

# 10

# QUALITIES

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## EVERY TOUR GUIDE SHOULD HAVE

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### 1. You need to be charismatic:

While there's only one tour guide, there can be numerous people on a tour, from 2 to 5 to 20 or more. Each and every person on your tour is looking for information and more importantly, entertainment, from their guide for the most part of a day. As a result, a tour guide needs charisma. Lots and lots of charisma.

Charisma can come naturally... but it can also come with practice. Every day on tour, look for opportunities to charm your group. Also, think about opportunities before you embark on tours and experiment with them during the tour to figure out tactics to delight your crowd.

### 2. You must be knowledgeable:

You can be the most charismatic tour guide in the world, but if you don't know your stuff then you'll lose your audience. A tour guide's job is, among other things, to know exactly what they're talking about. This means facts, figures and anything else somebody on a tour might throw at them.

Make sure you're clued up on everything you need to know and, whenever you answer a question thrown at you by somebody on your tour, think about how you've answered it and if you can respond better the next time.

### 3. You should be a good communicator:

If you're extremely knowledgeable and equally charismatic, but you don't interact with your group, it's going to make them feel like they're following their history teacher around. It will also feel like it's all one-way in terms of communication.

Vacations aren't about sitting and listening to other people – they're about chatting and meeting people. This could be fellow travellers or the people guiding them on tours or activities. Make sure to engage with the people you're guiding and give them one more person to remember their trip by

### 4. You need to be a good storyteller:

People love hearing about the history of a city or the facts behind a glacier, but they also really, *really* like listening to stories. Since you're in the travel business, chances are you've got one or two to tell about a destination, artifact or something else.

Storytelling is no mean feat – it's down to timing, the length of the story, punchlines (if there are any) and more. Know exactly when you're going to tell a story, decide how long it should be and practice it over and over again until you've completely nailed it.

### 5. You must have good organization skills:

Timing is key when you're a tour guide. You need to be at certain places at certain times, then at those places you can only spend a given amount of time – spending any more or less time than you're supposed to can throw off the entire itinerary for the day.

Look at your itinerary and make sure you know where you need to be and when. Then, every day when you're at those places, review your time spent there and decide if the amount of time spent there was sufficient – do you need more time or do you need less?

Additionally, you might need to hold on to a bunch of entrance tickets to get your group into a national park or you might need to take care of a heap of bus tickets. Organisation, when you're a tour guide, is key.

## 6. You need a good sense of humor:

You don't need to be a standup comic to be a tour guide, but being able to liven things up with a joke here or there certainly helps. While making fun of one of the members of your group can be risky, making fun of yourself is one way you can try to wrangle a smile from your group.

Other methods can include bringing humor into aforementioned stories, having lighthearted facts or taking advantage of (what could be) a funny situation on the spot.

## 7. You must be empathetic:

When you're dealing with multiple people in a host of situations, you're bound to occasionally find yourself in uncompromising situations with some members of your group. For these instances, empathy is key.

You might be dealing with somebody who has just heard bad news from back home, or somebody who has an embarrassing fear or somebody who has a disability. Just know that with a little more empathy, a lot more understanding and problem solving can be done.

## 8. You need to think on your feet:

As a tour guide, your day can be unpredictable. The weather can quickly change, things can break, your tour group could be very different from the last. It's so important to be flexible, prepared, and a master at improvisation. It will take time to be able to plan for any situation, but the key thing is to learn each time something happens.

One way to be prepared is to have items available. This could be a handy first aid kit, rain ponchos, a back-up tour route if you need to change. Having a plan in place will ensure your customers still have a great experience!

## 9. You should have a good sense of direction:

It may seem obvious, but some people don't have a natural sense of direction or can be hindered in a stressful situation. You never know when you might need to go off route, so a good sense of direction is key.

Another thing that any tour guide will know is that customers tend to ask you for local information. Where to hire a car? Where is the doctor's office? Where to go for dinner? By doing your research, you can offer something extra to your customer's experience.

## 10. You must be passionate about being a tour guide:

If you aren't excited about what you do or sharing an experience with new people, then being a tour guide probably isn't the right job for you. Customers are paying for a memorable experience, and whether this is trip number 1 or trip 10,000, they should never know.

A real passion for what you do does shine through, so always remember to share that with your customers. You will see it reflected in reviews every time!

