



WELCOME 2024 ECOTOUR GUIDES!

Please read through the Course Syllabus thoroughly and bring any questions to the first class

REGISTRATION LINK: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virginia-certified-ecotour-guide-course-2024-registration-864028762287>

GMail

Please [create a gmail account](#) if you have not already. The course uses Google Suite products and some of them are only accessible if you have a gmail account. Email facilitator with your gmail account once created **prior to the start of class** to be added to the Google Classroom.

Zoom - “Live” Classroom

Please [create a zoom account](#) **prior to the start of class** - this will allow times if you have questions on how to use Zoom prior to the actual start of the class. We will be using the Zoom platform for our virtual face-to-face classes. You can use the website version or you can download the Zoom application to your desktop, both will work. Additionally, it is available to download on most mobile/tablet devices. Resources on how to use/manage Zoom can be found here: [HOW TO USE ZOOM - How to Host/Attend a Meeting \[for Beginners\]](#)

Zoom Room: <https://zoom.us/j/7577872936?pwd=QTNJdmhCc3pWdVNUZ0ZWYnVjdWpWUT09>

Meeting ID: 757 787 2936

Meeting Password: 7577872936

Required Supplemental Certificates

Complete your [CPR](#) & [LNT](#) certificates here, then email to (adoyle@a-npdc.org)

Google Classroom

This is our main platform and the place you can find course materials, resources, weekly recordings, discussions, and exams. If you are having difficulty accessing the classroom, [click here](#) or access online resources:

[LINK TO GOOGLE CLASSROOM HELP](#)

[VIDEO TUTORIAL FOR GOOGLE CLASSROOM](#)

Field Trip Tentatively for ***Saturday, June 29, 2024***. (Rain date: 6/30/2024)

This is a **mandatory in-person field trip** that counts toward your participation and discussion grades.



Attendance

While you are expected to attend all of the classes, life happens. If you are able, please notify the course facilitator of any absence(s). **You will be responsible for watching the recording of that evening's class and completing any assignments by their due date** (if more time is needed, notify the course facilitator).

Participation

This is an **interactive** virtual course... this means that you are expected to participate, interrupt, ask questions, offer insight/experiences, share ideas, etc... during our Zoom classes. Your overall grade in the course will be influenced by your level of participation and interaction during Zoom classes and in the Discussion Boards.

Exams

Midterm - available 6/7, **due 6/13** - covering materials Weeks 1-4

Final - available 7/1, **due 7/15** - covering materials Weeks 5-8

Final Presentation

The culmination of all you have learned! Take all of the skills, facts, resources, and practices you have learned over the past seven weeks to design a 10-15 minute “tour” presentation. You will pretend that your classmates and facilitator are visitors on a tour you are offering. See ***Final Presentation Outline & Evaluation Form***

Components:

- 10-minute **slideshow presentation**
- Completed final presentation outline
- Have fun with this - you are acting out an ecotour
- Classmates will act as the audience described by the presenter
- Classmates will fill out an evaluation form for each presentation to aid in facilitating constructive feedback

Grading

Participation – 40 points

Exams – 20 points

Field Trip – 20 points

Final Presentation – 20 points

Total Points possible = 100 points

Points Required to Pass = 70 points (70%)



Important Dates:

Class will run May 16th – June 27th each Thursday, 5:30 - 7:30 PM

6/29 - IN PERSON class field trip (rain date: 6/30). Kayaks and lunch will be provided, details to follow.

Weekly Presentations:

5/16 Week 1 - Introduction to Ecotourism

Presenters: Burnham Team, Course Facilitators for Accomack-Northampton PDC, Lead Agency for the Coastal Virginia Ecotourism Alliance (CVEA)

5/23 Week 2 - Essential Interpretive Skills (not confirmed yet)

Presenter: Robert Forloney, Program Developer & Cultural Institution Consultant

5/30 Week 3 - Marketing & Tourism

Presenters:

Lisa Hull, Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator, Northern Neck PDC, and CVEA partner

Laura Messer, Destination Development Manager, Virginia Tourism Corporation, and CVEA partner

6/6 Week 4 - Habitat Restoration

Presenter: Bowdoin Lusk, Coastal Scientist, The Nature Conservancy

6/13 Week 5 - Essential Guide Skills

Presenter (recorded): Richard Ayers, *Retired* Coastal Operations Steward, VDCR Natural Heritage Program

6/20 Week 6 - Local Ecosystems

Presenter: Shannon Alexander, Coastal Region Steward and Regional Supervisor, VDCR Natural Heritage Program

6/27 Week 7 - Proper Land Management & Misuse Issues

Presenters:

Alex Wilke, Coastal Scientist, The Nature Conservancy

Jeff Flood, Coastal Planner, The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program



6/29 or 6/30 (rain date) Week 8 - Final In-person Practical, Onancock, VA

Presenters: YOU!

Depart from Onancock Wharf, Market Street, Onancock 23417

About your course facilitators:

Bill and Mary Burnham (aka Burnham Guides) have been guiding kayak tours on the Eastern Shore since 2006. They are both certified Virginia Eco-Tour Guides, and Bill graduated from the very first Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Naturalists class in 2008. Together, they operate the “yak shack” at Onancock Wharf offering kayak, bike and SUP rentals, lessons and tours April through October. Winter leads them to warmer climates, guiding multi-day kayak expeditions in Costa Rica, the Florida Keys and Everglades. Their commitment to Leave No Trace primitive camping earned them a Virginia Green Travel Attraction of the Year in 2016 and they’ve earned ESVA’s Best Local’s Choice Eco-Tour for the past few years. Their tagline “Paddle with the Authors,” comes from authoring 8 books, including “Kayaking for Everyone,” “Hiking Virginia,” and the “Florida Keys Paddling Atlas.” They’re proud parents of Shore SPCA adoptee, “Gilly,” the official shop greeter, but still refuses to get on the water with them! See more at: www.burnhamguides.com





Statement of Course Expectations

Course Facilitator will:

- Accommodate participants in an appropriate virtual learning environment.
- Supply the syllabus, course and speaker descriptions, and reference materials.
- Immerse the participant in local environmental, tourism, and conservation issues by providing an array of guest speakers and a diverse curriculum.
- Provide resources useful in operating an ecotourism company in the area in which they take the course, including suggestions for key books, websites, organizations, etc.
- Award the Virginia Ecotour Guide Certificate if all requirements are met - at the discretion of the facilitator(s).
- Offer discussion forum, email and/or phone availability for questions or concerns, with prompt replies.

Participants will:

- Attend “live” guest speaker sessions, with absence exceptions on a case-by- case basis. Participants will provide timely notification to the instructor of absences or termination.
- Offer the use of his/her special knowledge, skills, and experience.
- Complete all required course materials and contribute to all online discussion boards in a constructive, positive, and highly interactive manner.
- Be mindful of other participants in the virtual classroom environment.
- Respect the confidentiality of sensitive or proprietary information.
- Accept the guidance of the course facilitator(s).
- Strive to be a proactive and responsive Virginia Ecotour Guide upon graduation.
- Comply with core values and guidelines of sustainable ecotourism as defined by the Certified Virginia Ecotour Guide Course.
- Complete the final project and associated communication for all participants’ projects.
- Show proof of current [CPR/First Aid](#) and [Leave No Trace Awareness Certification](#) before certification will be issued.



Final Presentation Outline

Your name:

Tour Title: *should entice the proposed audience; get creative here - make up an ecotour operation, or ponder your dream tour for inspiration!*

Audience: *must be specific; provide some simple information; knowing your audience helps you to gauge how best to interpret the tour and information you are about to share*

- *Example: Twenty to twenty-five middle-income, retired couples 55 and older (demographic) from the local area (geographic) who like to visit parks for nature study and relaxation (psychographic)*

Mission: *a short statement of why your ecotour operation exists, what its overall goal is, the goal of its operations: what kind of product or service it provides, its primary customers or market, and its geographical region of operation*

Theme: *creates the structure for the tour development and inspires the visitor with a conceptual framework that is easy to comprehend and remember, provoking further consideration*

- *Keep it simple and focus on what matters to your audience - easy to process and relevant*
- *Good themes are strong*
- *Strong themes: provoke thinking*
 - are complete ideas*
 - are specific and interesting*
 - connect a tangible to a universal*
 - answer the question "So what?"*

NOTE: tangibles = physical elements of a site or object; they are the things you experience with your senses

intangibles = abstract concepts; they include ideas, feelings, relationships, values, or beliefs

universals = ideas or emotions (intangibles) that can be related to, contain meaning, or appeal to almost everyone, i.e. family, death, prejudice, love, hunger, survival

Goal: *what do you want the audience to walk away with; this is the main reason for doing the tour and should highlight your hopes for visitor experience*



Objectives: *provide at least (2) reasonable, measurable objectives; objectives tell you if you've reached your goal*

- *Example: 60% of visitors can name two coastal ecosystems. This will be measured by using discussion questions at the end of the program and observing how many people take part in the discussion.*
- *Example: During the tour, 90% of visitors can name three native flora and fauna. This will be measured by creating scenario activities for visitors to take part in to name these flora and fauna.*

Introduction:

- *Who you are*
- *What is going to happen*
- *Where you are going & Where you will end up; OR Where you are (if staying in one place)*
- *How long it will take*
- *What will be required of the visitors*
- *Theme statement*
- *An attention-grabbing welcome statement related to the theme*
- *A personal/relatable experience*
- *Encouragement for audience engagement and curiosity*
- *Show off YOUR personality!*

Body: *the highlight of your tour, the main attraction you are educating visitors about; pick (1) thing from your tour to focus on, giving us a snapshot of what a tour would be like with you as the guide*

Conclusion:

- *summary of tour theme and what was experienced/observed*
- *suggestions for continuing activities related to the theme*
- *provocation of further thought or action (i.e. a call to action)*
- *opportunity to seek further information from you (the guide!)*



Evaluation Form

Areas of Interest	Needs Significant Work	Shows Potential	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Purposeful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour seems without purpose/is not related to mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour clearly supports the mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour suggests or implies future thought or action be taken related to the mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour provoked and inspired future action related to the mission
Organized	Did not provide intro or conclusion; wandered from main idea	Intro and/or Conclusion weak or missing, stayed on theme	Intro/Body/Conclusion clearly provided, but lacking transitions and/or did not restate theme	Intro included statement of theme, Body had clear transitions, Conclusion included restatement of theme
Enjoyable	Did not address multiple senses, utilized only one interpretive technique	Found ways to incorporate more than one sense, used at least two techniques	Included hands-on activity or other techniques to involve the audience; clearly engaged some audience members	Actively engaged audience in a variety of interpretive techniques with positive audience reaction
Thematic	Had no discernable theme	Theme was apparent, but vague or weak	Theme was apparent, tangible and intangible were stated	Strong theme linking tangibles to intangibles throughout, included at least one universal concept, answered "So what" question
Relevant	Did not engage the audience in any meaningful way	Attempted to engage audience with at least one relevant example	Used more than one relevant example that appear to engage the audience	Asked questions and clarified material to make it more relevant as needed; included at least one universal concept
You	Completely disengaged from audience	Maintained eye contact and was clearly heard by audience	Talked with enthusiasm in a friendly, interesting way; good eye contact and volume	Fully engaged with audience, aware of audience reactions and responded appropriately; strong, confident delivery
Overall Impression	Unmotivated or unable to grasp material	Shows potential for improvement with more practice	Clearly understands the concepts of interpretation, good presentation skills	Excellent demonstration of the concepts taught; excellent presentation skills; shows creativity

COMMENTS: