

Volunteer Role Description: 'Gallery' Tour Guide



About 'Gallery' Tour Guides

The Ashmolean is the University of Oxford's museum of art and archaeology, with collections ranging from Egyptian mummies to contemporary art, telling human stories across cultures and time. As the world's oldest University museum we are an important bridge between academic research and public learning.

We are building our team of volunteer tour guides to help bring our collections to life. Full training will be provided including engaging with audiences and object-based learning, but you will develop your own tour which could be an introduction to a particular gallery or a short introduction to a topic. The volunteer tour guide team will compliment the work of paid variable hours staff who deliver pre-booked activity for groups and ticketed public tours.

This role provides the opportunity to:

- Develop skills including object-based teaching and public speaking
- Learn about our collections and share this with visitors
- Support the museum's education and accessibility remit
- Be part of the museum team and gain experience of museum practice
- Utilise research and provide a bridge between academic and public learning

Volunteer Tour Guides will provide visitors with a warm welcome and an engaging and informative insight into a gallery or collection. They will use their own research and delivery skills to facilitate the discovery of stories, context, and craftsmanship.

- Volunteer-led tours will be offered daily, initially at 10.30am, with the aim of adding a 2pm tour later in the year
- Following training, Volunteer Tour Guides will be expected to sign up to deliver 2 or 3 tours per month
- Tours should last 30 minutes, plus 10-15 minutes for questions
- Tours will focus on a particular gallery, chosen and researched by tour guides themselves in agreement with museum staff. The aim is to introduce visitors to some of the galleries; giving participants a taster of what's on display and encouraging them to explore more afterwards.

- The drop-in tours are aimed at the adult general public. Attendance numbers will vary throughout the year.
- The team is coordinated by the Ashmolean Volunteer Manager, Ruth Farnan, and supported by the Visitor Experience team on the day.

Commitment

Following training volunteer tour guides can expect to deliver two or three tours per month, although the rota is flexible. This is a 9-month pilot project in the first instance with possibility of extension.

Training

Prior to joining the team, volunteers attend 3 half-day training sessions focussing on the general skills of being a good tour guide. New Tour Guides then work together with their staff supervisor to develop the style and content of their own tours. We anticipate that this will involve another one or two shorter sessions over the course of a few weeks. The overall training is designed to build knowledge and confidence step by step. By the end of the training, Tour Guides will have delivered a full tour to their staff supervisor and other team members. They then become active guides by mutual agreement with staff.

The training sessions will be on Wednesdays 29th April (2-4.30pm) AND 6th May (9:30am–12:30pm) AND 27th May either morning or afternoon. We anticipate that all training should be completed by June 2026 and volunteers will then join tour rotas.

Volunteers are invited to regular additional (optional) training sessions to learn about the museum and collections.

About Volunteer Tour Guides

- Enthusiasm for the collections is more important than expertise, although you will be keen to learn more through personal research and speaking with staff.
- You will be excited to develop your own tour and present it to a diverse audience in an informative and accessible way.
- You will demonstrate care of the collections, be spatially aware, and be confident managing groups of people in a setting where fragile objects are sometimes on open display.
- Following training, you will demonstrate awareness of other offers such as public programmes and be comfortable signposting and making recommendations.

Why you might enjoy this role:

The opportunity to:

- join a friendly, enthusiastic, and supportive team of volunteers
- support the museum's public engagement and accessibility remit
- help ensure that all visitors feel welcome and engaged in the museum
- develop and practise research, presentation, and communication skills
- interact with a diverse range of people from a variety of backgrounds
- inspire learning and enjoyment
- learn from your peers and museum staff
- grow and share your knowledge and interests

Other information

- Volunteers can claim travel expenses up to £5 per volunteering session.
- This role is open to volunteers aged 16+.
- Volunteers new to onsite GLAM volunteering will need to be registered on the Volunteer Service mailing list (MyImpactPage.com), and the Volunteer Service will need to have received two references and done an ID check before volunteers can start in this role. We will send more details about this if relevant. The role does not currently require any additional checks.

Next steps...

Ruth hopes to invite as many people as possible to **informal 'audition' slots at the Ashmolean on Wednesday 8th and Friday 10th April** but may not be able to involve everyone who expresses an interest this time.

If you are interested in getting involved, then please **[complete a Microsoft Forms form by following this link](#)**. It will ask you to:

- confirm which times you could potentially attend an informal 'audition'
- confirm your availability to attend training in April and May
- confirm your general availability to join the rota in the coming months
- briefly tell us (max 150ish words each):
 - why you're interested in the role
 - your area(s) of interest in the Ashmolean

If sending a video or voice recording would make it easier for you to apply, then you are welcome to email one to Caroline at volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk – just make sure you include all of these points!

The deadline to apply is **Sunday 22nd March**. Caroline will then share expressions of interest with Ruth, who will get in touch directly.

Information will be kept in accordance with our [Data Retention Schedule](#).