

Charleston, SC

Overview:

The City of Charleston has enacted a comprehensive tourism ordinance to help manage the daily tourism operations within the city. Charleston has attempted to strike a balance between the need for tour buses and motorcoaches as a way of bringing people to the city and the desire to preserve the City's sensitive historic and residential surroundings. Charleston issues certificates or permits as a mean to control the number of tour buses entering the city's old and historic district. Certificates are issued to small tour buses while large buses require a permit. Additionally, to offset the cost of touring by buses the city may impose a fifty-cent fee on individuals participating in a tour. The City also requires all tours for hire to be conducted by a registered city tour guide. Finally, to manage the traffic flow of tour buses and motorcoaches, Charleston has designated specific routes that touring vehicles must travel on. It is the duty of Charleston's Tourism Management Division to oversee the daily management of tourism related operations within the city. A detailed list of Charleston's tour bus regulations and policies is outline below.

More information is available >> <http://www.charlestoncity.info/dept/content.aspx?nid=86>

City of Charleston Tourism Ordinance – Chapter 29

- Persons acting as a tour guide for hire must by licensed by the city.
- Small Bus: includes vehicles that are 25 feet or less in length and are used for the purpose of touring for hire.
 - o Must be issued a certificate of appropriateness
 - o Generally, small buses may operate on all streets within the historic district (except on cobblestone/brick streets and several designated roads).
 - o *Regularly Scheduled Small Bus Tours*: must submit a schedule of touring to city. City will assign designated route that buses must follow.
 - o *Other Scheduled Small Bus Tours*: small buses that do not regularly operate tours must notify the city at least 24 hours in advance of a tour in order to receive an assigned route to follow.
 - o No small bus tour shall take place without a city licensed tour guide (guide card must be displayed in windshield)
 - o Pick up and discharge of passengers must occur only at designated city passenger loading zones.
 - o Parking of small buses can only occur at designated locations, including the visitor center, one designated attraction and on certain streets.
 - o No more than 36 small buses can be operated on streets within the City at any one time.
- Large Bus: vehicles longer than 25 feet in length but not longer than 40 feet and used for the purpose of touring.
 - o Large buses must acquire a touring permit from the city in order to conduct tours. A separate permit for each trip into the district is required and permits must be displayed in the windshield.

- Large buses may operate only on a perimeter route and on two arterial roads. Arterial roads, which access downtown, can not be used from 4:30PM-6:30PM.
 - All large buses conducting tours must have a licensed tour guide on board (guide card displayed in windshield)
 - Pick up and discharge of passengers must occur only at designated city passenger loading zones
 - *Nontouring Purposes*: large buses may enter the district upon issuance of permit which specifies the route and designated loading/unloading point. Buses must depart district after drop off and only reenter (along a designated route) to pick up passengers.
 - Parking for large buses is available at a singles location
 - Permit Issuance Restrictions: no more than 6 permits issued per hour between 9:00AM-12:00PM and 2:00PM-4:30PM. No more than 4 permits will be issued between 12:00PM-2:30PM and 4:30PM-6:00PM
 - Two perimeter zones that specify specific routes for large buses are established by the city. The city issues permits for these routes in an alternating fashion.
- General Regulations:
- No vehicle of any kind conducting a tour shall stop or stand at a point of interest. Vehicles must remain as part of normal traffic flow.
 - Tours in small or large buses are prohibited from 6:00PM-9:00AM.
 - No buses may park with engines idling for more than 5 minutes in residential areas.