

## DECLARATION OF BEST PRACTICES FOR TOUR GROUPS IN PUBLIC AREAS IN BARCELONA

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Barcelona has become a tourist city in record time. According to *Observatori del Turisme a Barcelona: ciutat i regió [Barcelona Tourism Observatory: city and region]*, in 2019 the city received 18.5 million visitors who stayed in the city at least one night in tourist accommodations, compared to 1.7 million visitors in 1990. International trends seem to suggest that tourism will continue to increase, in particular urban tourism.

In Barcelona, the main attractions are concentrated in 30% of the city's territory and the intensification demand around these icons and attractions can result in the saturation and intensive use of certain public spaces, causing problems in the everyday life of the city's residents.

In this context and bearing in mind that tourism cannot be considered an economic activity that is alien to the area in which it takes place and that Barcelona has unique features in terms of its high compactness and diversity of uses, it is essential to create tools that facilitate the civic use of public spaces and foment their correct use, offering high-quality tourism activities while guaranteeing the traditional balance of the city's uses.

In 2017, the Barcelona City Council promoted a first declaration, which the association of accredited tour guides in Catalonia, AGUICAT, signed in agreement. This year, it has been deemed necessary to review the document in order to delve deeper and define key aspects that improve the management of tour groups in the city's public areas, in addition to the quality of the guide service provided, with the association of accredited tour guides, APIT, also signing up with the initiative.

This new declaration, which is intended to encourage other agents in the industry to sign up, beyond associations of tour guides accredited by the Generalitat [regional government] of Catalonia, aims to **encourage and promote the establishment of best practices for tour groups in public areas in Barcelona, and thus contribute to the harmonisation of intensive tourist use of public spaces with neighbourhood life, placing value on the**

**competitiveness and professionalism of official tour guides** compared to other forms of guide services that do not meet the same quality standards.

To this end, **this agreement aims to declare, disseminate, promote, and highlight the best practices for tour groups**, with the following goals:

- **To improve the quality of the visitor's experience and the internal and external image of the city.**
- **To showcase and disseminate the work performed by tour guides who are certified and accredited by the Generalitat of Catalonia** as highly skilled professionals who disseminate the image, culture and territory of Barcelona.
- **To promote coexistence with local residents and local economic activities, minimising the negative impact of high volumes of groups on public areas.**
- **To take care of the city's tourist resources and public spaces.**

As described above, on the one hand, the City Council is committed to getting the maximum number of other agents in the tourism sector who are involved in the arrangement and performance of guide services to sign up as backers of the Declaration. On the other hand, the guide associations, AGUICAT and APIT, assume the different points established as key elements in guaranteeing a high-quality tour guide service and commit to disseminating content to convert it into the standard operating guidelines. They will also take measures that ensure its implementation, with the exception of services already committed to and/or arranged for prior to this declaration.

**The Declaration consists of eighteen general best practices that encompass the entire city**, and **an annex of recommendations and action guidelines in micro spaces** that pose major difficulty when integrating guide activities with neighbourhood life and the mobility of local residents, as in the case of the neighbourhoods in **Ciutat Vella**, and in particular, those that are most saturated with tourists (Gothic quarter, Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la

Ribera, and la Barceloneta), establishing measures including but not limited to maximum group capacities in certain spaces and a single direction of tour group movement in Ciutat Vella.

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR TOUR GUIDES IN PUBLIC AREAS IN BARCELONA**

### **A BALANCE WITH EVERYDAY, REGULAR LIFE IN THE CITY**

Promoting a balance in the city's uses, minimising disturbance and interference in the everyday, regular life of local residents and businesses, by:

1. **Creating groups of less than 30 people and adapting the size of groups to the spaces they visit.** Crowds of people shall be avoided in places that are particularly saturated or where different economic activities are performed, dividing groups, introducing free visits, and/or providing explanations as swiftly as possible. The Barcelona City Council is particularly committed to disseminating these best practices amongst all stakeholders involved in the tour guide value chain, with a view to reinforcing the positioning of the guide associations signing this Declaration and making progress towards a future scenario of smaller groups in which guide activities will be of a notably higher quality.
2. **Committing to using audio guide or whisper systems and committing to refraining from using megaphones,** in addition to avoiding loud explanations, with a view to **reducing noise pollution** in public areas and improving the quality of the guide service. The Barcelona City Council shall commit, during the validity period of this agreement, to creating formulas for subsidising the acquisition of these audio guide systems for guides certified and accredited by the Generalitat of Catalonia, through agreements with the different associations signing this declaration.
3. **Respecting the privacy and safety of children,** avoiding any group contact with minors (for example, interfering with play or taking photos) and avoiding stopping



in spaces where there are many children at certain times (for example, school breaks in public areas).

#### **LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM RESOURCES AND PUBLIC SPACES**

**Protecting public spaces and tourism resources** visited, making the necessary efforts to preserve and treat the city and its heritage with respect, applying the following practices:

4. **Tour groups should rest in spaces that minimise disturbances** and interference with daily life in the city, using (when possible) areas dedicated to this purpose, and in any case, ensuring their **proper use and conservation**.
5. **Preserving architectural heritage and public spaces**, refraining from participating in conduct such as making etchings or climbing on sculptures/monuments, etc.
6. **Correctly disposing of waste**, encouraging selective collection and under no circumstances allowing tourists to litter or damage public spaces.

#### **EFFICIENCY, SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN MOBILITY**

Collaborating with institutions to ensure that **group travel** across Barcelona is undertaken pursuant to **safety and accessibility** criteria, maintaining fluid travel and the **proper functioning and efficiency of the mobility of all residents**, by means of:

7. **Correctly selecting start points, stops, and end points of tours, avoiding creating obstacles and blocking the entrances to buildings and/or standing in the way of other people and groups**, in particular those with limited mobility and difficulties manoeuvring. Planning itineraries on foot based on the routines of local residents, trying to avoid using main routes, can help to reduce congestion on the busiest streets.



8. **Awareness and dissemination of and respect for the rules of the road** and in particular, those specific to tourist mobility, such as: walking itineraries for tour groups or loading, unloading, and parking locations for tourist coaches. The person certified and accredited by the Generalitat of Catalonia as a tour guide shall call the driver once the entire group is at the established pick-up point (thus preventing an agglomeration of coaches on public roads). Coordinating with drivers helps to maintain service excellence.
9. **Guide activities when travelling on public transport** (in particular buses and trams) **shall always involve the use of audio guide and/or whisper systems**, using a tone of voice that does not disturb other passengers travelling with them and **ensuring that the public transport operator agrees** to the guide activities being provided on the mode of transport.
10. **Encouraging scheduled visits and purchasing tickets in advance** to improve public safety and accessibility on streets. When purchasing tickets to monuments, museums or transport, respect shall be shown for queues and turns, in line with the organisation thereof.
11. **Committing to refraining from soliciting tourists on the street**, thus ensuring that the size of the group adapts as best as possible to public spaces, in particular in micro spaces that are susceptible to saturation.
12. To ensure tour guide activities are undertaken properly in the city, developing a **sustainable mobility plan that features sufficient loading and unloading points close to the different points of interest** during the validity period of this agreements is recommended. The City Council is committed to seeking solutions to respond to the needs detected, in the form of a Committee set up by the City Council and the signatories of the Declaration.

Given their important role as **opinion leaders and disseminators** of Barcelona's story as a destination and the city's culture, heritage and territory, the individuals certified and accredited by the Generalitat of Catalonia as tour guides shall commit to ensuring:

13. **Awareness of and compliance with orders in relation to public areas** and mutual recognition of civic agents and the Guàrdia Urbana [city police], respecting their orders and instructions at all times. The City Council commits to keeping members of the tour guide industry aware of regulatory developments through their interactions with the corresponding associations.
14. **Maintaining in-depth, objective, and updated knowledge of the tourism resources and public spaces** visited or talked about, without conveying prejudices, using a high level of the language in which explanations are offered. Explaining the city's culture and customs can help visitors to understand how Barcelona's residents live and go about their lives.
15. **Paying all taxes** and fulfilling all other fiscal, administrative and occupational duties required of tour guides.
16. **Strict compliance and respect for the Tourism Law in force** in relation to tour guides in museums and spaces listed as a cultural asset of national interest (BCIN).
17. **Tolerance, politeness, harmony, and cordiality with the rest of the industry, groups and residents in general.** The guide's conduct during their activities can influence visitors' post-visit behaviour and their social and environmental attitude once the tour is over.
18. **Adhesion to communication and coordination systems that may be set up** between the city and guide professionals: notifications, creation of alerts, information of interest, etc.

This agreement between the Barcelona City Council and the two associations of guides certified and accredited by the Generalitat of Catalonia, AGUICAT and APIT, for adhesion to



**Ajuntament  
de Barcelona**

the updated *Declaration of best practices for tour groups in public areas*, shall be valid for one year.

The signatories commit to reviewing it once this term comes to an end, with a view to including any improvements considered necessary to ensure the integration of tourist activities with neighbourhood life.