Scottish Tourist Guides Association

STGA Blue Badge Tourist Guide Training
2027 - 2029
STUDENT PROSPECTUS

Thank You for Your Interest!

We are delighted by your interest in joining the Blue Badge course to become a qualified, successful tourist guide in Scotland and a member of our professional family.

Our Organisation

The Scottish Tourist Guides Association (STGA) is the premier professional body for qualified tourist guides in Scotland. Building on six decades of training experience, the STGA Blue Badge Training Programme incorporates key national, European, and international standards:

- STGA Standards of Performance & Code of Conduct
- BS EN 13809: 2003 (Definition of Tourist Guide)
- CSN BS EN 15565: 2008 (Standard for Tourism Services)

Our continuous commitment to these standards ensures that Blue Badge guides excel as leaders in the Scottish tourism sector, delivering unforgettable experiences for visitors.

Scottish Tourist Guides Association

INSTITUTE OF TOURIST GUIDING

european federation of tourist guide associations FEG

FULL MEMBER OF WORLD FEDERATION OF TOURIST GUIDE ASSOCIATIONS

About The Job

Upon earning your Blue Badge, you will be fully accredited to operate as a self-employed tourist guide throughout Scotland.

This dynamic and rewarding career connects you with visitors from around the globe. Key responsibilities include:

- Conducting in-depth research to develop guided tours across Scotland.
- Planning and coordinating customized tour itineraries.
- Providing engaging commentary and interpretation of local regions.
- Leading individuals and groups on walking tours, site visits, and vehicle excursions.
- Offering practical information, guidance, and assistance.
- Handling emergencies and resolving unexpected challenges professionally.
- Fostering strong relationships with clients, industry partners, and visitors.
- Managing business operations and keeping accurate professional records.

As guiding is a people-centric profession, successful candidates typically possess the following attributes:

Curiosity, enthusiasm, warmth and people skills, self-motivation, physical and emotional stamina, confidence, flexibility, clarity of speech and excellent communication skills.

Blue Badge Course Objective

We aim to train professional tourist guides to deliver outstanding service across Scotland in line with STGA standards, professional codes, and industry needs.

This comprehensive program balances expertise in history, culture, and landscape interpretation with superior customer care, organizational skills, and sound business practice.

Graduates will be eligible to sit the STGA Accreditation Exam in Winter 2028. Passing this exam leads to the award of the Blue Badge.

Programme Outline

The STGA Blue Badge Training Programme will be delivered through three integrated modules:

Core Knowledge • Regional Studies • Professional Skills

Module delivery combines lectures, seminars (online and in-person), group projects, practical training on sites and vehicles, study days, and written and practical assessments. **Trainees are expected to take initiative in their learning, committing to a minimum of 1,200 hours of self-directed study.**

Courses are taught by experienced, accredited Blue Badge guides, many of whom are certified trainers for the STGA and the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA).

Learning Outcomes

Core Knowledge Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate broad knowledge of Scotland’s archaeology, history, culture, arts, and natural landscapes.
- Critically analyze perspectives on Scotland's cultural and natural identity, applying this understanding both academically and practically.
- Understand chronological developments across natural and social history and synthesize thematic connections across disciplines.

Regional Studies Learning Outcomes

- Identify and explain the significance of key physical, historical, archaeological, and cultural features across Scotland’s regions.
- Connect regional characteristics using foundational Core Knowledge concepts.
- Interpret Scotland’s urban and rural landscapes effectively through core subject mastery.
- Curate content, draw comparisons, and develop engaging themes for regional interpretation.
- Apply professional guiding techniques to tailor regional commentary to diverse audience interests.

Professional Skills Learning Outcomes

- Select optimal routes, sites, and stops suited to participant interests and regional highlights.
- Maintain tour schedules while prioritizing visitor and colleague health and safety.
- Deliver engaging, well-informed commentary tailored to the tour area.
- Execute administrative tasks required to run a small business.
- Work effectively both independently and within team environments.
- Demonstrate relevant management skills.
- Demonstrate versatile communication skills to present balanced, objective tours.
- Design and execute diverse guiding services as a professional tourist guide.
- Adhere to ethics, legal regulations, and professional standards governing Scottish tourist guides.
- Develop comprehensive, workable Tour Plans.

Timetable

The Blue Badge Training Programme runs from May 2027 to December 2028.

STGA Blue Badge Accreditation Exams take place in Winter 2028.

The final examination is overseen by the STGA Board of Examiners and the STGA Training Manager.

The Board operates independently from the training programme. Examinations are conducted in English, with English competency evaluated as part of the assessment for non-native speakers.

Candidates wishing to guide in additional languages will take corresponding language examinations alongside an individual interview.

Results are released approximately one month following final examinations. Successful candidates become eligible to join the STGA and practice as accredited Blue Badge Guides.

Joining the Course

Becoming a Blue Badge Guide for Scotland is a rewarding and rigorous journey. Due to the significant commitment required from both trainees and the association, the selection process comprises multiple stages to allow mutual evaluation.

Course capacity is limited to 36 students, while applications typically exceed 120. To select candidates with the highest potential, the admission process identifies individuals who:

- Are fully committed to a long-term career as a professional tourist guide in Scotland.
- Are prepared to work extensive hours during the peak tourist season (April to October).
- Have the time and resources to undertake an intensive, self-directed practical training program.
- Demonstrate essential skills, professionalism, and attributes required of a professional tourist guide.

Applicants will be evaluated throughout the admissions process on core skills, practical performance, and overall professionalism.

Selection Process

- **Stage 1:** Comprehensive review of submitted application forms, after which shortlisted candidates advance to the subsequent phase.
- **Stage 2:** Individual interviews, conducted either online or in person. Discussions are tailored around the applicant's background and performance throughout the assessment process.

  Interviews may place targeted emphasis on specific areas, including:

  - English language proficiency and communication skills.
  - Teamwork abilities and digital literacy.
  - Capacity to dedicate necessary time to meet program requirements.
- **Stage 3:** Attendance at one selection day, featuring individual presentations, collaborative group tasks, peer feedback sessions, and panel discussions. Successful candidates progress to the final offer stage.
- **Stage 4:** Formal offers of admission to the training programme in early February 2027

Training Programme Fees

Detailed fee structures will be published on the Course webpage.

Full tuition fees must be paid by late April 2027 prior to the start of the course.

The tuition fee covers scheduled instruction, learning materials, assessments, access to STGA digital platforms, and some overnight accommodation during parts of the programme. Trainees are responsible for arranging and funding any additional accommodation required for classes, study tours, or examinations.

Fees are non-refundable in cases of withdrawal, unused services, or dismissal due to misconduct or academic non-compliance. The STGA reserves the right to cancel the program and refund fees, or offer the course at an adjusted rate, if enrollment thresholds are not met.

STGA Student Membership

STGA Student Membership is included in tuition fees, providing mandatory insurance coverage during training alongside access to our professional guide network and local branches.

STGA Blue Badge Accreditation Fees

Examination fees will be announced prior to the assessment period. First Aid certification is not included, as candidates frequently obtain certification independently. Candidates seeking resists and/or accreditation in additional languages beyond English will incur a supplementary language examination fee.

First Payment

An initial deposit of 10% of the total course fee is required upon offer acceptance to confirm your place.

Employment for Tourist Guides in Scotland

Blue Badge Tourist Guides in Scotland operate as self-employed freelance professionals serving tour operators, cruise lines, event managers, corporate clients, public sector organizations, and independent travelers.

Self-employment presents exciting opportunities alongside unique business challenges. Our online briefing sessions offer insights into the daily life of a guide, while our curriculum prepares you to successfully manage and grow your business.

STGA full members receive a dedicated profile page on the official website. Over 90% of member bookings stem from personal contacts and repeat client relationships. Additionally, the STGA actively promotes members through industry channels, government partnerships, international trade fairs, and marketing initiatives.

Benefits of STGA Membership

- Professional accreditation to operate as a Blue Badge Guide.
- Access to tour operators and clients that exclusively hire qualified guides.
- Comprehensive Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance under the STGA group policy.
- Individual directory listing on the official STGA website.
- Full access to STGA digital resources and educational materials.
- Participation in the STGA Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework.
- Involvement in national and regional branch events and initiatives.
- Industry representation across national and international tourism bodies.
- Affiliated membership with the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (FEG) and the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA).
- Direct marketing and promotional support.
- Networking opportunities with an established peer network of professional guides.
- Ongoing professional guidance and support from experienced board directors and colleagues.
- International prestige associated with the recognized Blue Badge qualification.

Contact

For enquiries regarding the course, please contact: trainingsupport@stga.co.uk

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