

Creating a Partnership Between the Tour Host and Tour Manager: Supplement for Travel Planner Forum

Managing the Group Experience

Travelers select a particular tour for a variety of reasons. It may be a unique destination, or a particular lecturer, or the time of year that attracts them. Or they may be celebrating a certain holiday or anniversary by visiting a different part of the world. Whatever their personal motivations, it is significant to note that

1. they have chosen a *group tour*, which means they are expecting the camaraderie of a group experience, and
2. they have chosen a *Notre Dame* group tour, which shows they expect to specifically experience the camaraderie of fellow Notre Dame graduates and others who have a strong affinity for Notre Dame.

The satisfactory delivery of these two expectations is determined by the Host. You will set the tone and ensure that participants enjoy the experience they are seeking.

Travel Staff Team

- **Tour Manager**

This person is responsible for all of the logistical operations of the tour, from departure until return. The **Tour Manager** is an employee of the travel operator that is offering the tour and serves as that company's agent in all aspects of *running* the tour. This is the person who knows about accommodations, destinations, facilities, and local customs. The **Tour Manager** is responsible for daily logistics and sightseeing excursions as well as managing the local staff. The **Tour Host** must be in daily communication with the **Tour Manager** to be aware of the daily schedule and changes therein and especially of any problems that might arise.

This is the most important person for you to meet and get to know. As soon as possible, introduce yourself to the **Tour Manager**. Suggest a short meeting during which you will be briefed on the basic routine of the tour. Please ask the following:

- Confirm plans to attend Mass. The NDAA staff makes an effort to pre-plan Mass options for the group. If there is not a Catholic church available, and you are comfortable doing so, you can choose to lead the group in a Prayer Service. Whatever the case, make sure the details are communicated to the travelers.
- The NDAA staff makes every effort to pre-plan a private ND reception near the beginning of the trip for the travelers. Many times the exact date and time are determined once the **Tour Host** arrives to the destination. Coordinate these details with the **Tour Manager** and complete the reception invitations provided to you by the NDAA to invite the travelers to the reception.
- Make every effort to dine with each traveler during the trip. Consult with the NDAA staff on the best method to arrange this as it varies from land trip to cruise.
- Are you scheduled to lecture? If so, confirm the date, time and location with the **Tour Manager**. If you have A/V needs, this will be pre-planned for you, but confirm and test the system, if possible.
- Can the **Tour Manager** provide an updated listing of ND travelers with room or cabin numbers?
- Is it a problem if you attach the photo magnets to the cabin door on a cruise? (If this is an expectation, NDAA staff will provide you with the magnets and details)
- In case of an emergency with a ND traveler, would the **Tour Manager** please contact you immediately?
- Will the **Tour Manager** be willing to take a group photo? If so, please use your phone or camera and be sure to provide the photo to NDAA staff en-route or upon your return, whichever is most convenient.
- Where is the best place to meet informally with our travelers on a daily basis before dinner?
- Is it possible to fly the ND flag on the ship for a period of time? If so, find out when and let the travelers know so they can see it and take photos.

- **Local Staff**

The staff includes any local operator representatives, bus drivers, local guides, baggage handlers, and all other individuals hired by the travel operator in each place we visit. All local staff is hired to help the tour run smoothly for everyone. On cruises, the local staff includes the employees aboard the ship.

- **Lecturers**

The lecturers are experts in the areas to be visited and the educational theme of the tour. They are hired and managed by the travel operator. All of the trips offered will include a heavy educational component, which is one of the defining aspects of our trips.

- **Tour Host (University Host)**

In other words, YOU! On the tour, you will be an important member of the team. It is imperative that all the team members work together to ensure that the tour meets Notre Dame standards of quality. As the Tour Host, you are **not** responsible for the operation of the tour or the logistical details of running the tour, but you are in charge of the overall perception of the tour.

Overall Expectations:

In active participation with the other members of the travel staff team, you will develop a shared work ethic based upon *communication* and *trust*. Here are some guidelines for fostering good relations with the travel staff:

- Communicate frequently. All team members must feel informed and involved. Let each other know what is happening each step of the way.
- Hold daily meetings with the **Tour Manager** and appropriate members of the local Staff. Note: Never hold staff meetings or discussions in front of tour participants. They should have the pleasure of a smoothly run tour without ever being aware of the behind the scenes work required to make it happen.
- Be clear and open about differences of opinion. There is no room on the trip for anything except honest communication. You need one another to make the tour a success. Always resolve differences with the good of the group in mind.
- Help each other at every opportunity. Offer your assistance frequently. The local tour guide and **Tour Manager** are responsible for making sure everyone is accounted for, and you can help. Count heads before a bus, train, or plane departure to give travelers a sense of security and to avoid leaving someone behind.
- As **Tour Host**, your words speak for the entire group. Compliment others. Say “thank you” often. Be quick to praise any job well done.

Problem Traveler

If you encounter a problem traveler - one who drinks too much, treats others rudely, or regularly keeps the rest of the group waiting - their behavior threatens the enjoyment of the entire group. Discuss the situation with the **Tour Manager** and try to reach a solution. Determine which staff member(s) should speak directly with the individual, and do so promptly. If necessary, arrange for the individual to buy a return ticket for their immediate use.