

# Blue Badge Guides and the Cruise Ships



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As South East Blue Badge Guides we are trained and registered by South East England Tourist Board (SEETB) to cover all aspects of tourism throughout Kent, East and West Sussex and Surrey. The training entails lectures on the history, geography, architecture, the arts, flora and fauna and local customs of the area as well as route planning, itineraries and microphone use on coaches, etc.

All these lectures and practical training sessions are followed by written examinations and several practical exams, on coaches, on foot in towns, museums and cathedrals.

Each region, including the City of London, has its own registered guides, while London guides cover the whole of the UK. There are various endorsements that can be taken should a guide require to guide in more detail in another area, be it region or individual cathedral. Several regional cities and large towns have their own registered guides, one of which is Canterbury.

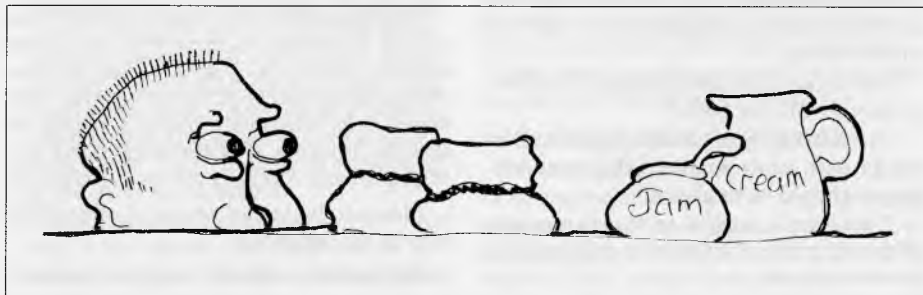
As Tourist Board guides we are all Freelance and look for work with coach companies, tour operators and national or local societies. Those with languages are

much in demand from tour operators who specialise in the overseas market.

With the advent of the Dover Cruise Terminal, we, as guides from both the S.E. and London have been employed by the various ground handling agents to take groups of cruise passengers to places of interest in Kent and London – the "Mecca" of all overseas visitors!

We have also taken groups to and from Gatwick and Heathrow Airports or London hotels at the start or end of a cruise holiday.

In particular, Cunard and Holland America Line made Dover one of their "ports of call", so passengers were able to book pre-arranged tours on board ship and then, once in port, were taken off for the day by coach to their chosen destinations.



London was the most popular place to visit. A London guide would accompany each coach and take the groups on a panoramic tour and have lunch at a pre-arranged hotel. Others would be accompanied to London and dropped off in the West End to spend the day as they chose. There would usually be between fifteen and eighteen coaches involved.

Those who preferred to see more local sights had the option of a morning at Leeds Castle, lunch in Ashford followed by a drive through the East Kent countryside usually via Chilham and then out towards Sandwich before returning to Dover.

There were two half-day tours on offer. The morning tour was to Dover Castle, Canterbury Cathedral, then back to the ship in time for lunch. The afternoon trip was to Tenterden with a ride on the Kent & East Sussex Railway. This was a return journey from Tenterden to Northiam and back so there was time for a cream tea of gargantuan proportions to be served! A short walk in Tenterden was followed by the return journey to Dover via Rye and Romney Marsh. The tour was entitled "Steam and Scones".

The third option was to spend time in Dover itself and to this end two or three shuttle buses were arranged to ferry passengers to and from the Market Square. I had been asked, as an ex-resident of Dover, to ask some local people to be co-ordinators who would be at both the Dock and the Market Square giving information to the passengers on what to see or do and how to get there, etc. This is where the Dover Society was well represented by the Lilleys, Peters, Copes and Gerrards, who shared the days between them.

It is a mammoth task arranging up to twenty coaches to arrive numerically and to get the passengers off the ship and on to the right coach for the particular visit or transfer to hotels and airports.

I spent several days this summer, usually with another guide and the ground handling agent co-ordinating passenger transfers to and from ships and coaches at the beginning or end of cruises. A colour-

coded system of baggage labels was used for those at the end of a holiday. Passengers were given "Bus"(USA) or "Coach"(UK) numbers depending on their destination and had to check their own luggage individually onto the correct baggage vans for security purposes. It was not unknown for people to have the wrong luggage as so much of it is very similar. Even those who had coloured bobbles, ribbons or straps for easy recognition found others with the same idea!

The first full year seems to have got off to a good start so, hopefully, next year will see an increase in ships calling and more local amenities will be involved.

As S.E. guides we have already had a day's training in London to learn where to park coaches, the location of suitable loos and bureaux de change and hotels which are popular. This will enable more S.E. guides to be involved, although some of our current members are London Guides as well and have the relevant qualifications and knowledge of London.

