tour Guiding Ethics 18
 - 8.1. Work Ethic..... 19
 - 8.2. Business Ethics..... 20
 - 8.3. Tour Guiding Ethics..... 20
- Topic 5: Representing a Brand 23
 - 5.1 Distribution channels 23
 - 5.2 International Brand Standards 25

Introduction

This manual provides the content of what is taught in the module. Please:

1. Read it carefully
2. Make notes, or highlight sections that you need to remember
3. Read it just before the training so that you know what you need to teach
4. Check it after the training so that you can make any additional notes or changes to content that may have come up in the course.

Helping the participants with change!

People are often threatened by or resistant to new ideas – they don’t want to be pulled out of their comfort zones. This is uncomfortable and difficult for them. So they may reject the ideas in this course. However, the following process of understanding change may help them:

S	Shock! At first you really don’t like the idea – you may be upset, or even scared of the new idea
A	Anger! You get angry – you want to fight against the idea
R	Rejection! You throw the new idea away, and don’t want to have anything to do with it
A	Acceptance! After thinking about it for a while, you realise it may be a good thing after all, and you decide to accept it

1. Topic 1: Professional Behaviour

1.1. Introduction

Why is professional behaviour so important?

Tourists travel all over the world and compare the skills, knowledge, behaviour and professionalism of tour guides from one country to another.

Guides therefore have to show high standards of professionalism all the time in order to be respected by international tourists.

A tour guide has a lot of competencies (skills, knowledge and way of behaving) that make up their professional profile:



1.2. General Behaviour

The general behaviour of a guide, while on tour, in vehicles, in restaurants, dealing with tourists, is very important.

Western tourists have specific ideas of how guides should behave. For example, being on time, being quick and well organised are very important to Westerners. Here are some guidelines and tips on good general behaviour for tour guides.

General Manners

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time, quick, and well-organised • Ask tourists individually how they would like to be named (e.g. Mr. Jones or Michael or Sir) • Learn how to manage larger groups (e.g. get them together so you do not need to shout or say the same information many times) • Give time for tourists to talk to one another and understand what you have told them. • Use the visitors' knowledge: find out if there is anything they want to see/taste and include these in the tour, if you can. • Find out from Tour Operator operations staff if the tourist is only doing a holiday in Laos (unlikely) or as part of a longer holiday across Indochina/Thailand (likely) – find out more about the tourists' whole holiday package • Show confidence in positive body language – stand straight, make eye contact, smile! • Follow the laws of the country at all places you visit with the tourists • Do your best to follow the itinerary of a tour and speak positively of the company that you represent. • Help tourists when you see they need help (e.g. taking photo's) • Separate personal time from work time e.g. don't take your own holiday photos when you are with your tour group • Keep receipts for work expenses on tour, and give these (with unused tour funds) to the Tour Operator Operations Manager. • Notice if tour members are unhappy (e.g. too hot/cold), or looking around for something – be aware of their body language at all times and offer help • Learn how to stand in a way which makes you look professional and interested in your group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be late, slow or disorganised • Share your own opinions/beliefs on sensitive subjects such as religion and politics. • Believe the tourists know about the country and laws or that the tourists don't know anything. • Be negative: Don't say things like "What a shame about the weather!" or "On a good day, this usually looks better..." "If only we could..." Always talk about the site or experience in a positive way. • Tell lies or guess the answer. • Speak badly to the tourists • Argue with anyone. • Forget the name of your tour group, hotel, program or voucher • Be negative: Don't say one place, person or tour group is worse than another. • Give drugs (legal or illegal) to your tourists if they ask for it or are feeling sick • Take tourists to shops unless this part of the itinerary or unless tourist clearly want to do this • Repeat information which has already been given earlier on the tour (this shows a lack of communication between tour company and guide) • Give bad service to any tourist on any basis, e.g. colour, gender, ethnicity, nationality, physical challenge, age, etc.

Vehicle Manners

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit upright, be alert, often check on the passengers to make sure they are comfortable and enjoying themselves • Make sure the driver uses her/his cell phone very little and pulls the vehicle over to a safe place at the side of the road before talking on the phone. • Make sure the tourists are interested in what you are talking about, know when to talk, how much to talk, and when to let tourists just sit quietly/ rest/ sleep • Open and close doors for tourists (also a driver responsibility) • Help elderly tourists get on and off vehicles (also a driver responsibility) • Make sure that tourists know what their vehicle looks like when it is parked with lots of other vehicles which look the same • Make sure air-con is on and vehicle is cool, before tourists get on (if weather is hot; or warm if weather is cold) • Before leaving a site count the number of tourists when they get back on the vehicle (to make sure no one is missing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take shoes off • Put your feet up on the seat or dashboard • Sleep • Text or talk on a cell phone if you are driving • Talk too much/talk only with the driver (your talking should be to the benefit of the tourists) • Drink alcohol or take drugs

Eating, Drinking, Smoking

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat with the tourists, with good table manners • Make sure all tourists have their food before you start to eat • Ask tourists what sort of food they would like to eat, and (more specifically) recommend different foods/places to eat • Ask the tourists to re-use their plastic water bottles if possible (advise them to re-fill at the hotel or restaurant) • Understand tourist allergies (common with Westerners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chew chewing gum • Drink alcohol during working hours – a small drink at dinner is alright, but check with tourist group first • Smoke in sight of tourists • Eat very smelly food in the presence of clients (e.g. durian), unless the tourist group have said they are ok with this • Make loud noises while eating (a common sign of good manners in Asia, yet a sign of poor manners with Westerners)

What are allergies?

A negative reaction by the body to certain foods, most often nuts (peanuts), flour (wheat flour), eggs, or food made from milk. Eating these items may make the person very sick. Allergies can also be a reaction by the body to some insects (e.g. bees), animals (e.g. cats) and plants (e.g. pollen).

What to do:

1. Check if any tourists have allergies;
2. Ask the tourist if they have their allergy medicine with them on the tour before they leave on the tour;
3. Call the restaurant the day before arriving and tell them about the tourist's food allergies;
4. Help the tourists to choose foods that do not contain the ingredients that they are allergic to;
5. Ask the restaurant if any of the ingredients they are allergic to is in any of the dishes on the menu;
6. Watch out for non-food allergies (e.g. bees, animal fur, etc.) when on the tour, so you can keep the tourist away from these things that they are also allergic to;
7. Keep an allergy chart with pictures on to help understand tourists' allergies.

Cell Phones

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer professionally and clearly with your name and a suitable greeting E.g. Sabaidee, Sone speaking". • Only take business and emergency calls • Excuse yourself from the tour group if you have to take an emergency call • Set your phone to vibrate mode while on duty • Set your phone up with an auto-text message which says 'sorry, I am busy guiding and will call you at the next available opportunity' • Ask your family/friends to rather sms you if they need to get hold of you while on tour • Give you cell phone number to tour group members, so that they can contact you if they get lost from the group during tour time/in an emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer the phone with only 'hello/sabaidee' unless you know the caller and it is personal. • Take personal calls; chat to friends on the phone while on duty (during tour time) • Send text messages or engage in text conversations unless these are work related • Answer the phone when talking to tour group members

Work and Private Life

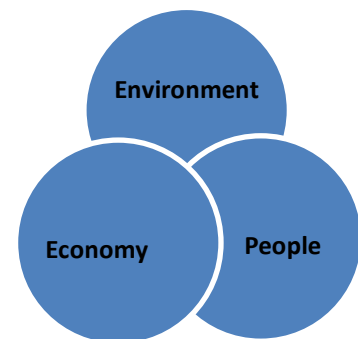
Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work during working hours and only talk to family/friends when not with the tour group (after-hours) • Ask for your Operations Manager if you can meet once a month to talk about the various tour groups (keep a diary of each tour group), so that you can learn from different tours and be a better guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do personal jobs like shopping while on a tour or with a tour group • Bring friends or family along on the tour – this is work time, not social time. • Take your own photos on tour • Change the itinerary to see or do something for yourself (and of no or little interest to tour group)

2. Topic 2: Responsible Tourism

Make sure the tours you lead don't negatively change/damage the local culture, people or the environment but rather have positive economic effects on the communities you visit.

Responsible Tourism is tourism that is careful about the effect of tourism on:

- The Environment
- The People in the community
- The Economy



Let's look at each of these, and see what it is a tour guide needs to do and say to set the right example for responsible tourism behaviour.

Think about the needs of the environment and the people in the community:

- Do not operate tours at times/on days that communities see as 'restricted' in some way (e.g. because of religious or other beliefs, due to local customs and traditions)
- Do not enter areas that the community says are private or sacred
- Walk only on proper paths
- Do not go too close to some animals, activities, people, buildings or other special events
- Ask tourists not to look at and/or interfere in certain activities – or start talking to local people unless you say it is okay.
- Tell and show tourists important local manners – and what is normal and acceptable, as well as what is not allowed or might upset the local people
- Don't let too many tourists enter an area at once – so that they don't have a bad effect and so that they don't interfere with normal activities
- Ask tourists not to stare at locals

- Tell tourists to ask before taking photographs – or tell them not to take cameras or cell phones into certain areas

2.1. The Environment

The earth is in big trouble, and many developed countries know about the problems that are affecting the planet. People from these countries usually think about how their actions affect the environment, and will notice these things when travelling in Laos. The issues are:

Environmental problem	What is it?
Global Warming	<p>The earth’s temperature is increasing (getting hotter) because of more greenhouse gases in the air, especially carbon dioxide. We can fight global warming by doing fewer activities that make greenhouse gases – e.g. leaving lights on, running air conditioners when not in rooms, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Save energy!
Climate change	<p>Global warming causes extreme weather conditions – droughts, floods, huge storms, etc.</p> <p>Laos: effects: hotter days, floods and droughts, fires, landslides, erosion, tropical storms, and disease epidemics.</p> <p>Example: Mekong flooding in Vientiane in 2008, then a drought of the river</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fight climate change: save energy and water, and recycle rubbish
Water Conservation	<p>Many places in the world are very dry. Even countries with lots of water have to clean the water so that it is safe for drinking. This costs money and electricity, leading to greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Save water!
Biodiversity and habitat destruction	<p>Many types of animals, plants, fish, birds etc. are dying out due to their habitats (places where they live) being destroyed – or from global warming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fight global warming! ▪ Protect all living things: don’t pollute the environment and protect habitats!
Waste management	<p>Rubbish has a huge effect on the environment – it poisons the ground, air and water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don’t litter! ▪ Reduce, reuse, recycle: save resources and energy: Do not throw things away but rather use them again in some way ▪ Encourage your tour group to use less plastic bags and plastic bottles,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IDEA: ask your Tour Operator to think about ways to save on plastic bottles because travellers use thousands of plastic water bottles each year. What about giving them a branded, refillable, water bottle at the beginning of a tour?
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The tour guide and tourist must not do things that can damage or harm the environment in any way.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only take photos • Only leave footprints • Buy souvenirs or products made from local and renewable products • Keep litter in the vehicle to throw away in a proper garbage can • Pick up your rubbish, and even someone else's! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take natural items as souvenirs: shells, rocks, plants, animal products • Buy wildlife products, especially from endangered animals (these are animals that have very few left in the world and in Laos) • Leave anything behind, like rubbish in any form! No water bottles, Coke/ cold-drink cans, cigarette butts, chewing gum, snack packets, etc. • Damage the natural environment: break trees, pollute water sources • Throw anything out of the vehicle! • Waste water • Leave electrical equipment running – lights, fans, air-conditioners, etc. where no one needs them straight away.

2.2. The People

Whatever you do, you and the tourists must always consider the local people, their needs, their culture, and their way of life. A tour guide should guide the tourists in the most proper behaviour to respect the culture and not upset the people of Laos.

These guidelines show you how to behave. Share and tell these to tourists so that they know what to do to not upset or confuse local communities.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress and behave in a way that shows respect for the tour site, especially temples, religious sites or ceremonies • Dress neatly and moderately (don't show too much skin). Dress is important and first impressions count and tell people what to think of you. • Ask before taking photos of people and sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give treats or money to children begging • Hug and kiss in public, or touch any people without permission • Touch sacred items or sacred sites without permission • Buy antique Buddha's or sacred items • Promote or engage in sex tourism, especially with children

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy new, quality, handmade products and not items that belong to the heritage (history) of the country • Report sex tourism, especially with children 	

2.2.1. Cultural host

You are a 'cultural host' for tourists that you guide in Laos.

You help the tourist to understand the local people and sites. You need to:

- teach tourists to learn about local cultures in a sensitive way; and
- introduce tourists into the local community in a way that does not cause any problems, and helps the local people to be comfortable and welcome foreign tourists.

Being a cultural host is a major role of a Tour Guide and is important because it:

- helps tourists connect with the locals, the local culture and local people/communities;
- explains things which may cause 'culture shock' to some tourists; and
- helps tourists understand local surroundings and the local experience.

This is important so that visitors do not damage or harm any place they visit, or person they meet because they don't know what is right.

This role is also important in situations where the tour group members cannot speak the local language and they need you to help with communication.

2.2.2. Need to respect local culture

It is important for Tour Guides to show tourists how to show respect local culture for the following reasons:

- meet expectations of tour group members;
- meet the advertising promises made about the tour;
- help lower negative impacts of tour on local communities;
- teach tourists about the country, area and communities;
- show respect for sacred sites of the local area which are important to local people; and
- develop a good relationship with the local community and the tour company/ tour groups by always showing respect for beliefs, customs and other important parts of the culture.

Ways to show respect for local culture:

- respect and follow any arrangements that a Tour Operator has made between them and local communities – about what tourists can and cannot do in the community

- ask permission from locals – before doing certain things:
 - never just think that it is OK
 - always ask before you do something
- always use common sense – but if not sure, do whatever is best for the community or local people;
- understand the local culture so that you can explain it properly - many tourists might understand or believe things about the culture differently;
- tell short personal stories to help tourists understand the local culture better;
- lead by example – What you do is an example for tourists as they will follow/copy what the leader does;
- be sensitive to issues about culture – for example:
 - gender
 - age
 - dress
 - what to call people
- keep secrets about certain things that locals do not want ‘outsiders’ to know about; (private things) and
- support the local community – which may involve:
 - pay entry fees or other fees to local communities;
 - buy goods and services from locals;
 - encourage visitors to buy from the locals; and
 - use a guide from the local community to help do local tours of certain areas.

1.3. The Economy

The economic part of responsible tourism is about trying to make sure that tourists spend some money in the local area so that the local people can get value from tourism. The following ideas will help you to understand and to also share with tourists.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people to spend money on local products or souvenirs made locally • Eat in local restaurants, shop in local markets, buy local fruit, etc. to support local traders and farmers • Buy products that are marked ‘Fair Trade’: this makes sure people are paid fair pay for work done and use ‘environmentally friendly’ materials when making products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy imported products and souvenirs if there are local products available. • Eat mainly in large or international hotel restaurants (buffets, etc.) • Give really big tips or pay too much for something as it encourages people to beg or overcharge.

2. Topic 3: Research Skills

As a good guide, you need to keep updating your knowledge so you can share the latest and most correct information with the tourists you guide.

This is not too difficult to do if you have a few research skills and tricks, and if you like to read!

Remember: You don't have to know everything!! In fact, you cannot know everything!

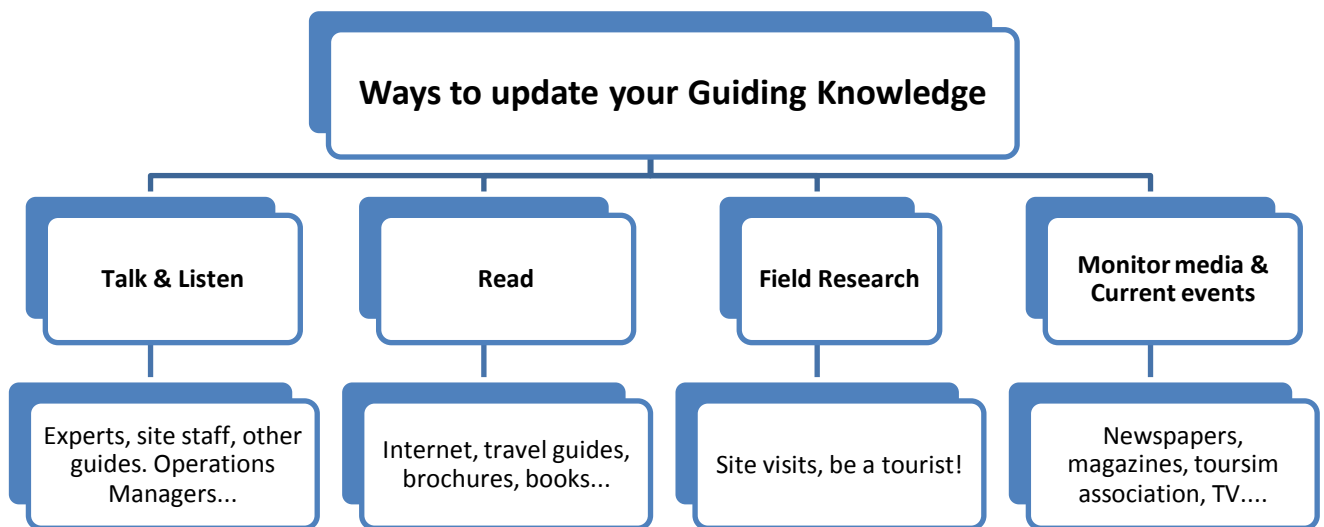
There are experts who will support you in what you do – site guides, experts on the coffee farms, etc. They will know more about the subject than you do.

You need to know when and where you MUST know something, and when and where you can use an expert instead of yourself! If there is no expert available, then you will have to learn about it so that you can give good information to the tourists.

3.1 Ways to Update Guiding Knowledge

You can use different ways to research and update your knowledge and to find information. However, make sure that the research method you choose is:

- easily available – you can easily find and use it in the local area: e.g. library
- low cost/cheap to use – rather use your time instead of your money.



7.1.1. Talk and listen

You can learn a lot if you talk and listen to different people like:

- **Visit communities/sites** which will be visited on the tour/discussed on the tour and talk to the community and people in the sites.
- **Learn from 'site guides'** who work at destinations/places that are included in tours – these are the private tour guides who work at the site/attractions to deliver tours for that specific site/location and nothing else. They always have good quality information about the place where they work.
- **Speak with key people** from the local tourism department (DICT), travel agent association (Champasak Travel Agent Association (CTAA)) – as these people always have:
 - good local knowledge;
 - access to lots of deeper information; and
 - contacts which can help you find out more information.
- **Talk to other Tour Guides** – this includes:
 - other Tour Guides from in your Tour Operator company;
 - Tour Guides who work for *other* Tour Operators; and
 - private/self-employed Tour Guides.
- **Operations Manager** – should be able to tell you where the tourist comes from, where the tourist is going, tourist ages, what they like, name of the tourists' previous guide, allergies, etc.

Sources:

Tour Operators and Wholesalers: they can give you information like:

- example tour and travel packages: itineraries
- prices
- terms and conditions
- policies and procedures
- understanding of:
 - customers, visitors and tour groups;
 - tourist needs, wants and favourites; and
 - experiences with groups.

Venue Operators: These provide excellent information like:

- advertising brochures
- opening days and times
- entry fees
- special attractions, displays and events
- facilities at the venue
- meals, food and drinks available on site

- where and how to get to an attraction
- booking and ticket information

Network of personal contacts

It is important to develop a network of people who are useful to you in your guiding work. These could include:

- **Tour Guides** – from different employers and who do different tour types
- **local Tour Operators** and travel agents
- carriers (transport operators like bus companies or taxis)
- venue operators (e.g. Vat Phou)
- government officials
- people at local Tourist Information Centres.

Formal industry organisations

These can include:

- professional Tour Guide bodies and industry associations like CTAA
- government and semi-government authorities
- heritage groups like UNESCO (with sites like Vat Phou, Luang Prabang, Plain of Jars).

Local people

Examples are:

- community leaders and elders
- people who have been in the area a long time
- experts with very good knowledge of local topics.

7.1.2. Read

Improve your knowledge by reading information that you can get from local sites like Vat Phou, coffee farms, and so on. You will find information brochures, marketing materials and leaflets given by:

- destinations;
- attractions;
- businesses;
- activities;
- local tourism bodies; and
- government tourism agencies.

Sources:

- **Books** – and other reference sources. Good sources of information are:
 - guide books – such as Lonely Planet, DK, National Geographic

- newspaper and magazine articles
 - history books
 - reports or government publications on e.g. statistics
 - travel and tour promotional brochures.
- **Internet research:**
 - visit and download information from web sites of:
 - destinations and attractions (e.g. <http://www.vatphou-champassak.com>)
 - government agencies/tourism authority
 - websites that have specific information that you need,
 - Create a 'Travel' folder under 'Favourites' and 'Bookmark' any interesting website so that you can easily go back to them when you want to
 - Be prepared to:
 - print interesting pages/information
 - follow links on pages to other sites
 - take notes from the pages visited.

7.1.3. Field Research

Field research means to go to different places and find things out for yourself. These places can include sites, attractions and destinations and when you are there you should:

- talk to staff/employees and management;
- be a tourist in those locations; and
- get printed copies of their brochures and other information.

Some operators will provide free tours to Tour Guides who explain they are visiting to learn information to give to tourists.

7.1.4. Monitor Media and Current Events

The media means 'newspapers, TV, magazines etc. It is important to keep up with these because it will help you know about new things, and what is happening at the time. You should

- read travel and tourism sections of newspapers and magazines;
- make a note of articles and advertisements in newspapers that show new businesses, changes in businesses or products, developments in the tourism industry;
- listen to local radio to hear about what is happening at the moment and about any changes to things that affect you; and
- watch television – to see travel and tourism programmes and relevant documentaries.

Sources:

- **CTAA** – meetings to find out what is new and developing in the local and national industry
- **Magazines and newspapers:** Vientiane Mai newspaper, Vientiane Times newspaper (inside the back page is a listing of events happening in Vientiane, and some of these are of interest to tourists)

7.1.5. Other activities to upskill yourself as a guide

Training courses	<p>Training may be provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism industry companies such as carriers, providers, suppliers, important industry organisations, associations and/or government organisations/authorities; and • training schools. <p>These courses may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be free or you may have to pay for them; • give you some type of qualification • be delivered at a tourism site or at some other place like a hotel or meeting room
FAM tours	<p>FAM (familiarisation) tours are offered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industry attractions; • venues; • sites; • they are provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of charge; • To industry staff • Fam trips teach tour guides and others about the site’s products, their services and helps them know how they operate and how you should work with them • Arrange these in advance: call the site and ask for a special fam visit or tour. • Get some other tour guides to go with you so you can all learn together.
Professional Guiding Association	<p>Tour Guides join a professional guiding association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so that you can meet other tour guides and tourism people; • so that you can learn from, and share experiences with similar people; • get information that will help you in your job, advise on Tour Guiding issues – like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ employment opportunities;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ employment terms and conditions; ▪ career possibilities; and ▪ legal requirements placed on Tour Guides and operators. <p>Visit the following to help you understand what professional tour guiding associations offer:</p> <p>http://www.wftga.org/ - World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations</p> <p>http://www.seatga.org/ - South East Asia Tourist Guides Association</p>
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8. Topic 4: Tour Guiding Ethics

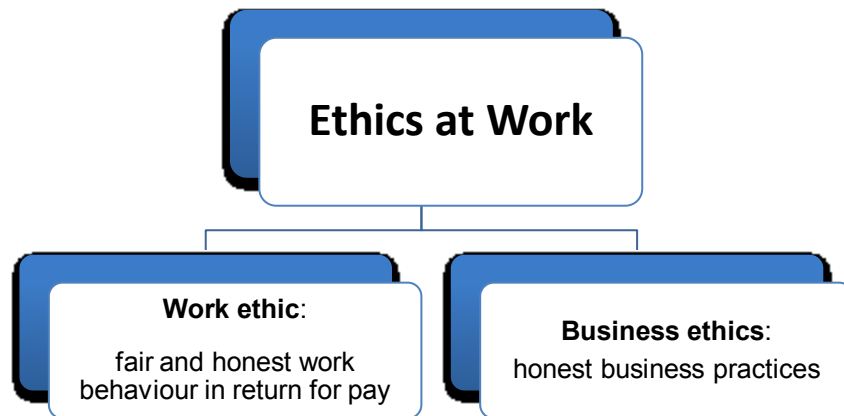
Definition: Ethics

- Moral principles, standards of conduct (behaviour), or set of values governing proper behaviour in the workplace
- Moral rules, ways of behaving, or a set of values that show proper behaviour in the workplace

Ethical behaviour:

- Always acting within rules of correct moral behaviour or following acceptable professional ways of doing things.

There are two types of ethics at work:



Ethics are certain rules that tell you how to behave and what to do. In simple terms, this is knowing what is right and what is wrong and then doing the right thing. Sometimes it is difficult to clearly see the difference between right and wrong. This topic will help you make the right ethical decisions.

8.1. Work Ethic

Work ethic means that workers who work hard and stick to the rules will be rewarded and will move ahead, and that those who do not, will not enjoy much success at work.

Work ethics show many things about a person. Work ethics how you feel about your job, but also how you do your job. This involves attitude, behaviour, honesty, respect, communication and how you get along with others.

Guides that have a good work ethic get more work; a more stable income and a good reputation with the travel agencies/ Tour Operators. Guides with a bad work ethic will not get so many bookings, or will only be booked by less respected travel agents.

Work ethic includes :

- commitment;
- being on time;
- loyalty;
- respect for your employer/where you work;
- diligence; and
- pride in own work.

Good Work Ethic	Poor Work Ethic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive and leave on time • Behave properly • Keep guest privacy • Being a good team player • Work all your hours • Respect your employer • Be loyal to your employer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show up late/ leave early • Gossip • Ignore tourists • Make private calls • Talk badly about your employer

Ethical challenges: different people have different ideas about what is right and wrong. Sometimes the line between right and wrong is not clear. These situations can lead to ethical problems on how you should behave. When you have an ethical problem or you need to decide how to act, ask yourself:

- Is my decision fair to everyone involved?
- Will it make the travel agent/Tour Operator look good and bring in repeat business?
- Is the decision good for everyone involved?

When you can answer these four questions truthfully with a "yes," it is likely that the decision is ethical.

Another way to make sure that your decisions are ethical is to ask yourself how you would feel if what you did were published in a newspaper. If you would be comfortable to have your family, colleagues, friends, and other people find out what you did, chances are that your decision is an ethical one. However, if you would not want anybody to know what you have done, you probably need to rethink your decision.

8.2. Business Ethics

Business ethics means you understand what is right or wrong while guiding, then doing what is right. Business ethics guide you on the right thing to do in any situation when you are working. Remember:

- do no harm;
- make things better; and
- respect others and their property.

Importance of ethical business decisions

Rewards of Acting Ethically	Consequences of Acting Unethically
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reputation • Repeat bookings • Gain the respect of travel agents and colleagues • Earn trust • Happy tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer bookings • Lose respect and credibility • Unhappy tourists

8.3. Tour Guiding Ethics

Ethics in tour guiding applies to three areas of the job:

1. **Content** of guiding: what you say
2. **Behaviour** of guiding: what you do
3. **Management** of tours and activities: what you manage and organise



There are certain ethics that you should always show when you are guiding a tour group. These are:

Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be truthful and honest about information you give to tourists, never ever make up information; and • provide products and services that were advertised and promised in the tour itinerary
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not get another guide to do a tour you have committed to: A professional guide will accept each tour as a serious commitment and will cancel only if it is an emergency, and will tell the tour operator as long as possible before the tour starts; • declare your income for tax purposes. If not, the tax office will act against your employer – which is not fair and puts them in a bad situation; • deliver tour guide services in a way which is sensitive to local social, economic and environmental issues – meeting the principles of Responsible Tourism; • do not pay bribes or charge tourists for special services you give them outside of the itinerary. These are types of unethical behaviour. If you practice any of these, you could prevent yourself from getting more work, but may also cause problems with the law; • show respect for local communities, local culture, sites and the environment, behaving in such a way as a Tour Guide that will result in on-going operations; • never ask tourists to go on tours with you without going through your employer or ask for tips; • do not buy or sell (illegal) items or make a profit from tourists other than what is included in a tour guiding contract (fees or commissions); and • do not write to the tourists unless the employer/ tour company has said that you may and given you permission. Check with the tour

	<p>company if you are allowed to keep in touch with tourists about any tour-related things; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • always be loyal to the tour company that employs you for the tour.
Tour Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not change the itinerary to go to places/shops/suppliers where you will get special commissions – especially if this changes the quality of the tour and puts the reputation of the Tour Operator at risk; • do not leave out activities or stops because you feel like it or you want to finish early; and • provide value for money experiences – make sure the tour gives the tourist what they expect and paid for.

An ethical Tour Guide will:

- do what is best for the tour group;
- let your employer/tour company know about personal interests, family connections or financial arrangements with sites, businesses or destinations visited on tour;
- be honest in all your communication;
- never lie or make people get the wrong idea about anything;
- follow all rules, laws, regulations and company policies; and
- do not ask for tips/gratuities.

Industry Codes

These are guidelines on behaviour that are agreed to by a group of guides, usually in a Tour Guides Association. There is an international organisation to which most tour guide associations belong; the World Federation of Tour Guide Associations. The WFTGA has an international code for tour guides.

<http://www.wftga.org/tourist-guiding/code-guiding-practice> - The code of guiding practice

Ethics can be difficult...what is good behaviour for one person may not be good behaviour for another.

A tip is to let your feeling of right and wrong guide you in decision making when you are not sure of the ethics of a situation.

Ethics are not set in stone – there is no fixed checklist or perfect plan to guide us in wrong or right. If you are not sure, ask yourself some questions before you act:

1. Is this legal?
2. Is it against our policy?
3. Could the action cause loss or harm to anyone?
4. If anyone I knew saw me, would I feel comfortable with my action?

Orphanages and Schools: Is it ethical to visit them?

Many travellers want to visit schools and orphanages and don't think anything is wrong with this ... when actually this creates problems for the teacher and the children.

- Do not visit orphanages and schools – children are not tourist attractions

Topic 5: Representing a Brand

What is a brand?

A unique symbol, mark, logo, name, word, sentence or a combination of these items that companies use to make their product different from others in the market.

Many brands are recognised all over the world, and the companies that own them spend a lot of money to get people to know and recognise these brands.

A brand is powerful and can cause repeat business: people are loyal to a brand and will buy the same product over and over again. Consider examples like Coke, Mercedes Benz, Toyota, Samsung, etc.

Travel brands spend a lot of money and time promoting their brand so that tourists buy Laos tours (and other holidays) with that brand.

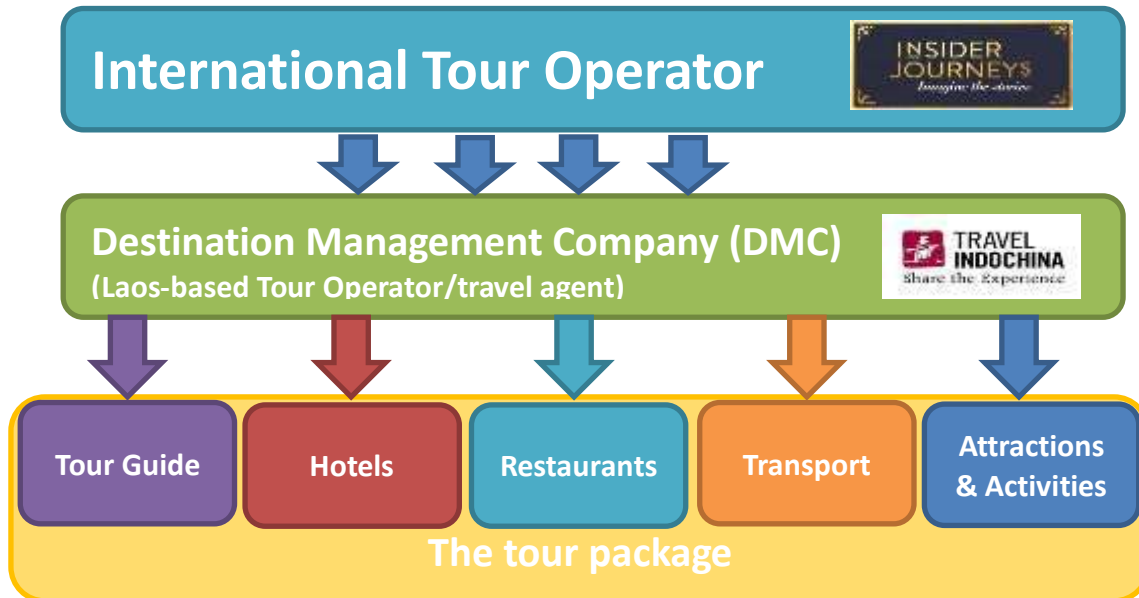
It is therefore important that you know the name of the brand you represent so that the good work you do is linked with that brand, and leads to (hopefully) more business for the brand.

Each brand has its own style it offers its tourists, and the guide must understand what this is in order to represent the brand properly. For example, Green Discovery is an adventure and eco-tourism brand. Insider Journeys is a brand that stands for quality small group travel, etc.

5.1 Distribution channels

The tour operating distribution channel: simplified using a real example:

Insider Journeys, who contracts with Travel Indochina to do their tours in Laos. The diagram below explains this.



The DMC Brand: e.g. Travel Indochina (TIC)	The International TO Brand: e.g. Insider Journeys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The official name of the Asia businesses • Contracting of suppliers, including guides, done by TIC • Reservations by TIC • Invoices still to TIC • Invoices paid by TIC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIC airport transfer slips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IJ is the main account for TIC Asia offices • AU, UK, USA sales offices are IJ offices • All pax from IJ offices & all SGJ pax are IJ pax & get IJ branding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IJ airport transfer boards • IJ vehicle magnets • IJ guide & driver uniforms • IJ welcome kits & surveys • IJ airport transfer slips

General Branding: what this means for TIC

While on the job, the guide works for two organisations:

1. **The employing organisation** (the local Tour Operator) who contracts the guide, and to whom invoices are send and payments are received

2. **The sales market brand.** This is the brand that the clients have bought and need to see they are getting.

There are some Tour Operators that aren't like the above example. The Tour Operator sometimes has its own brand, this means that both the Tour Operator and the sales market brand will be the same.

5.2 International Brand Standards

As a tour guide, you have to know and present the rules of the organisation employing you. That is:

1. **Code of Conduct and behaviour**
2. **Dress and uniform:** wear the livery (uniform) of the organisation and make sure it is always clean and in good condition. Examples include:
 - branded shirts, caps, jackets; and
 - correct colour trousers/skirts and shoes.
3. **Standard of guiding:** knowledge and skill of the specific tour you have been booked for
4. **Health and safety:** specific procedures, equipment, safety checks, insurance forms, etc. Rules of health and safety must be kept – especially for adventure activities like kayaking, boating, cycling, zip-lining, hiking, etc. These activities often have special guides who have been trained in the safety procedures and rules of the activity, as well as safety equipment and how to use it. Make sure that you follow all the rules that have been made for these activities.
5. **Brand Style:** each travel brand has its own style, and you must know, understand and present that style to the clients. If you are not sure of this, ask the Operations Managers who will help you to understand what it is, and what is expected of you. It may include:
 - how you dress;
 - how you talk to people;
 - the types of activities you do; and/ or
 - the types of information you give.