

17. SAMPLE HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEERS

WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in, and welcome to, San Diego Visitor Services, a department of the Membership Division of the San Diego Tourism Authority also known as SDTA (formerly known as San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau or CONVIS). Visitor Services include the **INTERNATIONAL VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER** (known as **IVIC**), located on the waterfront in downtown San Diego and the **California Welcome Center, Alpine (CWCA)**, located at the Viejas Outlet Center in East County.

Whether you are a new staff member, or a new volunteer, we are pleased to have someone with your special skills available to assist visitors and the staff. We hope the enclosed information will help orient you. **Please read it carefully.** It is important to familiarize yourself with SDTA publications, policies, and, most important, its members.

San Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA) is a non-profit sales and marketing organization which markets the destination and promotes its members exclusively. Only in special instances are non-members referred (See office procedures). Feel free to ask the staff whenever you have questions about a policy, procedure, or service. *Knowledgeable, helpful personnel create an atmosphere of hospitality which encourages visitors to stay longer and return often.*

A short **History of Visitor Services.** The **International Visitor Information Center** opened at the Horton Plaza Shopping Center in October 1985. Prior to that time, calls for visitor information were answered by Visitor Information Specialists at the SDTA (then CONVIS) “Main Office.” After 18 years at Horton Plaza, IVIC moved to the Waterfront location in December 2003, in partnership with the Port of San Diego. We operated the La Jolla Visitors Center from 2002-2012. It is now operated by the La Jolla Village Merchants Association. The **California Welcome Center, Alpine** opened as the Visitor Information Center for the San Diego East Visitors Bureau. In 2010 it was designated as a California Welcome Center by the State of CA, and became part of SDTA Visitor Services when SDEVB & SDConVis merged. In January 2013 our corporate name changed to **San Diego Tourism Authority.**

What is the purpose of a visitor center? “To increase visitor length of stay and resulting dollar expenditures, and to encourage repeat visitation that produces additional income to our community.” *Marshall Murdaugh Marketing e-newsletter.*

Why are knowledgeable volunteers so important? To provide information and options to visitors. Research has shown: the more options a visitor is aware of, the longer they stay, the more dollars they spend, & the more often they return.

What are the “**M & Ms**” of Visitor Services? **Memories, Members & Money.** Our staff and volunteers create lasting Memories by providing a wide variety of options to our visitors. We generate revenue for our Members, by referring visitors to our Members. We save the visitor Money (and generate revenue for SDTA) by offering discount coupons and special rates on hotel reservations & attraction tickets.

What will you do at our Visitor Center(s)? Depending on your schedule, your preferences and our needs, you could find yourself being asked to participate in a number of the following activities:

- Assist people who visit the Center
- Sell tickets, maps & make tour reservations
- Answer telephone calls
- Retrieve voice mail messages
- Keep brochure racks filled
- Prepare items for mailing
- Compile statistics
- Work on special projects
- Enter information into our database
- Do some research on the Internet
- Work off-site at an information table during special events

Description of a Great Visitor Services Specialist

Positive Attitude - Be friendly and courteous to visitors. Treat them as your guests. Even if you're having "one of those days," offer a sincere smile and your sparkling personality.

Proud - Take pride in your job and your community. In the visitor's eyes, you're part of the community, and if you put it down, you are also discrediting yourself.

Empathetic - Try to place yourself in the visitor's shoes and understand their point of view and needs. (I always think of my favorite grandmother when dealing with "little old people" who are sometimes hard of hearing, flustered, or need lots of time & attention.)

A Good Listener - Listen carefully to what the visitor is really asking for – some have very specific questions and others don't know where to begin. Give them what they need.

A Team Player - Tourism service is a team effort. Work closely with your fellow volunteers and staff members and put aside any personal differences so that nothing spoils our visitors' enjoyment.

Respectful - Show respect to your fellow Visitor Specialists by allowing them to assist a visitor by themselves, unless they specifically ask you for help. Too many "advisors" can be very confusing! (Do discreetly correct *inaccurate* info, however – we want those *memories* to be positive!)

Flexible - Some visitors want a lot of attention, others want to explore the Center by themselves, and some will switch from one type to another right before your eyes. Try to "go with the flow" and be willing to adjust your approach.

Neat - Your appearance makes an immediate impression on a visitor. Dress neatly and simply. Don't smoke, chew gum, or eat where you can be seen by our guests.

HOSPITALITY GUIDELINES – How to WOW our visitors

WOW = service that is **W**ay beyond the expected, **O**wn it personally, **W**in their hearts!

- Make all our visitors feel welcome. Greet them with a pleasant smile. Instead of saying "may I help you?", offer them a free visitor map.
- Anticipate needs – provide options. If they want directions to the Zoo, ask them if they already have their tickets – we offer a discount.

- Be attentive, alert & cordial – but never “pushy.”
- Be hospitable and answer questions in a polite and patient manner, no matter how busy you are or how many times you’ve heard the same question.
- Be courteous and cooperative at all times.
- Get to know our web site, so you can guide visitors to specific areas to help answer their questions. www.sandiego.org
- Learn as much as you can about our community, surrounding areas, San Diego County and SDTA members, so you can share that information with visitors.
- Know where “services” can be located.
- Familiarize yourself with local street maps, road maps & bus routes.
- Talk up local events.
- Remember visitors and callers aren’t interruptions to our work. They’re the reason we’re here!

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE: Please remember that you represent **SDTA** and **San Diego Visitor Services** both at the office and at outside events/parties. Outside activities are an opportunity to see some of our member properties, network with people in our industry, as well as sample food & services, and socialize. Spouses and friends are permitted only when the member specifically indicates that guests are invited.

- **DO** accept complimentary food and beverages when offered
- **DO NOT** demand or expect free food or ask for something not offered
- **DO** ask if they offer a visitor industry discount
- **DO NOT** ask for free admission, free lunch, or a free night at a property
- **DO** dress appropriately for the office, or event
- **DO** tip when it is appropriate
- **DO** write thank you notes - “mom” was right about this one!

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

BREAKS: Fresh air helps clear your mind. Please be sure to check with the staff when planning your breaks to ensure adequate coverage for the phones and the counter.

PARKING & TRANSPORTATION: SDTA pays for 4 parking permits at the Holiday Inn for our volunteers. The entrance is on Pacific Highway at A St., just one block south of Ash Street. Drive onto A (short street), drive thru the parking attendant gate (pull a ticket), turn left & drive thru the parking garage & out the other side, turn right; park anywhere in that lot. We can also reimburse volunteers who ride the bus, trolley or the Coaster. Please bring in your trolley ticket for our petty cash records.

COFFEE: Coffee is available at IVIC & CWCA. At **IVIC**, mugs are available for tea. There is a water dispenser with hot/cold water.

LUNCH/SNACKS: You are welcome to use the refrigerator for your food and beverages. Eating in public view is not permitted at any time.

THANK YOU FOR LEARNING AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT SAN DIEGO AND STAYING INFORMED OF CURRENT EVENTS. YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE HERE!!

GENERAL OFFICE PROCEDURES

OPERATING HOURS: **IVIC** is open daily year-round. Lobby hours are 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM June-September. (Phones are open 9-4 Mon-Sat, not on Sun). Fall, Winter, Spring lobby hours are 9am to 4pm daily. **CWC, Alpine** is open 10-5 Mon-Sat & 11-4 Sundays. All visitor centers are closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Years Day.

COURTESY: Of primary importance is that **San Diego Visitor Services** personnel represent San Diego to visitors, potential visitors, and residents. Very often, we are the first contact some of these people have in San Diego. We want **San Diego Visitor Services** to represent the best in San Diego. If callers/visitors are rude or irritating, it is part of our job to be polite, regardless. (The best way to handle these people is to excuse yourself and put the call on hold, or walk away from the counter with an excuse. Blow off steam quietly and then return to the caller/visitor.) A professional, polite & friendly manner is to be maintained at all times. If you feel you are being pressured or abused, ask a Supervisor for assistance.

REFERRALS: SDTA promotes its member organizations **exclusively**. Never recommend one property over another. We **refer** people to a variety of member properties and services. When questions are asked about a non-member property or service, answer at your discretion. Keep in mind our members have been known to call, pretending to be a visitor, to see what we say about their property or service. Always keep your comments positive and keep your personal *opinions* to yourself.

NOTE: People often confuse the **Chamber of Commerce** (619-544-1300) and **SDTA/IVIC**. They call the Chamber for *visitor* information, which we handle; or they call **IVIC** for *relocation/newcomer* information, which the Chamber handles.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

- **OFFICIAL VISITORS PLANNING GUIDE (VPG):** contains information on arts/attractions, accommodations, dining, maps, shopping, transportation/tours, visitor events, and sports/recreation. This guide is sent to potential visitors & is distributed to walk-in visitors and residents. The VPG is available at each desk/phone & at the counter. (*Will be available Spring 2013.*)
- **www.sandiego.org:** our web site! Lots of information & coupons. Please become familiar with it so you can help visitors find what they need.
- **SAN DIEGO VISITOR SERVICES BIG INFORMATION BINDER:** This large, 6 inch thick, 3-ring binder is put together by the staff and is available at each desk/phone and counter/phone. The counter edition is slightly different, and the differences will be emphasized in your counter training. In training, you will receive a Resource Review on the binder that will familiarize you with the information available. Review the 'big binder' often.

- **NEWSPAPERS & GUIDES:** includes the San Diego Union Tribune, the U-T Night and Day section, the Reader (good source for concerts & events, etc.) There are miscellaneous guides such as WHERE Magazine, Old Town Magazine, Ramona, Julian, La Jolla, and California Tourism guides.
- **MAPS:** There are SD County Thomas Guides, SD street maps, CA state maps (showing highways and state lines), SD County Recreation maps, SD Transit bus and trolley maps, & SD County bike maps.
- **IVIC SOURCE BOOK:** This book contains important, but infrequently called-for information.
- **www.Google.com:** great way to find events and information we don't have on hand. Please "play" with google so you are comfortable using it as a resource.

You can assist the staff by bringing in current items of information whenever possible. These include items from the local newspaper, news from TV programs or ads, and magazine news items. Please don't assume we saw the article – we're often too busy to scan the paper. The staff constantly updates information and phone numbers, so you can help provide the most current information.

PHONE CALLS

In general, questions fall into three major categories. One is the request for visitor information. Second is the request for current event/attractions information. Third is the request for hotel/motel referrals

REQUESTS FOR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS: IMPORTANT - Identify *what* the client/caller wants, and what they want it *for*, and then refer to the appropriate department. See the "main office contacts" page in the big binder, for names and phone numbers.

- **Media (radio, tv, newspapers, magazines) : PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)**
 - Provides press kits, news releases, photos, slides, media-only raw video footage, interview arrangements, etc. (These clients should be transferred to PR first, no matter what the request.) Note that some PR materials can be requested via our web site. Go to "media", "Public Relations", "SD Press Kit."
- **Meeting-Related Clients: HOTEL MEETINGS**
 - Provides quantities of visitor guides to meetings and conventions – there may be a fee and/or a delivery charge. (if available!)
- **Meeting Planners: HOTEL MEETINGS DEPARTMENT**
 - Provides the Meeting Planners Guide
 - See also the web site: Go to 'meeting professionals,' 'promote your meeting,' and choose photos, or contacts, or video, etc.
- **Travel Agents, Tour Operators: TRAVEL TRADE DEVELOPMENT**
 - There are "Discounts for Travel Professionals" available on-line only. See the web site: Go to 'travel professionals,' 'discounts and coupons.'

REQUESTS FOR EVENT/ATTRACTION INFORMATION:

There are two important things to remember. One, we are a **visitor** information center and have information on **visitor**-related events/attractions. Second, we have information on the **San Diego Region** only. Except for limited information on LA attractions, ConVis Bureaus, Consulates, and Northern Baja California (Mexico), our boundaries are the San Diego county lines. The exception is our new California Welcome Center, Alpine. CWCA has information about the entire State of CA.

1. **Current Events:** This section of the binder is updated every month. It contains all the events going on in the current month as well as one month ahead. In addition, the **yellow** pages contain museum info, the **green** pages contain concert info, and for certain holidays the **red** pages contain holiday info (fireworks, Christmas lights, etc.). During some holidays there may be additional folders, (for example: which hotels are serving whole turkeys, or where the Easter egg hunts are being held.) These folders are kept at the phone desk. If you get a question on an event about which we have not received information, you can explain that we only have information on those events about which the promoters notify us. Or try Google!
1. **Past/Future Events:** The **Annual Calendar** contains information on festivals, fairs, sporting events, music events, parades, rodeos, and general visitor-oriented happenings for the current year. The Annual Calendar **index** is an alphabetical listing of major events that enables you to find the event & the page where the event is listed in the Annual Calendar.
1. **Attractions:** Prices and hours change frequently, so double-check for current information. Attractions pay membership dues too, so be aware that you are ‘selling’ them as well as the hotels and restaurants.
2. **Individual Schedules:** These event listings are posted on the clip board and include: the Civic Theater, Balboa Theater, the San Diego Convention Center, Qualcomm Stadium, Valley View Casino Center, the Del Mar Fairgrounds, The Town & Country Hotel, and the Race Place Magazine. Schedules for a variety of our local sports teams, (for example; the Chargers & Padres) are included in the *Sports & Recreation* section of the big binder (during the season).
3. **Calendar of Conventions:** A listing of conventions being held in San Diego is available on our web site to SDTA members only. Each member uses a special code to access this list. If a caller requests a copy, we must inform them that SDTA is a membership organization and the Convention Calendar is a benefit of membership. The SD Convention Center (www.visitsandiego.com) has their calendar available on their web site and a monthly version is included in the Individual Schedules folder posted on the clip board.
4. **Conventions & Trade Shows:** If you cannot find a listing for a convention or trade show, it does not necessarily mean that it isn’t taking place. Sometimes organizers prefer not listing, in order to avoid being approached by vendors and salespeople. Try Google!

REQUESTS FOR GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Campground Information:** Refer to the binder “Camping” section for the phone numbers for the county, state, and national parks. In the city of San Diego, Campland on the Bay is the only place that allows tent camping. Caution callers that the city ordinances are strict. They could be fined or at least asked to move if they camp or park their RV in a non-camping area. This includes the parking lots at the Zoo, Mission Bay, etc.
2. **Road Information:** In the “Directions” section of the binder are specific directions to major attractions & area locations. You may also consult the Thomas Guide or other maps. For road

conditions the visitor may contact the CA Highway Patrol. Distance data is located in the “Transportation” section of the binder.

3. **Weather/Clothing Information:** The “San Diego Facts” section of the big binder lists the average temperatures, rainfall, humidity, % of sunshine, etc. If a caller asks about the weather---**BE HONEST**. It may be raining today, but the sun could be out by tomorrow.
4. **Research & Statistics:** Assorted community facts and statistics are found in the “San Diego Facts” section. For detailed Visitor Industry research & statistics, refer callers to the web site www.sandiego.org, Go to Research, Research & Reports. Questions should be referred to the SDTA Market Intelligence Department – see the Main Office section of the big binder.
5. **Visitor Center Network (VCN):** It is important to keep in mind that the San Diego region extends far beyond what we see. The SDTA is charged with the promotion of the entire San Diego area - from North County to the South Bay; from Mission Beach to Poway, Coronado to Alpine and beyond. It is also important to remember that we have a number of information partners throughout the County. These organizations and information centers are valuable resources for information, so please be sure to become familiar with their names and locations. There is an alphabetical listing by community of **County Information Centers**, Chambers of Commerce, and San Diego City/County agencies. If you can’t find information on a Carlsbad event or hotel, for example, please refer the caller to the Carlsbad Visitor Center.
6. **Useful:** This section of the binder lists colleges and universities, community clinics and hospitals, a religious directory, and local WIFI sites.
5. **Questions from/about International Visitors:** A listing of Tourist Bureaus and Consulates of foreign countries is located in the IVIC Source Book, on the bookshelf.

REQUESTS FOR HOTEL/MOTEL REFERRALS: Many callers will want **YOU** to recommend a hotel/motel for them. Our members are **not rated**, and we do **not** recommend one property over another. Ask the caller if he/she has a location preference, a price range in mind, or if there is something they want to be close to, (a convention? an attraction?). Use the Visitor Planning Guide (or the web site) to refer callers to Member hotel properties.

Always **mention at least three** member properties. Be aware that occasionally a member will call and “check-up” on our referrals. **Never make negative comments!!** Pick a positive feature to comment on, or if you are not familiar with a property, read the description from the **Visitor Planning Guide**.

Availability: The SDTA official reservation agency, **ARES** (Advanced Reservation System) is able to check hotel availability for visitors and make reservations. This service is also an important revenue source for SDTA, because we receive a commission for every booking. The ARES number is posted at each desk, and on business cards in the lobby.

- If a caller is having trouble finding rooms (on holiday weekends, for example) refer Bureau members in the outlying areas such as North, East or South County. Remember to include North and South County beach areas when people are looking for beachfront hotels.
- You can also mention other SDTA member hotel reservation agencies, which provide free reservation services. (Listed in the VPG)

- **NEVER** discourage a visitor from a property—it may not be our choice but it might be theirs - or it could be the owner of the property on the phone!

Rack Rates & Specials: The hotel prices recorded in the Visitor Planning Guide are called “published” or “rack rates.” Unless a hotel is very full, visitors can usually get a lower rate by calling the hotel and asking about mid-week specials, family specials, SW/Zoo specials or package deals; or they can check on the web for internet specials.

- Walk-in visitors looking for special prices can be directed to our Advertiser hotel brochures in the lobby, as well as to the ARES toll free number.
- You may also check the visitor center specials that have been faxed to us by the hotels, for daily availability and last minute rates.

WALK-IN VISITORS - COUNTER PROCEDURES

When you are scheduled to assist visitors at the counter, it is helpful if you report to the counter a few minutes before the start of your shift. Make sure that someone else is available to answer the phones, though. It makes it easier for the person at the counter to be relieved on time. More than likely, they are due on the phones. Check the daily schedule, as it changes occasionally!

General Counter Procedures: Your job at the counter is to welcome and assist walk-in visitors. Please wear your nametag. Start a conversation. Welcome visitors to San Diego and our visitor center. If someone says they're just looking, ask if they already have a free Visitor Guide or map and offer it to them. Please do not leave the counter unattended. If you must leave (for a break or whatever), please ask someone to take your place.

Planning Guide and Brochures: The Official Visitor Planning Guide is available to all walk-in visitors. Show them where the maps and discount coupons are located in the Guide. Visitors may help themselves to the individual activities & attraction brochures in the racks.

Directions: Visitors and residents alike may ask you for directions. You may use the "Driving Directions" section of the binder, bus maps, trolley maps, Thomas Guide, street maps. Drawing on the maps gives visitors a visual picture of where they are going, or where things are located. (People can remember a maximum of 3 directions!) If you are not sure about directions, please **ASK - DO NOT GUESS**. Visitors depend on you for accurate info. **Staff are always the first people to ask when you have questions**, as most of us are here 5 days a week answering the same questions time and again.

Sales:

1. IVIC sells tickets to most attractions, as well as a variety of local maps.
1. We also make reservations for, and take a deposit for a variety of tours.
1. We have both a cash register and a credit card machine. They will both print receipts. Complete instructions regarding these machines will be given during the COUNTER & retail sales TRAINING periods.
1. If a person asks for change for the meters, we have quarters under the counter.
2. Please pay attention when handling money and inventory. We have to balance & reconcile our sales every night! If others are waiting, do not panic. Let them know you will be right with them, and **take the time to complete each sale accurately**.
3. If you need assistance please ring the bell on the counter.

Restrooms: Public restrooms are located inside the terminal for SD Harbor Excursions (the Bay Café), and also just south of the Fish Market (open 9am to sunset).

Taxis: People may use the pay phones in the Bay Cafe to call a cab. There are taxi stands across the street in front of the SD Harbor Excursion & Hornblower ticket booths, and in front of the Holiday Inn on the Bay hotel. You may call a cab for an elderly or disabled person if they ask and you feel it is warranted.

Complaints: If someone has a complaint, gather all the details (if you are comfortable) or ask a staff member to take the call or come to the counter. Sometimes people just need someone to listen to their complaint. You should not have to take verbal abuse by callers or walk-ins. If there is an official complaint regarding a SDTA member, staff will forward it to a Membership representative.

No Smoking: If visitors enter IVIC with a lighted cigarette, cigar or pipe, please ask them to leave immediately. It could set off our smoke alarm. If they say they only have a quick question, tell them you cannot help them until they take their cigarette outside. No ifs, ands or “butts” about it!!

Security: If you are uncomfortable due to a “weird” person in the lobby, please call for a staff person right away. In case of a real emergency call the SD Harbor Police (619-223-1133) or use the emergency alarm switch at the counter.

Member visits: When members visit IVIC or CWC, Alpine, and bring supplies of their brochures (or goodies for the staff & volunteers), please notify a staff person immediately. One of us may need to speak to the member. If the entire staff is in a meeting, please get a business card from the visiting member, so we can call/thank them later.

Food and Beverages: Please **do not eat in public view**; keep your sodas, water & coffee cups under the counter out of public view; remember to take your cups with you, or throw them out when you leave the counter.

SPECIAL PROMOTIONS

Discount Coupons: are popular SDTA promotions on our website. Discounts may include hotels/motels, popular attractions, car rentals, restaurants, harbor tours, and much more.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Advertising - This is an opportunity available only to our ConVis members. It enables them to increase their visibility to visitors by displaying backlit advertising and distributing their brochures at **IVIC** and/or the **CWC, Alpine** for a fee. If there are inquiries about becoming an advertiser please ask Sue Mason or one of the staff to handle. If no one is available, please get a business card and give it to Sue Mason, or refer them to our Membership Dept.

BROCHURE RACKS – Our SDTA Members pay an additional fee to have their brochures featured in the IVIC lobby or in the racks at CWC, Alpine. When you have time in between visitors, you can help by re-stocking the brochure racks. At IVIC, there is a “Brochure racks – restocking” binder under the counter. It contains a “grid map” showing what brochures belong in the racks. Please note, we don’t keep back up supplies of every brochure (not enough room!). One of our member vendors, Certified Folder Display, re-stocks our racks three times a week.

HOTEL DISCOUNTS - Each day Visitor Services receives calls and faxes from various hotels with the hotel rate of the day. At IVIC, these discounted rates are posted at the counter in a binder “Hotel Rates.” When our walk-in visitors ask about special rates, consult the hotel rates binder. When making reservations, **visitors must mention IVIC or CWCA** to receive the visitor center special rate or discount. These special rates are only valid for the date given and on a **space available basis**. If you receive the hotel call, please write down the name of the hotel, the rate for the day, and the name of the hotel representative & their phone number.

COMMON QUESTIONS & SUGGESTED ANSWERS

In the front section of the information binder there is a yellow/golden sheet with answers to **frequently asked questions**. This includes locations of restrooms, lockers, money exchange, cleaning services, the Post Office, ATMs—you get the drift. Many of the general questions you get at the counter can be answered from information on the pink “frequently asked questions” sheet.

Q: What transportation is available in Downtown?

A: ON FOOT: San Diego’s downtown central business district is extremely walk-able. The streets are on a grid system; and street addresses on blocks running east to west generally indicate cross streets as well. For example: 121 Broadway is between First and Second Ave; 410 Island is between Fourth and Fifth. Broadway is the 1000 block running south to north, E St. is 900 and C St. is 1100. After A is Ash and then names of trees (Ash, Beech, Cedar, etc.) alphabetically each block north. Gateway streets such as Market, Ash, Broadway, and N. Harbor Dr. link the waterfront with the most extensively developed areas of the Center City.

BUS: San Diego Transit has approximately twenty different bus routes (five express) that service all parts of the county from Center City. Exact change is required. Most buses now accept one dollar bills. **The Transit Store** is located at the NE corner of First and Broadway, approx. eight blocks from IVIC. They offer bus maps, bus schedules, Compass Cards and routing information. It is also possible to get city routings by phone at 619-233-3004, or 511, or on their web site www.transit.511sd.com. IVIC sells 1 Day Compass Cards.

SAN DIEGO TROLLEY: There are now four main trolley lines. They run about every 15 minutes from early morning til 8 at night and then every 30 minutes to 1 hour until shortly after midnight.

- The Blue Line goes from downtown to within 100 feet of the Mexican border in San Ysidro and then returns to downtown.
- The Orange Line goes to El Cajon (Gillespie Field) via Euclid Ave, Lemon Grove, La Mesa Blvd & Grossmont Center.
- The Green Line operates from downtown to Old Town, Fashion & Mission Valleys, Qualcomm Stadium, Mission San Diego, SDSU, and onto Santee Town Center.
- The Red Line operates during special events, such as Padre Games, from Qualcomm to Gaslamp Quarter stop near PetCo Park.

TRAINS: Amtrak trains run between San Diego and Los Angeles. The Coaster is a commuter train running between San Diego and Oceanside. Both leave from the Santa Fe Train Depot at Kettner Blvd. and Broadway. Phone numbers are in the “Transportation” section of the big binder.

PERSONAL CAR: Remember when driving downtown that most streets are one-way. Starting with Front St., traffic runs north to south. First Ave. traffic runs south to north, and following streets alternate accordingly to Park Blvd (used to be 12th). Ash runs east to west and A St. runs west to east. If a visitor is driving, you can suggest the 59-mile Scenic Drive (self-guided tour), copies of which are available for purchase at IVIC. The closest parking lot is located near IVIC, with the entrance on Pacific Highway, near Broadway. Street parking is limited during cruise ship operations.

BICYCLE: There are designated bike paths installed by the Port Authority along San Diego’s beautiful waterfront. You can bike to the Embarcadero Marina Park or traverse the city to Balboa Park.

Mission Bay is a good place to bike, or take the Coronado Ferry over to Coronado with your bike (no add'l fee!). Sometimes we have free bike route maps at IVIC.

Q: Do you have downtown walking tours and maps for the San Diego area?

A: “Walkabout International” at Liberty Station is a good source. Their number is 231-7463. Carol Mendel’s book San Diego on Foot, is helpful. We have a copy of the Mendel book at IVIC. We have SDTA members who offer walking tours. On our web site, type in “walking tour” in the search box.

Q: Do you have San Diego souvenirs for groups to take to Europe?

A: SDTA does not have buttons, pins, pens, postcards, hats, etc. You can refer the caller to our web site - on the home page, go to *Members, Member Directory, Professional Services, Promotional Products and Gifts*. Horton Plaza, Seaport Village, and Old Town have shops that sell SD T-shirts and souvenirs. The San Diego Harbor Excursion Gift Ship and the Cabrillo National Monument Gift Shop sell slides of San Diego. If it is for a convention or the media, transfer the call to the appropriate department at the Main Office. Refer to “main office contacts” page in the big binder.

Q: What information do you have on “Meeting Rooms”?

A: If someone wants information on where to hold a meeting, other than in hotel meeting rooms, see the “Event Venues” section of the Meeting Planners Guide. See also the “Restaurant” binder for private dining rooms. If they will need hotel meeting rooms for 2 or more nights, you may refer them to the Hotel Meetings Department at the Main Office.

Q: Why are there so many transients Downtown? Is it safe? What is being done about them?

A: Every major city in the world has a homeless population; and most homeless are harmless. It’s a social problem common to urban areas, yet it need not prevent people from enjoying the Downtown and its amenities. San Diego attracts their fair share of homeless because of the temperate climate. **Using reasonable caution, like you would in any major city, is suggested.**

The Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul Village will feed and house people on a temporary basis. There is a Transient Resource Center. See the “Downtown Social Services” section in IVIC Source Book.

Q: Is SDTA funded through local taxes?

A: No. A percentage of our budget is raised from membership dues, and a percentage of the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) funds are provided to SDTA **specifically for marketing San Diego**. The TMD is an assessment on City of SD hotels/motels and is collected by the City of San Diego. SD Visitor Services (IVIC & CWCA) is responsible for raising enough revenue to cover our operating budget through *ticket sales and advertising*.

TIPS FOR INTERACTING WITH INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Greetings

- Initial greeting should be simple: “Good Morning,” “Good Afternoon,” and “Good Evening” are generally understood.
- Smiling is not a universal communication symbol. Although American service personnel should always “go the extra smile,” do not expect international visitor’s facial expressions to always mirror your own.
- Good eye contact is valued in many cultures, but not necessarily appropriate in all cultures. Please do not be offended if it is not returned.

Verbal Communication

- Many international visitors speak English fluently. Listen to the response of those who do not. If they don’t understand, **simplify**. Keep sentences to a minimum with short pauses in between. Quite often repeat what was said and confirm an understanding.
- International visitors appreciate the patience and courtesy you show when you imagine yourself in their shoes.

Giving Directions

- Many cultures do not use a street grid system in which “blocks” have meaning. Others do not rely on “East,” “West,” etc. for giving directions. **Use a map and mention landmarks to guide visitors more clearly.**
- Because most of the rest of the world uses metric distances, “miles” and “feet” may be difficult for visitors to understand.
- Using one finger to point is offensive in some cultures. Please use a *flat hand* (your whole hand) when directing visitors.

HOW TO USE THE PHONES

The phones on volunteer desk I will be active from 9am-4pm Monday thru Saturday. The phones will not ring on Sundays.

TO ANSWER CALLS:

- Lift the handset and answer as follows: “San Diego Visitor Services, this is _____,” OR “San Diego Visitor Services, may I help you?”

TO PUT A CALL ON HOLD:

- Press the “hold” button
- Press the “resume” button again, to resume call.

Before you put someone on HOLD, always ASK: “May I put you on a brief hold, please” or “Will you hold for a moment please?” (Please put callers on hold while you are looking up information. We don’t want them to hear our comments in the background.)

When you come back to the phone after putting someone on hold: Press the resume button and answer: "Thank you for waiting..."

Please close your conversation with: "THANK YOU FOR CALLING."

TO LEAVE YOUR PHONE: (for any reason, restroom break, at the end of the day/your shift etc.)

- Let someone know you are leaving your desk. We can cover or assign someone else to answer.

TO TRANSFER CALLS TO IVIC STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS or to the Main Office

- Press “TRANSFER“ button, dial the four digit extension, wait for the recipient to answer, press the “TRANSFER” again, and hang up. If the recipients voice mail answers, press “TRANSFER” once the recorded message begins.

TO MAKE OUTSIDE CALLS: (Because we are close quarters, and you won’t have any privacy, if possible, please step outside for personal calls - also it can be difficult to hear the caller if someone is talking on their phone nearby).

- Do NOT make outside calls while you are assigned to answer phones.
- And please don’t answer your cell phone. Unless you’re expecting an emergency-type call, please turn it off. Thank you!

If a caller wants to speak with someone at the Main Office give them the direct number to call – please see the MAIN OFFICE INFORMATION page in the big binder regarding phone numbers for the Main Office staff. If you are familiar with transferring a call you may do so by following the steps above. Prior to transferring call please give caller the appropriate phone number in case they are disconnected.

If you see a RED light on the Vol I phone handset – that means someone has left a voice message. Please check the message and return the call as needed.

PLEASE NOTE: Our policy is: **NEVER ACCEPT COLLECT CALLS.**

TO CALL THE VISITOR CENTER ACROSS THE STREET or TO CALL BACK OFFICE FROM VISITOR CENTER - JUST DIAL THE LAST 4 DIGITS OF THE PHONE NUMBER.

HOW TO USE THE FORMS

It is extremely important that accurate statistics be kept of the number and type of visitors and visitor phone calls.

PHONE TALLY FORM – you will find this form at volunteer desks #1 & #2, & everyone using that desk will use the same form, for one full week (Sunday thru Saturday).

We keep track of **Visitor Information calls**, and whether the caller is calling within San Diego County (local) or outside SD County (long distance). Make a tally mark in the appropriate day and section of the phone tally sheet, according to the type of call. We do NOT keep track of wrong numbers, hotels calling in availability, calls from the Main Office staff, or personal calls

SECONDARY INFORMATION: The secondary info column is to collect a variety of information. These marks are ***in addition*** to the mark for visitor information calls and SD articles. For example:

1. If someone calls and complains that they have not received their visitor information, make a tally mark in the **mail complaint** box. ("I called 3 weeks ago, and haven't received anything yet!")
2. Certain times of the year we may be asked to track something specific, for example - how many people call asking about **Transit** information. We will add a box to the sheet and ask you to make a mark for each inquiry regarding transit.

THANK YOU again for the time and effort you've chosen to give to the Visitor Information Center(s). SDTA is a non-profit organization. This service to San Diego's visitors just wouldn't exist without your time, skills, knowledge, commitment to excellence, & dedication.

Thanks for remembering to...

Accentuate the positive

Make wonderful Memories, Refer visitors to our Members, Generate Money

Anticipate Needs - Provide options

WOW 'em – Way beyond the expected, Own it personally, Win their hearts.

You've won our hearts by being a volunteer for San Diego Visitor Services.

18. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL – CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS (FOLLOWING PAGES)