Heart of England
Blue Badge Tourist Guide
Training Programme

2027 - 2028 Prospectus

Training Provider
The British Guild of Tourist Guides

Course Programme Accredited by
The Institute of Tourist Guiding

Programme Aims: The programme aims to prepare students to enter the tourist industry as professionally qualified and registered, (*Blue Badge*) Tourist Guides for The Heart of England tourism region. Registered tourist guides are qualified by examinations set and administered by The Institute of Tourist Guiding, the government-approved standard-setting and registration body for the tourist guiding sector in England, Northern Ireland and Jersey. Those students who are successful in these examinations will be awarded the Institute's Blue Badge photocard, which will be renewed annually upon registration". The "*Blue Badge*" is the symbol of this national qualification. The programme forms a foundation for continuing professional development in tourist guiding.

The training course covers key tourism market focus areas in central England in which guides will be qualified to accept tour guiding assignments. These Market Focus areas are included in the *Blue Badge* Tourist Guiding region described by the Institute of Tourist Guiding as the Heart of England. Some of these counties/areas are also included in training programmes for other regions, for example, the Gloucestershire Cotswolds is also part of the South West region and Oxford is part of the South-Central region.

To benefit most from Tourism market opportunities, the Heart of England region will incorporate five **Central England Market Focus areas**. **The Heart of England region** in which guides will be qualified to accept tour guiding assignments will be:-.

1	**Central Midlands**	Birmingham, Black Country, South Staffs, North Worcs.
2	**Oxford & the Cotswolds**	Nth Oxfordshire inc City of Oxford, Cheltenham, The North and South Cotswolds National Landscape area
3	**Severn and Wye valleys and the Marches**	Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, South Worcestershire, Shropshire
4	**Shakespeare Country & Coventry**	Warwickshire, West Midlands and Coventry
5	**Staffordshire and the Potteries**	North Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, the Moorlands.

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For examination purposes, the Market Focus areas can be defined as falling within the county boundaries of:

Gloucestershire
Herefordshire
North Oxfordshire & Oxford
Shropshire
Staffordshire
Warwickshire
West Midlands
Worcestershire

Programme Objectives: By the end of the programme students will be able to:

- Present an effective tour commentary
- Select the most appropriate routes, sites and stopping places for that tour
- Demonstrate an understanding of the composition of the area in order to satisfy the interests of the visitors
- Maintain an appropriate time schedule
- Have a regard for the health and safety of both the visitors and staff and be confident in preparing a Risk Assessment for any tour.
- Demonstrate an ability to work both as an individual and as a member or leader of a team
- Demonstrate relevant management skills – dealing with for e.g. late arrivals, bad weather, road closures
- Demonstrate a range of effective and appropriate communication skills

Programme Content: There are four components to a *Blue Badge* Tourist Guide Training Programme.

1. *Core Knowledge* - giving a wide cultural background to Britain.
2. *Local/Regional Knowledge of the Heart of England* - giving an in-depth local and regional knowledge of the counties and tourist destinations within the Tourism region.
3. *Guiding Techniques* - communication and presentation skills for guiding on foot, in sites and on a moving vehicle (generally a coach). *Virtual Tours* - Provision of on-line tours.
4. *Business and Marketing Skills - working as a self-employed guide in the tourist industry*, including Risk assessment.

Subjects include (within a national and regional context):
Core Knowledge: Architecture & Gardens, The Arts: Paintings, Sculpture, Literature, Performing Arts, Music, Screen Tourism, Furniture, Geography, History, Life in the United Kingdom today.

Heart of England regional Knowledge: *covering the above, and including Town and City Walks, Guiding in a Museum/Art Gallery and a religious site, guiding on a moving vehicle.*

The Professional Guide *(Business management and Marketing for Tourist Guides).*

A Student information pack and full syllabus is provided at the start of the programme.

Programme structure: The programme is designed to be part-time, based on a 5 day introductory session and six intensive 4 day training sessions from 09:00 Thursday to 17:00 Sunday, with lectures and practical training sessions included. The four components of the Programme Content form an integrated programme of study which includes:

1. ***Lectures and Tutorials***

1.1 ***Core Knowledge*** Lectures - will be delivered 'on-line' during the period May to September 2027.

1.2 ***Regional*** - lectures will mirror the topics listed in the Core Knowledge Content, provided by a combination of a series of web-based lectures delivered via the internet direct to learner's PC's (desktop or laptop) supplemented by face to face, classroom-based lectures..The face to face lectures will be delivered during the evenings of the intensive study weekends and will be held in a variety of classrooms and study centres throughout the region. The study centres will be a mixture of hotels, commercial study centres and public/private lecture rooms, all of which will be within a short distance of overnight accommodation (hotels, B&B's etc) should learners wish to avoid travelling on a daily basis. The cost of this accommodation or travelling to the area is not included in the programme fee.

The web based, on-line lectures (for which a demonstration/tutorial will be provided) will be broadcast between 19:00 hrs - 21:00 hrs on each Monday evening between September 2027 and March 2028. Each lecture will last for up to 2 hours with an opportunity to submit questions and receive answers by email.

2. ***Practical visits*** - visits to sites, villages and towns throughout the region. Trained guides and site experts will provide training and in-depth knowledge on these visits. However, programme students will be expected to do a considerable amount of the guiding to practise guiding techniques and skills. These sessions will take place throughout the series of intensive study weekends. They are an integral and essential part of the programme and should not be missed. When coaches are used for practical sessions, the coach will cover a variety of routes, starting from different locations throughout the region on each of the training days.

3. ***Communication seminar*** - a two-day seminar, concentrating on communication techniques and presentation skills for Tourist Guides. At all times health and safety, customer care and the widest possible access for all are stressed.

4. ***Private study*** - although the programme covers a wide range of topics and visits, students will be required and expected to do a considerable amount of private study. Project work and research for the practical sessions are an essential part of the programme. Following the introductory session in April 2027 (during which guidance will be given on the personal research required), students will be required to undertake, in their own time, a full regional familiarisation. During this period, they will need to visit cities, towns, villages, geographical and tourist attractions throughout the whole region. Depending on the approach taken and any existing knowledge, it is anticipated that this familiarisation may require at least two days each week (or blocks of days as an equivalent) throughout the summer of 2027. Note however that everyone learns at a different pace and in different ways and these figures are of necessity only approximate.

We recommend that students share transport both during the summer familiarisation visits and when preparing for and attending the weekend training sessions. This not only keeps costs down, but such shared experiences provide far more enjoyable visits and the research work can be shared between students. This training does involve a lot of hard work and commitment, but creates lasting memories with discoveries made and camaraderie experienced throughout. Attendance during the introductory week provides the opportunity to explore possibilities for such teamworking throughout the course.
The holiday breaks are intended as study leave. It is expected that students will attend, participate and commit themselves fully in the programme of study. Applicants should note that there will be a wide range of locations around the Heart of England region for the practical sessions. This requires a prompt morning start, and a late finish, a characteristic of the job itself.

Please Note: It is essential for students to have:

- Availability of transport for the familiarisation visits, as public transport is, in the main, insufficient to fully cover research visits, which cover a large geographical area much of which is away from public transport routes.

- Regular access to a computer (desktop, laptop or tablet), email and a good printer, as on-line lectures, hand-outs for lectures and communications regarding changes or additions to the programme are sent out electronically.

- A dedicated mobile telephone for WhatsApp Group messages.

A Student handbook containing the full syllabus and programme will be issued to all students during the Introductory session.

Programme Duration: 1 year: May**l 2027 – April 2028**

Part One – **May to August 2027**

Wednesday May 5th to Sunday May 9th 2027 **- 5-day Introductory Session**.

Following the introductory session and during the summer period all students are required to undertake individual and team study and research, project work and detailed regional familiarisation. During this

period, Tutors will monitor individual progress and there will be two on-line Tutor/Student Group Q & A sessions.

Part Two – **September to December 2027**

During the period from 20th September 2027 – December 2027, **internet-based Regional Knowledge lectures** will be released weekly on Monday evenings from 19:00 – 21:00 (with the exception of a Christmas/New Year break on Monday 21st December and Monday 28th December 2027.) The lectures will then each be available 'on demand' for a limited period.

Communication Seminar. This will take place from Tuesday 26th October to Sunday 31st October. During this period, students will each attend for two full days. During the introductory sessions in May 2027, a choice of individual Communication 2 day Seminar session dates will be offered and finalised.

Three 4-day study sessions, starting at 09:00am on Thursday morning and finishing at 5:00pm on Sunday (Later finish on Thursday and Friday - see below) will take place on the following dates:

October: Thursday 7th to Sunday 10th
November: Thursday 4th to Sunday 7th
December: Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th
Times: During the study days, practical sessions (coach, walk, gallery and religious building) will take place from 09.00 – 17.00 on each day, with one classroom-based session from 18:00 – 20:00, on some evenings as timetabled. The training days include breaks but require concentration over an 8-hour period (longer on those evenings with additional sessions) . We recommend that, to maximise free time, where possible, students share driving duties, or consider staying overnight, locally to the Study centres.

The **Training locations** will vary each month throughout the course period, to include all five Market Focus Areas

Christmas/New Year break – continuing individual study and project work will be required over this period.

31st December. **Project submission Deadline**. Projects to be handed in for marking.

Part Three – **January to March 2028 will mirror the Part Two programme. Three 4-day study sessions** starting at 09:00am on Thursday morning and finishing at 5:00pm on Sunday (Later finish on those evenings with additional sessions) will take place on the following dates:

January 6th to 9th
February 3rd to 6th
March 2nd to 5th

Times: During the study days, **practical sessions** (coach, walk, gallery and religious building) will take place from 09.00 – 17.00 on each day, with **classroom-based sessions** from 18:00 – 19:30 on some evenings. . These training days include breaks but require concentration over an 8-hour period (longer on those evenings with additional sessions) . We recommend that, to maximise free time, where possible, students share driving duties, or consider staying overnight, locally to the Study centres.

During the period January 2028 – February 2028, on-line **lectures** (Predominantly Regional Knowledge) will be released every Monday from 19:00 – 21:00

Business knowledge and Marketing skills Seminar: Two classroom based, 1-day training days will take place, one during February 2028 and one after the examinations are completed.

Project: A 3,000-word project will be prepared by each student, chosen from a defined list of tourism subjects and this will be a part of the exam assessments. The choices will be given out in early October with a latest submission date of 31st December 2027.

Final Assessment - April 2028

Having completed the training programme, the Programme Directors will submit students for practical and written assessment, administered by the Institute of Tourist Guiding. To gain the *Blue Badge* qualification, students are required to pass all of the examinations:

Core Knowledge – Examinations are usually held twice per year, in October and April. The provision of on-line Core Knowledge lectures from May to September 2027 will enable students to study and apply to sit the Core Knowledge written examinations either in October 2027 or April 2028.

The April 2028 examinations will take place over four individual days as follows:
One day Core knowledge written examinations.
One day Heart of England Regional knowledge written examinations.
Two days Practical assessments on foot, on site and on a coach.
The days will not necessarily be consecutive.

In addition, a 3,000-word project will be prepared by each student, based on a choice of tourism subjects and this will be included in the exam assessments. The choices will be given out in early October with a latest submission date of 31st December 2027. .

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Successful applicants will be awarded the Heart of England *Blue Badge* and will be issued with the Institute's Certificate and Registered Guide photo card at an award Ceremony (Date TBC)

The National Core Knowledge paper, once passed, will be transferable to other *Blue Badge* Regions Subject to certain conditions, if the candidate were to follow a programme of study for these.

Progression/Career Opportunities: The *Blue Badge* is the highest level of Tourist Guiding qualification available. However, guides are encouraged to continually update and develop knowledge and skills. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes and events are available through the Institute and Regional Associations such as the Guild of Registered Tourist Guides and the Heart of England Tourist Guides Association. The programme will include sessions on self-employment, business planning and Risk Assessment.

Cost: The Programme fee is £5,040 and is non-refundable.

As a not for profit organisation, The Guild of Registered Tourist Guides is not required to charge VAT on course training fees. If prior to the course commencing, HMRC rules change or the interpretation is modified, the Guild reserves the right to add VAT to course fees. If, prior to the course commencing, on notification of such a VAT change an applicant wishes to withdraws his/her application, the Guild agrees to refund in full all course fees paid by that applicant.

Upon acceptance of a place on the programme, the programme fee - £5,040 is payable by 5:00pm Tuesday 20th April 2027.
The fee includes tuition, handouts, admission and supervision on practical training dates, coach travel where this is part of the training (but not driver gratuities). Included is a two-day Communications Seminar on practical presentation skills for Tourist Guides, which will take place in late October. Excluded from these fees are personal transportation costs, overnight accommodation, guide books or literature specific to historical or cultural sites and attractions.

N.B. This fee does not include the Institute of Tourist Guiding examination fees (see below).

In addition to the Programme Fee, a non-refundable Registration Fee of £30.00 is payable with the application.

Students are advised to take out suitable insurance against the cost of their personal withdrawal from the programme as no refunds will be given for withdrawal from the programme or any part of it for any reason, nor for non-use of any of the services provided. The British Guild of Tourist Guides reserves the right to cancel and refund all fees paid or to offer the programme at a higher fee if insufficient enrolments are received.

Examination Fees
Fees applicable to 2028 are subject to confirmation by the Institute of Tourist Guiding, but, as an indication, these are currently (2026) projected at around £1,783.00 per person increasing annually (figure subject to final confirmation in 2027) and will be due, direct to the Institute by 31st January 2028. There is an additional linguist test fee at a later date (currently (2026) approximately £200, increasing annually) for those of non-English mother tongue who wish to qualify to guide in a language other than their own mother tongue including English.

Programme Fees – Funding
For candidates who have been offered a place on the course it may also be possible to apply for a bursary from the British Guild of Tourist Guides for part of the fees. Details will be made available to those being offered a place and will be subject to assessment under the terms of the Guild Bursary.

The Institute of Tourist guiding
The Institute of Tourist Guiding is the standard setting body, not only for *Blue Badge* guides but for the whole of the tourist guiding sector. It provides examinations and accredits programmes which meet its standards and provides examinations for White, Green and Blue badges. The Institute also oversees and monitors the quality standards of the course by the use of a Course Visitor who attends a sample of training sessions to monitor and report on the course activity and obtain student feedback on the course. After qualifying, registration with the Institute of Tourist Guiding signifies that a Guide has achieved an accepted level of professional competence. The Institute of Tourist Guiding does not engage tourist guides but promotes the *Blue Badge* in general. Tourist Guides are listed on its web site, which is available to users of guide services.

Application and Selection
Application forms should be submitted via the course website and a bank payment made for the £30 Non-returnable Registration Fee, to: 'Guild Training - Heart of England Account', (sort code and account details are shown on the course website application form).

- **The opening date for applications will be shown on the course website, the closing date is Wednesday 31st March 2027.**
  A short-list of applicants will be asked to attend a knowledge test and interview between March and April 2027. , This will include making a short presentation, without notes, on a pre-assigned tourism topic. Candidates will be informed in writing following the interview, whether a place will be offered.

- Candidates' acceptance letters and payment must be received into the course bank account by Tuesday 20th April 2027.

- Candidates, of a minimum age of 18, will need to demonstrate an outgoing personality, smart appearance, physical stamina, good general knowledge, organisational ability, flexibility, a genuine interest in people and the motivation to develop their own business.

- Preference for places on the programme will be given to those fluent in English but whose mother tongue is other than English, English mother tongue speakers who are fluent in a foreign language, those already living in the region, those already in the tourism industry, local guides or house guides.

- Those with existing Institute of Tourist Guiding qualifications from other regions are encouraged to apply and should, in the first instance, request details of the Blue Badge Tourist Guide Candidates Scheme from the course administrator. If maximum applications are received, preference in the first instance will be given to those living in the Heart of England

The Training Team

Joint Programme Directors:

Sam Loveday Msc PTGE MITG is a Heart of England and Cumbria *Blue Badge* Guide. He has considerable experience as a *Blue Badge* Tourist Guide, is Chair of the Cumbria Tourist Guides Association and is a past chair of the Institute of Tourist Guiding Examinations Committee.

David Waite MBA FITG is a Heart of England, South-West, North-East England and Cumbria *Blue Badge* Guide, a qualified accountant, and has extensive experience in training, both in Tourist Guiding and other industries. He was Joint Programme Director on the Heart of England *Blue Badge* training programmes held in 2006/07, 2015/16 and 2018/19 and Course Director of the 2019/20 North-East England *Blue Badge* training programme. He was Programme Director for *Green Badge* training programmes for the City of Lincoln in 2003/4 and Tamworth in 2012/13 and is a Past Director, Company Secretary and Joint President of the Institute of Tourist Guiding.

Both of the Programme Directors are recognised by the Institute of Tourist Guiding as registered Trainers.

Programme Tutors and Lecturers: All programme tutors will be experienced *Blue Badge* Guides who are recognised by the Institute as registered Trainers with support from Part 1 trainers working on their training portfolio to gain full trainer status. Programme Lecturers will include, where available, university and college lecturers, *Blue Badge* Guides and local experts.

Steering Group: The programme will be monitored by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the Tourism industry which will include:

- Representatives of one or more tourism bodies covering the Heart of England region.
- The Institute of Tourist Guiding Chief Examiner
- A management representative of a regional site or attraction
- The Chair – Heart of England Tourist Guiding Association
- A representative of the British Guild of Tourist Guides
- A management representative - Coach Company and/or Tour Operator
- The Joint Programme Directors