

Professional Licensing Examination: New York City Sightseeing Guide Study Reference

TO: Prospective New York City Sightseeing Guides

When applying for a Sightseeing Guide license from the Department of Consumer Affairs, you will be required to take the *Professional Licensing Examination for New York City Sightseeing Guides*.

There are different versions of the examination. All examination questions are either Multiple Choice or True/False and are written so that pertinent information and “clues” are often included within the actual examination.

The 150 questions will address only a portion of the knowledge necessary to conduct professional tours of New York City. Your task will be to focus on overall general New York City knowledge—predominantly Manhattan—but the test will include questions about all five boroughs.

A score of 97 correct answers is required to pass this examination. If you score 120 or more, a star will be placed next to your name on the DCA Web site.

The areas covered by the questions are:

- 1) **“Getting There”** – Basic travel information about subways, City buses, and the Staten Island Ferry [Study NYC Bus and Subway maps and check www.mta.nyc.ny.us for general information, and for information about the Arts for Transit Program.]
- 2) **General New York City Knowledge** – Basic information oriented toward visitors to NYC [*Blue Guide New York* and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*]
- 3) **New York City History** – Rudimentary history from the Algonquin Indians to the present day [*Blue Guide New York* and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*]
- 4) **New York City Neighborhoods** (Predominantly Manhattan): Location, history, and historic transformations [*Blue Guide New York*; *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*; and *New York*. Optional: *Ethnic New York*]
- 5) **Major New York City Landmarks** – General information and location [*Blue Guide New York*; *New York*; and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*]
- 6) **Ethnic Studies and Immigration Patterns, Past and Present** – [*Blue Guide New York* and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*. Optional: *Ethnic New York*]
- 7) **Museums, Art, and Culture** – Basic knowledge of artistic mission and focus of major cultural institutions, museums, historic houses, and cultural properties throughout New York City. Basic tourist-oriented knowledge of collections. [*Blue Guide New York*. Also NYC & Company *Official NYC Guide*]
- 8) **Music, Theatre, and Dance** – Basic knowledge suitable for visitor orientation purposes [*Blue Guide New York* or *New York*]
- 9) **New York City Literature** – A few questions will be included about the New York writings of prominent authors whose works can readily enhance a tour. In the examination, the list will be limited to the following: *E. B. White*, *Langston Hughes*, *Edith Wharton*, *Washington Irving*, *Paule Marshall*, *Jack Finney*, *Walt Whitman*, *O. Henry*, and *F. Scott Fitzgerald*. [A very general recognition of the writings of each of these authors will be sufficient for examination purposes. A few hours in a library or bookstore should suffice.]
- 10) **Religion** – General knowledge about religious orientations of major ethnic groups and basic religious traditions [*Blue Guide New York*; *New York*; and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*. Optional: *Ethnic New York*]
- 11) **Architecture and basic New York City Planning** – Some identification of prominent architectural styles in New York City and the identification of noted examples. Comprehension of “grid plan” and its impacts. [*Blue Guide New York*; *New York*; and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*. Optional: *AIA Guide to New York City*]
- 12) **Parks and Parkways, plus Greenwood and Woodlawn Cemeteries** – Very general knowledge of New York’s major parks and garden cemeteries. [*Blue Guide New York*; *New York*; and *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis*]

- 13) **Ethnic Foods** – Basic identification of popular ethnic foods. Personal experience helps!
[*Ethnic New York; The Food Lover’s Guide to the Real New York*, or another comparable ethnic food text]
- 14) **Public Sculptures of Noted People** – Identification and sites, predominantly in Manhattan
[*Blue Guide New York; New York; and New York, A Guide to the Metropolis*. Optional: *Guide to Manhattan’s Outdoor Sculptures*]
- 15) **A Few Residences of Noted People/Celebrity “Walks of Fame” in the City** –
[*Blue Guide New York*] “Walks of Fame” include Seventh Avenue’s “Fashion Walk,” Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s “Celebrity Walk,” the former Theater 80 “Film Star Walk,” Second Avenue Deli’s “Yiddish Theatre Walk,” and others.
- 16) **Practicum** – Legal routings and passenger pick-up/drop-off locations for tour buses; the Midtown Thru Streets Program. **This is very important!** [NYC Department of Transportation Web site. Also, for one-way streets, *Manhattan, Block by Block: A Street Atlas*]
- 17) **Practicum** – Working with groups; using a microphone; billing and tax issues; Travel and Tourism terms, etc.
[*Start and Run a Profitable Tour Guiding Business*. Discussions with working tour guides.]

A professional New York City Sightseeing Guide must have an extensive base of knowledge. Even for well-versed New Yorkers, a cursory reading of the suggested texts is highly recommended. Please pay special attention to the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) bus regulations. All Sightseeing Guides are legally obligated to strictly adhere to these regulations when directing bus drivers.

A prospective professional Sightseeing Guide should prepare for this examination by meeting and talking with licensed New York City Sightseeing Guides. Join commercial tours and participate in the various walking tours offered through New York City organizations such as the Municipal Art Society (<http://www.mas.org>). Food aficionados may want to participate in walking tours with such groups as Nosh Walks (<http://www.noshnews.com>). A number of the Manhattan Business Improvement Districts offer excellent free tours of their neighborhoods. Check out free BID tours through groups such as the Times Square Alliance, Grand Central Partnership, 34th Street Partnership, the Union Square BID, the Lower East Side BID, Alliance for Downtown New York, and the Village Alliance. Information about these tours is often listed in newspaper tour listings, *New York Magazine*, *Time Out New York*, and *Club Freetime Magazine*. An excellent range of tours is listed on the Web site for the Guides Association of New York City (GANYC, <http://www.ganyc.org>).

IMPORTANT:

There is no penalty for failing the *Professional Licensing Examination for New York City Sightseeing Guides* on your first attempt. Should you fail, you may return to take another version of the examination within 10 days.

If you fail the exam twice, you must pay the exam fee again in order to retake the exam.

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There are numerous texts that might be useful for study purposes. For the sake of simplicity, the suggested list is limited to the following texts. For those who do not have access to the Internet, please use a computer at a local library or a “cyber-café” or have a friend print out the Internet text for you.

For Study Purposes for the Examination, the following texts are STRONGLY suggested:

- **Blue Guide New York** / Carol von Pressentin Wright; Miller and Seitz / W. W. Norton & Company; 3rd edition (April 2002). (General NYC guide)
- A possible **Blue Guide** alternative: **New York** / Christine Metzger / Könemann, 2001. (General NYC guide)
- **New York: A Guide to the Metropolis** / Gerard R. Wolfe / McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing; 2nd edition (January 1, 1994) (Walking tours of New York City) **Please note:** The 2003 version of **New York: A Guide to the Metropolis** is now named **New York: 15 Walking Tours**. For the purposes of the examination, these texts are interchangeable.
- **NYC and Company Official NYC Guide** (Obtainable at no cost from NYC & Company, 810 Seventh Avenue) (<http://www.nycvisit.com/>)
- **NYC Department of Transportation Web site:** <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/home.html>
- **Start and Run a Profitable Tour Guiding Business** / Braidwood, Boyce & Cropp / Self-Counsel Press; 2nd edition (September 2000) (Or a comparable book). This specific text is not necessarily critical. The examination will ask some questions about common Travel Industry terminology. This information may often be readily obtained in discussions with Licensed Tour Professionals. Another option is to borrow this, or a similar book, from the library.
- **New York City Bus and Subway Maps** (Obtainable at no cost at the New York Transit Museum shop in Grand Central Terminal)
- **NYC Metropolitan Transportation Authority Web site:** <http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/> (MTA Bus and Subway information)
- **MTA Arts for Transit:** <http://www.mtabt.org/mta/aft/index.html> (MTA art and music in subways program)

For Study Purposes, additional information may be obtained from this OPTIONAL list of texts:

- **AIA Guide to NYC** / Willensky & White / Crown Publishing Group, 2000.
- **Ethnic New York** / Mark Leeds / Passport Books; 2nd edition (August 1995). (Ethnic histories, neighborhoods, food, and merchandise) This excellent text is currently out of print, but is available in lending libraries. Copies may be purchased via www.amazon.com and other used book sources. This book can prove to be a valuable text for tours.
- **Manhattan, Block by Block: A Street Atlas, 3rd Edition** / John Tauranac / Tauranac Ltd / August 2004. Great for tour routing.
- **The Food Lover's Guide to the Real New York** / Alperson and Clifford / Prentice-Hall, 1987. (*The Food Lover's Guide* is out of print, but is available in libraries. Copies may be purchased via www.amazon.com and other used book sources.) Other sources may also be used. The examination asks a few questions about descriptions of popular ethnic foods.
- **Guide to Manhattan's Outdoor Sculptures** / Gayle & Cohen / Prentice Hall, 1988. (Guide to Public Sculptures in Manhattan) Out of print, but available via <http://www.amazon.com> and other used book sources.
- **The Street Book** / Henry Moscow / Fordham University Press; Reprint edition (July 1990). (Origin of Manhattan street names) Excellent stories.