

MKSA Guide- Job Description

Guides drive and narrate our tours on Mauna Kea. The workday begins 5 1/2 hours before sunset at our office in Kailua Kona. Our vehicles are new 14 passenger 4x4 Micro-coaches with automatic transmissions. We pick up our passengers at several designated pick-up points and collect payment and necessary documents from the passengers. During the drive up the mountain guides interpret a wide variety of subjects using a PA system and look after guest comfort. Guides also answer a myriad of questions. Our clientele is very well educated and surprisingly knowledgeable about Hawaii. At the mid-level station, we pause for 45 minutes to serve dinner. We arrive at the summit (13,796ft.) just in time for sunset. At night, we descend to mid-mountain and produce an educational astronomy program. Guides will setup and operate large, computerized telescopes, interpret the night sky and teach basic astronomy. Afterwards we drop off our guests and return to Kona 4 1/2 hours after sunset.

Work schedule

Our guides normally work 3 or 4, 10 hour shifts per week. The work days begins 5 1/2 hours before sunset and ends 4 1/2 hours after. Work days normally remain fixed for a month or two at a time but change from time to time. Normally guides do not work more than two days in a row. Flexibility is important in this job as the visitor influx is changing. This is a career and as such, any other work you have must be scheduled secondarily to this position. While we try to make a consistent work schedule outside factors including weather, fluctuations in business levels, equipment issues and illness can all change the normal schedule. An average of 25 days a year is cancelled due to bad weather. Any one guide might lose an average of 10 workdays a year as a result. On these days there will be no work or pay.

Training:

Our guides are thoroughly trained and tested. The training period varies depending on the individual's aptitude and study habits. The basic training period can be rather intense and progress must be rapid. This training includes a great deal of technical driving instruction, observation and personal study time. During this probationary period you will be driving and interpreting while a senior guide rides along helping with narration or driving as necessary. Individual study will concentrate on geography, geology, speaking skills and natural history. This part of the training needs to be completed in 5-10 work days. Study materials, internet access and written materials are supplied. Some trainees fail during this time due to poor driving habits/skills, lack of study/recall, substandard speaking/interpersonal ability or inability to work in the high/cold environment. A pay raise accompanies the successful completion of this sector as well as more workdays.

You will move to the next phase when we feel you are ready to drive and narrate solo. During this phase, you will be polishing your presentation, learning astronomy and operating the telescope. There will always be another guide along driving a second vehicle, and mentoring. This phase may last a few weeks up to a few months. A significant pay raise accompanies the successful completion of this sector.

After this phase, you will be a full guide and may work completely solo at times. Training is continuous at all levels.

Benefits:

MKSA offers health insurance including dental and vision to all full-time employees. We also give one paid week of vacation a year and one week unpaid. Uniform shirts are provided.

Pay:

Our pay scale and work scheduling are based upon job performance and customer response more than seniority. Trainee guides receive a trainee rate until such time as they can drive and narrate a tour solo when the hourly rate goes up. When they learn to also conduct stargazing show the rate goes up again. Each year salaries are reviewed and cost of living adjustments made. Many customers will TIP a hard working and courteous driver. These TIP's could be a very significant part of a driver's income.

Personal and Physical qualities:

Guides are the most important element in our business. They must be very versatile and adept in many subjects. Although our training program is extremely thorough a good candidate should have some substantial knowledge in some if not most of the areas listed below. They will also need to possess certain personal qualities that we will list below. Our interview process includes some skill and knowledge testing. Please save yourself some time and abstain from applying if you don't really qualify.

#1 A guide candidate should be a great driver; Safety conscious and courteous and with well above average technical driving skills. We road test applicants and skills such as: safe backing with mirrors, precision parking, gear changing (automatic) and smooth braking will be examined. Of course, a driving resume and a traffic abstract will be required at the interview. Experience with larger vehicles or professional driving experience would be a great asset. A C.D.L.. is not necessary

#2 Guides must be quick learners and great at retaining and recalling rather large amounts of factual and statistical information. Good study habits and a real interest in the material are quite important. Most of our clients are post graduates; their questions will be tough and the answers must be correct and concise.

#3 Guides need to be good public speakers and comfortable interacting with and leading a wide range of people. Language skills should be well above average.

#4 Be in good physical health and capable of doing somewhat strenuous tasks at high altitudes and under difficult environmental conditions. Guides need the physical capability to lift 65lbs. to torso height and hold for 30 seconds. Excellent day and night vision are necessary as well as stamina to remain alert and cheerful throughout a 9 hour work day. You cannot do this job if you have a heart condition, lung condition, severe obesity or pregnancy. Guides are subject to drug testing and background checks at any time.

#5 Appearance is important in the visitor industry. As we are professional drivers and we need to look the part. Drivers should be neat and tidy with no visible piercings beyond the ears. Uniforms and parkas are provided.

Base Knowledge:

Guide candidates should have significant knowledge and/or experience in at least two of the following subjects or a degree in any one before undergoing training:

Astronomy, Geology, Natural history, Hawaiiana, Geography

Note: This knowledge, need not have come from formal education. It could well be from reading or personal avocations. There is a special guide application addendum for listing all relevant knowledge even from informal sources. A brief quiz accompanies our personal interview in an effort to determine your actual knowledge levels in subjects appropriate to our job.

Job Experience:

As our operation is relatively unique we don't often expect to find people with experience in our particular field. There are, however, some prior occupations that might be quite relevant to our work.

#1 Professional drivers especially diesel, bus or limo experience

#2 Visitor industry workers with direct public contact expertise

#3 Teachers, professors and trainers

#4 Outdoor leaders, guides, park rangers, scout leaders etc.