

TOUR REGULATIONS

TOURING HISTORIC CHARLESTON, SC BY MOTORCOACH

Because of the unique and sensitive nature of Charleston's historic district, its numerous narrow streets and lived-in residential areas, the Charleston City Council has found it necessary to enact a comprehensive set of tourism ordinances to manage the day-to-day tourism operations of the city. The principal features of these ordinances, primarily as they affect tourism-related transportation, are summarized below.

Your understanding of the problems faced with modern transportation systems in a city laid out in colonial times, and your cooperation in complying with these regulations will be deeply appreciated. We are very proud of our city, and we want to show it to you in an efficient, sensitive manner. There are several general regulations of which group tour planners should be aware:

PERMITS

Permits are required for all visiting tour buses, including vans if they are engaged in touring for hire. Permits are also required for transportation purposes (non-touring) and motorcoach parking within the historic district. This is to assist drivers in reaching destinations such as hotels, restaurants and attractions by the best route possible. Permits must be picked up at the bus shed located directly behind the Charleston Visitor Center at 375 Meeting Street. *Permits are not mailed, they must be picked up.*

TOUR FEE

Last year the Charleston area welcomed approximately 4 million visitors. To provide for additional safety, increased beautification of the city and other tourism-related activities, a fifty-cent fee per person is required of individuals participating in tours conducted on the public streets and sidewalks of Charleston. Anyone under the age of 18 in an organized group, the bus driver and the escort(s) are excluded from the fee. Motorcoach tours should submit a check for the tour fee upon arrival at the Tour & Permit office, located on the John Street end of the Charleston Visitor Center, while picking up permits.

Questions regarding permits or the tour fee should be addressed to:

Tourism Management Office
VRTC Garage
32 Ann Street
Charleston, SC 29403
(843) 724-7395
Fax (843) 579-7673

TOUR GUIDES

If your group is not utilizing the services of a local tour bus operator, sightseeing vehicles (touring for hire) must employ the services of a registered city tour guide. Many of these guides are listed in the Tour Services section of this publication.

TRAFFIC FLOW

Vehicles actually engaged in touring may not stop or stand for description of points of interest, but must remain part of the normal traffic flow. However, slow-moving vehicles may safely pull to the side to allow faster vehicles to pass.

HOURS OF TOURING

Touring by motorized vehicle is prohibited in residential areas during the following times: Eastern Standard Time – 5pm-9am and Daylight Savings Time – 6pm-9am

ENGINE OPERATING WHILE STOPPED

Motorcoach operators may not park with engines operating for more than five minutes.

PERIMETER ROUTE

All out-of-town (not locally certified) motorcoaches carrying passengers for hire are to use the perimeter route. Registered tour guides are familiar with this route, as well as with the authorized passenger pickup and discharge points and parking areas.

FOR A CLOSER LOOK

Visiting groups are encouraged to get a more detailed look at historic Charleston. Locally licensed small charter buses and carriages may be used. Walking tours are also recommended as a pleasant way to experience the city.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OBTAINING PERMITS

The City of Charleston and the Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau have provided a blank application form for obtaining the permits required for touring the historic district. Most of the information on these forms is self-explanatory, but please keep the following points in mind when completing the application.

- Size and number of vehicles
- Specific date and hours of tour and the Charleston guide or service handling the tour
- Type of permit(s) requested while in Charleston (such as motorcoach transportation to a hotel, restaurant, the Market, etc.) - be sure to provide approximate times for permits
- Name and location of your hotel/motel

Please make checks payable to the City of Charleston and mail to:

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32 Ann Street
Charleston, SC 29403

Should you need assistance in completing the application, please contact the City of Charleston's Office of Tourism Management at (843) 724-7395.