



## Updated Guidelines and Script for Visitor Orientation

October 2024

As a Visitor Services Volunteer (VSV), you are a key ambassador of Hillwood. You are often the first point of contact after guests check in, and your warm, welcoming presence sets the tone for their entire visit. By providing essential information, you ensure that each guest enjoys a memorable and meaningful experience.

To enhance this even further, we're introducing a new element to the visitor orientation process. In addition to detailing our touring options, we ask that you now emphasize a few key visitor guidelines. Presenting these guidelines at the start of their visit will help guests explore the mansion comfortably while respecting the spaces and collections.

### Key Points to Cover During Orientation:

- **Map Overview:** Use the map in our brochures to provide an overview of Hillwood's grounds.
- **Orientation Film:** Encourage guests to watch the 10-minute orientation film, shown every 15 minutes starting at 9:30 a.m.
- **Touring Options:** Provide an overview of the various touring options. Allow the visitor's interests to guide the conversation, emphasizing that Hillwood offers multiple ways to explore and enjoy the estate.
- **Visitor Guidelines:** Highlight these important guidelines:
  - **Art Experience:** Remind guests to engage with the art through observation and imagination, as touching the collection or leaning on the mansion's walls, doorways, or columns can damage these fragile pieces and is not permitted.
  - **Camera Use:** Let guests know they're welcome to use their camera without a flash. Encourage them to be considerate of others and avoid use while walking to keep the flow in the mansion smooth for everyone.
  - **Bag/Coat Check Policy:** Remind visitors that Hillwood offers a complimentary coat/bag check in the mansion. Oversized bags, totes, backpacks, bulky items, coats, and water bottles must be checked upon entry to the mansion. If they have any questions about what should be checked, the Security team in the mansion are happy to assist.

Thank you for incorporating this new information into your orientation. On the next page, you'll find an updated sample script to assist you in delivering a comprehensive and welcoming visitor orientation.

## Sample Visitor Orientation

**Estimated time: 4 minutes**

Hello, welcome to Hillwood! Is this your first visit?

*If the answer is yes, proceed with the following:*

Great! Let me start by showing you a map of the estate.

- You're currently here at the visitor center. When you're ready, you can start your visit by taking the stairs behind the front desk or using the elevator to exit from the second floor.
- Once you exit the conservatory, you'll see the mansion directly ahead, surrounded by our formal gardens.
- The greenhouse, located to the left of the visitor center, is open to the public.
- To the left of the visitor center is the Merriweather café. You can make a reservation online, grab a table if available, or visit our to-go window for ready-made options.
- Before you leave, don't forget to visit our museum shop on the second floor of this building.

*If this is their first visit, also suggest:*

I highly recommend watching our 10-minute orientation film in the theater behind us. It plays every 15 minutes, starting at 9:30 a.m.

*For all visitors:*

Hillwood offers several complimentary ways to explore the campus. If you're interested in our guided tours, we have both docent-led and audio tours available for the mansion and gardens. Tickets for docent-led tours are offered on a first-come, first-served basis. You can also explore on your own using our brochure or mobile app, which offers detailed information.

- Guided mansion tours are available at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. (with an additional 3:30 p.m. tour on Friday-Sunday). These tours last one hour and highlight key pieces in the collection.
- Offered seasonally in the spring (April–June) and fall (September–mid-November), guided garden tours are available at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday (with an additional 2:30 p.m. tour Friday-Sunday). These tours also last about an hour and showcase the beauty of Hillwood's gardens.
- Our mobile app offers three curated audio tours:
  - Mansion tour (about one hour)
  - Garden tour (about one hour)
  - Family tour (about 30 minutes)
- You can also use the brochure or app for self-guided exploration. The mobile app provides the most comprehensive experience, with several hours of content available.

**NEW:** *Finally, introduce the visitor guidelines:*

Before you start, I'd like to highlight some important guideline to ensure you have a comfortable visit:

- Experience the art with your eyes and imagination. Please avoid touching any part of the collection or leaning on the walls, doorways, or columns, as many of these pieces are extremely fragile.
- Feel free to use your camera without a flash. While using your camera, please be considerate of others and avoid use while walking to keep the flow in the mansion smooth for everyone.
- We offer complimentary bag check services in the mansion. We ask that you check any oversized bags, totes, backpacks, bulky items, coats, outerwear, or water bottles. If you have any questions about what should be checked, the Security team in the mansion are happy to assist.

*Conclude with a warm invitation:*

We're thrilled to have you here at Hillwood today! If you have any questions or need assistance at any point, please don't hesitate to ask any of our volunteers or staff members.