



Blue Badge Tourist Guide Course '26-'27
Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire



Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in training to be a Blue Badge Guide in the ceremonial counties of Somerset (including Bristol and Bath), Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire. This is a wonderfully varied region, with a vibrant visitor economy and award-winning attractions and destinations. Great tourist guides are a major asset to visitors wishing to make the most of their time in this special corner of England.

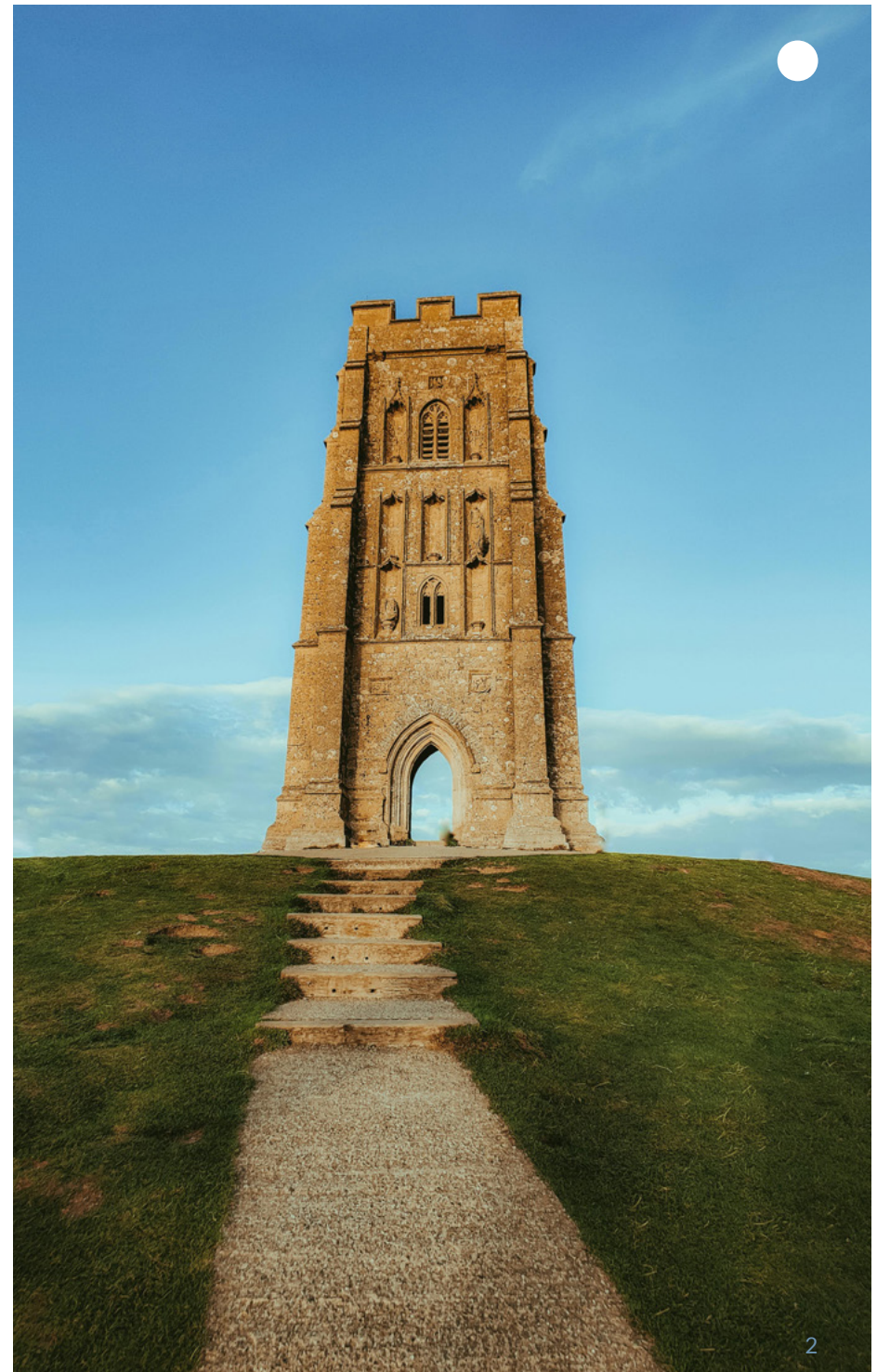
Blue Badge Tourist Guides are internationally recognised for their skill and professionalism, and are indeed considered to be the gold standard of tourist guiding in the UK. Completion of this course will enable you to be one of those great, professional guides, bringing the heritage and history of this region alive for those on your tours.

What is a Blue Badge Guide?

The Institute of Tourist Guiding says:

“Blue Badge Tourist Guides are ambassadors for their regions, city or site, showcasing wonderful landmarks, hidden gems and breathtaking countryside in their historic and contemporary contexts, in an accessible, entertaining and culturally-aware way. It is also a flexible career option, fitting in and around other jobs and your personal lifestyle or responsibilities. Alternatively, professional tourist guiding can be a lucrative freelance career for those choosing to work full time.”

Blue Badge Guides are known for their knowledge, reliability, flexibility and professionalism, and will keep track of contemporary events and all the latest information to make their tours current and meaningful for today.



What is the work like?

No two days, or clients, are exactly the same; you may visit the same place regularly with different clients each time, but you'll be giving a different interpretation of it depending on who you're working with. The clients might be tour groups, students, couples, or families. They could be from anywhere in the world, and from all walks of life. It is incredibly rewarding work and your clients may remember you as the highlight of their trip, and tell everyone back home about you.

Blue Badge guiding work is on a freelance, self-employed basis. The work is mostly seasonal, with less work in wintertime. Many people make a career as a full-time guide, and many also enjoy fitting their guiding career around other commitments. Just as no two days of guiding work are the same, all guides have different styles and approaches - each guide has their own personality and career path. There is a lot of scope to build a career that works for you. Finding your own unique offering is part of the joy of finding your feet in your role as a Blue Badge Tourist Guide.

Already a Blue Badge Guide?

If you hold a Blue Badge for another area and would like to be considered for acceptance onto this course, we have a limited number of spaces available to offer to Blue Badge candidates. Please see pages 11 & 12 for more info.



About the course

During this course, you will develop skills such as:

- The ability to recall, select and present information in an engaging and entertaining way
- Awareness of health and safety, and the distinctive needs of each client
- Awareness of approaches to responsible and sustainable tourism
- Business and marketing knowhow to start and develop your career as a guide

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Speak confidently on all the subjects covered in the syllabus
- Lead a group on a tour by coach, walking, in a church, and in a museum
- Feel confident in time and group management, and in working with suppliers
- Launch yourself into a career as a competent, professional and business-minded Blue Badge Tourist Guide

This is a part-time course, with teaching taking place on evenings and at weekends. However, self-study must be undertaken privately outside of these sessions. The assessment process set by the Institute of Tourist Guiding includes a tour planning project, as well as written and practical exams.

We use learning technology to help, support, engage and inspire our students. Our course contains teaching and practice that highlights and encourages the skills needed, both practical and theoretical, to be a wonderful addition to the guiding profession.

The course consists of:

- Practical training, including presentation and communication skills for guiding on foot, at a site (e.g. church, or museum), and from a coach.
- Knowledge Modules comprising of lectures and learning materials on diverse topics, including the 17 background knowledge topics required for the exams, regional knowledge needed for the exams and for working as a guide, business and marketing skills, and guiding practicalities.
- One-to-one tutorials, small group seminars, and on-going tutor support.
- Tour Planning Project: this is a project with a specific theme, detailing how you would provide a coach tour, a walking tour, and site tour. This project is submitted to the Institute and is part of the examination process to be awarded with the Blue Badge on successful completion of all examinations. Tutors will provide ongoing advice on the tour planning project up to the submission date.
- Communication Seminar. A compulsory two-day seminar focusing on communication and presentation skills for professional tour guides.
- Exams and Assessment (see Exam section).



Course details and dates



17

in-person practical weekends, including the induction weekend



24

Wednesday evenings, online



9

tutor group seminars, online



7

informal, in-person, tutor group practice sessions (once a month)



9

one-to-ones with your assigned tutor of up to 30mins, online



4

Friday evening online discussions



240

hours minimum of self-study

From the moment you are accepted onto the course and the first installment paid (see the application process and course fees on pages 9 & 10), you are given your own log-in for the Learning Portal. This gives you access to schedules, learning materials, quizzes, and discussion boards.



Tutor Group Seminars

There are two online seminars in the summer of 2026. Seminars consist of a small group of up to 8 students, led by a tutor. These first seminars are a chance to discuss the self-study you have done so far, share knowledge and tips, and ask any questions. From then on there is one seminar a month until the end of the course, for Q&A and feedback between tutors and students.

Induction Weekend 25th-26th April 2026

This is a chance to meet the course directors, tutors and your fellow students. It is an introduction to the course and how it is organised. Important information will be shared and tutors will provide guided tours - and the students will make their first foray into guiding.

Weekly Knowledge Modules

From 2nd September 2026 we have online sessions every Wednesday evening until 17th March 2027 (with a week off in October and February and three weeks off over Christmas and New Year). These modules consist of a variety of topics, including Background Knowledge, Regional Knowledge and business skills. These will usually be available online in advance, in time for absorption and self-study, with notes and tasks to complete while watching. This is followed up with a live online Q&A and quiz every Wednesday evening. (The quizzes and tests on the topics covered are released throughout the course on the Learning Portal, available for you to take in your own time.)

Panel Discussions

There are 4 Friday evening live panel discussions online, with experts in various tourism industry sectors. Similar to a podcast, these are opportunities for you to listen to experienced, industry professionals, discussing a varying range of topics, with a chance for you to ask questions and comment on the conversation.

Tutor One-to-Ones

The one-to-one sessions between you and your designated tutor are for the tutor to share feedback, discuss your progress, or offer any help and direction you need, as well as ensure your welfare during your programme of study. These are an opportunity to privately raise any questions or issues with which you're struggling, or to discuss practical tasks in-depth.

Practical weekends

The in-person practical weekends are every other week from 5th September 2026 to 18th April 2027, with mid-term breaks and a 3-week break at Christmas. We visit each of the 5 designated areas covered by the course, on multiple occasions, and the weekends include visits to important sites, practicing walking and coach tours, and guiding in churches and museums/galleries. There are also sessions to share knowledge, develop practical skills, as well as in-person lectures and workshops on regional knowledge and business topics.

2026	Sep	5-6	Bath
		19-20	Gloucestershire
	Oct	3-4	Communications Seminar: Communication and presentation skills
		17-18	Bristol
		31	
	Nov	1	Wiltshire
		14-15	Somerset
		28-29	Wiltshire & Gloucestershire coach tours
	Dec	12-13	Creative Weekend: Workshops and practical skills
2027	Jan	9-10	Bristol
		23-24	Bath
	Feb	6-7	Wiltshire
		20-21	Gloucestershire
	Mar	6-7	Somerset
		20-21	Bath & Bristol group walking tours
	Apr	3, 10, 17-18	Practical Exam Practice

Exams and assessment

The Institute of Tourist Guiding is responsible for the setting of standards and the exams themselves. The students on our course must pass all 8 elements of the examinations in order to receive their Blue Badge qualification. There are separate Institute exams for guiding in a non-first language.

The fees for the exams are paid directly to the Institute and are separate from the course (see page 10).

Written exams	Background Knowledge Exam (Taken by all Blue Badge candidates across the country)	200 questions 2hrs
	Regional Knowledge Exam	1 paper 200 questions 2hrs
		1 paper Essay questions 2hrs
	Tour Planning Project	Plan of a full day tour within the area, max 1500 words
Practical exams	Walking Tour	Minimum of 2 stops of 5mins each
	Religious Building Tour	
	Museum/ Gallery Visit	
	Coach Tour	3 presentations totalling 15mins

Applying for the course

Please apply online [here](#). You can also apply through our website cadencetraining.co.uk.

Applications open from 1st September 2025 until the 15th February 2026.

We welcome people to apply from all backgrounds and all levels of experience.

Fluency in another language is a bonus - language speakers are always needed as Tourist Guides and there is a shortage in this region.

Please consider the workload and the time commitment, and whether it is right for you, before applying.

We look forward to receiving your application!

Do not hesitate to get in touch with any questions or queries.

hello@cadencetraining.co.uk

After applying, what next?

If your application is approved, you will be invited to an in-person interview.

Interviews will take place **between 25th November 2025 and 26th February 2026**. The interviews will mostly take place in person in Bath or Bristol.

Following your interview(s) we will be in touch by email **no later than the 28th February 2026** to advise if you will be offered a place on the course.

First installment of course fees paid on acceptance of the offer of a place.

The induction weekend is on **25th and 26th April 2026**. Tutor groups are assigned at this time and dates fixed for small group meet-ups and one-to-ones over the summer.

Second installment of course fees paid by **30th June 2026**.
The final installment of course fees paid by **31st August 2026**.
Formal teaching begins on **2nd September 2026** (see dates on page 8).

What are the fees?

The course fee is £4,850 + VAT. This includes all teaching, tutorial supervision, practical visits, entrance fees, online learning materials on the learning portal, coach travel as part of the training, venue hire costs and student registration with the Institute of Tourist Guiding (who supply the Photo ID card for students to gain free access to a number of sites).

Upon acceptance of a place on the course £1,950 + VAT becomes payable by 28th March 2026. The second installment of £1,450 + VAT is payable by 30th June 2026. The final installment of £1,450 + VAT is payable by 31st August 2026.

(N.B. Once a Blue Badge Guide, the fees above will be paid off in approximately 16.5 full days of guiding work.)

FAQ on Fees:

Is the course fee refundable?

All course fees are non-refundable once paid, even if a student withdraws from the course for any reason. However, Cadence Training reserves the right to cancel the course and refund all fees paid.

Why are course fees fully paid before the course begins?

As the course is self-funded, it is viable only if all course fees are paid before the course begins. Applicants may want to consider getting insurance if they are worried about the financial risk of withdrawing from the course.

Is accommodation and food included?

No. You need to budget for any overnight stays, though we are willing to give advice about this. Sometimes tea and coffee and a few morsels are provided, but on the whole you also need to budget for meals / bring food from home.

Are there additional exam fees?

Yes. The estimated examination fees for 2025-2027 are available on the Institute of Tourist Guiding website

itg.org.uk/about/examinations

At the time of writing (2025) these amount to approximately £1,800 and are payable directly by each student to the Institute. This is a staggered cost (the Institute invoices candidates a few weeks before each exam). Failed exams can be re-taken (up to three attempts) and a fee for each re-take exam is payable to the Institute of Tourist Guiding. Once qualified, guides are allowed to guide in their one main language. To guide in any other language, there is an additional language exam (and fee) for those wishing to qualify to guide in a language that is not their first language. These can be taken any year during, or after, the course. Details are available at itg.org.uk/about/examinations

Blue Badge Guide Candidates

A limited number of places are available on the course for holders of a Blue Badge qualification in another region.

Applicants should complete an application in full to be submitted by **15th February 2026**, and will be required to attend an interview with the Course Directors. Interviews will take place between **25th November 2025** and **26th February 2026**, with successful applicants informed by the **28th February 2026**.

In-Person Weekends

Successful BBG applicants will be required to attend a minimum requirement of 6 days from the list shown below. Attendance at the mock exam weekends (**3rd, 10th and 17th/18th April 2027**) is also a prerequisite. However, BBG candidates may attend as many extra in-person weekends (above the stipulated requirement stated) that they wish, with a minimum of 6 weeks notice. Each date (or part of a day) attended is chargeable at a rate of £210 + VAT. There is also an ITG student registration fee that BBG candidates will need to pay, which will be upwards of £203 (current 2025 price, 2026 price TBC).

2026

Sep	5-6	Bath 1
	19-20	Gloucestershire 1
Oct	17-18	Wiltshire 1
	31	
Nov	1	Bristol 1
	14-15	Somerset 1
	28-29	Glos & Wilts coach tours

2027

Jan	9-10	Bristol 2
	23-24	Bath 2
Feb	6	Wiltshire 2
	20-21	Gloucestershire 2
Mar	6-7	Somerset 2
	20-21	Bath & Bristol walking tours



Blue Badge Guide Candidates (continued)

Study Group

The monthly seminars, one-to-ones, and tutor group guiding practice sessions are not included for Blue Badge candidates. However, connecting together regularly as a group for communal study sessions will be encouraged and resources to facilitate this can be provided.

Knowledge Modules

Blue Badge candidates may also attend any of the knowledge modules advertised on the syllabus. These cover a broad range of topics including Background Knowledge, Regional Knowledge, and business skills. These will usually be available for students to absorb before the live session takes place. There will be live online sessions for each of the topics within the knowledge modules on Wednesday evenings between 6:30pm and 9pm, from **2nd September 2026** until **17th March 2027**.

Access to the above modules are chargeable at £35 + VAT per evening or part thereof payable by 1 week prior.

Learning Resources

BBG Candidates will be offered access to learning resources provided during the course, but these resources will be limited to the weekends and/or modules each candidate has booked to attend.

Communications Seminar

A limited number of places may be available to Blue Badge Candidates wishing to participate in the Communications Seminar. If BBG Candidates applying have not attended a Communications Seminar in the past 5 years, attendance is a compulsory requirement of the Institute of Tourist Guiding. Blue Badge Candidates requiring participation in the Communications Seminar should apply directly to the Course Directors. The fee for participating in this weekend is £420 + VAT.



Who are we?



Mike James
Course Director and Admin Lead

Mike has worked in the tourism industry since 1990, primarily as a freelance tour manager for numerous package travel operators working primarily in North American markets throughout the UK and Ireland.

He has also worked in administrative, and operational management roles both as a regional manager (supervising a team of over 400 tour managers) and also in financial, health & safety, and crisis management roles.

Mike qualified as a Blue Badge Tourist Guide for the South West of England in 2014 when he won the regional prize for Best Written Paper. He is also an accredited guide at York Minster since 2007, and has completed endorsement examinations with the Institute of Tourist Guiding in Windsor & Eton, Wells, and is also accredited by the Institute to train Blue Badge Guides. He is the proud owner of the award-winning Savouring Bath which provides culinary sampling tours in Bath, and also of Akeman Tours Ltd who provide tour guide-led services across the UK both on a wholesale basis and to FIT clients. As a specialist in culinary travel, in his spare time Mike also works in the cheese industry! He continues to work both as a guide and a tour manager but can also regularly be found behind the counter of the country's oldest cheesemonger, and he has also worked for various cheese makers in the south west of England.



Lindsey Garwood
Course Director and Welfare Lead

Lindsey Garwood has been qualified as a Blue Badge Guide for the South-West in English and Spanish since 2014, has been endorsed to guide in Wells, and qualified as a certified trainer of Blue Badge Guides in 2025.

Alongside working as a guide in the region, Lindsey is co-director of a theatre company and performs on-stage regularly. Lindsey writes, directs and performs shows at interesting locations such as Brunel's SS Great Britain, Ashton Court and Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol. In the last 20 years, Lindsey has taught in areas such as tour management; delivery and creativity in the workplace; and skills for professional performers. Lindsey worked for various tour companies before becoming a Blue Badge Guide. She travelled the globe widely as a Tour Director, has trained new Tour Directors and has helped to design better tours. As an actively involved member of her local community in Bristol, Lindsey campaigns for historic buildings, community venues and social causes. She has done a variety of interesting things in her life, including being a dancer, a pirate radio DJ in Spain and surveying coral reefs off the coast of Mexico, but she is delighted that a childhood dream of becoming a Tour Guide came true and remains passionate about the job.

Mike and Lindsey have a long professional working relationship - first meeting working for EF Educational Tours in 2004. They have shared standards in training excellence and are looking forward to running the first course in this area since 2017.



Training Provider

Cadence Training is the training company run by Course Directors Mike James and Lindsey Garwood. Cadence Training brings the training of guides up to date with the use of learning technology and technical support, as well as having a dedicated vision of the practical and business training needed to create competent and professional tourist guides who will go on to have long careers in the industry. The well-being of students is paramount and Cadence Training provides the support students need to prosper during the course and to then flourish as guides.

Our values

Quality	Using the best professionals to deliver timely and appropriate training
Learner-centred	Using technology and practical training to support outstanding learning experiences
Care	Looking to the well-being of students at all times, with accessible learning materials and the dedicated support of a designated tutor
Industry-aligned	To ensure our training matches the business need of the industry and that our students will succeed in that profession

Our Team

Our tutors include Blue Badge Tourist Guides with a lot of experience in guiding, and training guides, as well as Guides with a variety of specialist skills in different locations, languages and in various themes for tours.

Our guest lecturers and panellists include experts from the fields of tourism, marketing, accountancy and performance, as well as experts in topics you will be able to use in your guiding content.

Our Digital Learning Designer supports our values of a learner-centred training experience, and offers technical and pedagogical support.

Awarding body

The Institute of Tourist Guiding is the officially recognised body for setting standards and awarding qualifications for tourist guiding in England, Northern Ireland and Jersey. The Institute accredits guide training courses that meet its standards and it provides the examinations. The Institute of Tourist Guiding owns and awards the Blue Badge, the UK's highest tourist guiding qualification. [itg.org.uk](https://www.itg.org.uk)



Important Dates

Opening date for applications

1st September 2025

Closing date for applications

15th February 2026

Induction Weekend

25th and 26th April 2026

Formal teaching

2nd September 2026 to 18th April 2027

Exam dates

April / May 2027



If you have any questions, please get in touch.

hello@cadencetraining.co.uk

Apply today!

cadencetraining.co.uk/apply/