



Visitor Services Volunteer (VSV) Guidelines

March 2026

These guidelines are provided to ensure the best possible experience for volunteers *and* visitors while at Hillwood.

Questions? Our doors are always open, and we want to hear about your volunteer experiences. Please direct your questions or feedback to volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org or 202.686.8528.

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VSV Shift Overview

Primary Responsibilities

Like Hillwood, volunteers are committed to providing the best possible visitor experience. Visitor Services Volunteers (VSVs) are essential members of the volunteer team who provide a gracious welcome, guidance, and light interpretive assistance to our visitors in the visitor center and mansion.

As a VSV, you will:

- Welcome and orient visitors at the tour desk in the visitor center, providing clear directions and helpful information to ensure a smooth start to their visit.
- Engage with visitors in the mansion by answering questions and offering basic interpretive information.
- Support evening events and public programs by providing orientation and wayfinding assistance.
- Promote a positive, enjoyable experience by maintaining a courteous, professional demeanor and proactively assisting visitors when needed.

Your presence, knowledge, and hospitality help create a memorable experience for every guest.

Onboarding

Volunteers-in-training will transition to active Visitor Services Volunteers (VSVs) upon successful completion of all required orientation sessions. Once onboarding is complete, VSVs will receive an email granting access to Volgistics, Volgistics, Hillwood's volunteer database and scheduling system.

Your onboarding email will include:

- A direct link to the Volgistics login page
- A temporary password, along with instructions for creating a permanent password for at-home access
- Instructions for updating your volunteer profile and signing up for VSV shifts through the online schedule
- Your personal identification (PIN) number, which allows you to log volunteer hours using the on-site iPads or through the Volgistics mobile app

Shift Time & Structure

Volunteers serve two to four shifts per month, equating to approximately 100 service hours annually. Shifts are four hours in length from 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 1-5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. Your time is equally split between the visitor center and mansion. Please note: The general operating hours of the estate are 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Sunday.

Morning Shift	9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Arrival	9:15 a.m. Report to the volunteer lounge or visitor center to sign-in
Breaks	Breaks are taken during slow periods in the visitor center and/or mansion
Departure	1:30 p.m.
Afternoon Shift	1-5 p.m.
Arrival	12:45 p.m. Report to the volunteer lounge or visitor center to sign-in
Breaks	Breaks are taken during slow periods in the visitor center and/or mansion
Departure	5 p.m.

- **Team Size:** VSVs typically work in teams of four to five volunteers per shift, with 2-3 VSVs stationed in the visitor center and mansion, respectively.

- **Physical Requirements:** Volunteers are regularly required to stand for extended periods of time and move between buildings and the campus grounds.
- **Additional Shift Opportunities:** Volunteers can sign up for additional shifts during evening programs and special events. Duties may include serving on-station in the mansion and auxiliary buildings, providing orientation in the visitor center, or offering wayfinding throughout campus.

Scheduling

VSVS self-schedule their shifts using Volgistics, Hillwood’s online scheduling software. Sign-ups open on the 6th of each month for shifts in the upcoming month.

Volunteers are assigned to either a fixed or floating schedule depending on Hillwood’s scheduling needs. Please note: All new volunteers are assigned to a floating schedule, which means you sign up for shifts that best fit your calendar. The number of shifts may vary from week to week, so flexibility is important.

Reference: See the [Volgistics User Guide document](#) for step-by-step instructions on the self-scheduling procedures, cancellation, leave of absence, and inclement weather policies as well as other features offered through Volgistics.

Arrival & Departure for Each Shift

Entering, Driving, & Parking

- All volunteers should enter Hillwood through the upper gate and can choose to park either along the back railing behind the Merriweather café, C.W. Post Center, and administration building, or along the lower gate drive. Please be mindful of the 15-mph speed limit on the estate and watch for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- Security may occasionally direct volunteers to park in a different area upon arrival. Volunteers are expected to follow any parking instructions provided by Security.
- Please review the [detailed instructions and map outlining the volunteer parking plan](#), available on the volunteer website.
- Hillwood is pleased to provide two electric vehicle charging stations for visitors, volunteers, and staff. For more information on how to access EV charging at Hillwood, please see the EV Charging Stations Information document and the EV ChargePoint Instructions.

Identification & Access

- Volunteers are issued a Hillwood nametag, photo ID badge, and lanyard, all of which must be worn at all times while on duty. These identifiers help visitors easily recognize volunteers as sources of information and assistance.
- Volunteers also receive an access card, which allows entry through the front and back doors of the Butler’s House (where the volunteer lounge is located) via card readers, as well as the side entrance of the mansion.
- Lost nametags, ID badges, lanyards, or access cards must be reported immediately to the Hillwood volunteer management team. Replacements will be ordered and provided in a timely manner.

Volunteer Lounge

The volunteer lounge, located in the Butler's House near the cutting garden, is easily accessible from various parts of campus, including the mansion, visitor center, Merriweather café, and more. It serves as a central hub for all volunteers to reconnect with one another, recharge during breaks, and access valuable resources.

Coats & Personal Belongings

- **Volunteer Lounge:** A coat closet and lockers are available for volunteers to store their personal belongings while at Hillwood.
- **Visitor Center:** Hooks for coats are available in the visitor center kitchen. VSVs are welcome to store their personal belongings in the lower cubbies at the tour desk.
- **Cell Phones:** Volunteers are welcome to keep their cell phone with you in case of emergencies, but we discourage volunteers from using their cell phones (calling or texting) while volunteering at Hillwood. If a volunteer receives a call they must take, please step outside or into the visitor center kitchen.

Recording Volunteer Hours

Service hours are tracked to accurately document volunteer contributions, evaluate program impact, support grant funding, and recognize volunteer milestones and achievements.

To record service hours, volunteers will:

- Sign in and out for each shift using the QR code or iPad located in the volunteer lounge, visitor center kitchen, or greenhouse. Simply follow the prompts.
- Log hours remotely through the "Service" page in Volgistics.

Attendance for training and continuing education sessions (in-person or virtual) will be entered into Volgistics by staff on your behalf.

For a complete guide on scheduling procedures, recording service hours, and exploring additional Volgistics features, please refer to the [Volgistics User Guide](#).

Daily Schedule & Groups Report

After signing in using Volgistics, review the following three documents and note any updates for the day. These resources are available at the volunteer lounge, mansion coat check (located off the entry hall), and visitor center tour desk.

1. The **daily volunteer schedule** includes:
 - Number of pre-registered visitors for day
 - Tour space availability for mansion and garden tours
 - Groups and/or members pre-booked for a docent-led tour
 - Volunteers scheduled for the day
2. The **volunteer briefing notes** include:
 - Updates and reminders regarding the volunteer and visitor experience
 - Programs and events scheduled for the week
3. The **groups report** will provide details on any groups pre-booked for the day and includes:
 - Group name
 - Group size
 - Group itinerary (touring method such as guided or self-guided, café reservations, etc.)
 - Special notes regarding a group (accessibility needs, etc.)
 - **Please note:** if no groups are scheduled for the day, then the group report will not be printed.

Visitor Center Shift Procedures

Tour Desk Overview

VSVs provide one of the first impressions guests receive at Hillwood. Once a visitor checks in with the visitor services staff at the front desk, they are directed to the tour desk for an orientation. At the tour desk, you will:

- Welcome and greet visitors.
- Provide information about Hillwood’s amenities and policies.
- Orient visitors using the estate map, highlighting daily tour options and special programs.
- Distribute tickets for docent-led mansion and garden tours.
- Explain and assist with the use of Hillwood’s immersive mobile audio tour.
- Respond to general and Hillwood-related questions.

Tour Desk Guidelines

While stationed at the tour desk, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Sign In and Review Daily Assignments:** Once you’ve signed in using Volgistics, check the daily volunteer schedule for your assignment, review the groups report, and check in with the visitor services staff for updates regarding the day’s activities or programs.
2. **Welcome visitors and provide orientations:** Once guests have been checked at the front desk and are directed to the tour desk, welcome them warmly, review the estate map, and provide a visitor orientation.

Reference: See the [Sample Script for Visitor Orientation](#) for a complete example.

3. **Restock brochures:** Restock the tour desk with printed material and brochures, as needed. Supplies are stored in the credenza behind the front desk, including all Hillwood brochures, large, printed materials, and information in Braille for visitor requests. Brochures available at the tour desk include:

Brochure	Notes
Visitor Guide and Map with Audio Tour	Available in: English, Russian, French, Spanish, and Mandarin
Treasure Hunts	Available on: Outdoor Art and Architecture, Russian Art, French Art, and Majorie Merriweather Post
Picnic Guideline and Map	
Woodland Trail Map	
Special Exhibition Rack Cards	When available

4. **Direct visitors to the estate map:** When visitors select the printed tour, please note the estate map is located in the front flap of the brochure.
5. **Assist with the mobile audio tour:** When visitors select the [mobile audio tour](#), instructions for downloading the app are available in signage at the tour desk and on Hillwood’s website. For more information, review the [Tips for Using Hillwood’s Mobile App](#). Note: The mobile app is available in English only.
6. **Promote membership:** As visitors depart for the day, ask if they enjoyed their visit to Hillwood. For those looking for a return visit, membership is a fabulous option for staying engaged with Hillwood!

Tips for Visitor Flow

- **Visitors who bypass check-in:** During busy days, some visitors may approach the tour desk first before checking in. Kindly redirect them to the front desk. Visitors receive an admission sticker once they have checked in and provided the suggested donation.
- **Managing a queue:** If a line of visitors forms at the tour desk, invite visitors to gather as a group for a collective orientation. Review the estate map and tour options, then distribute individual materials at the end. This will offer guests a speedier start to their visit.
- **Families with children:** While our visitation is typically made up of adults, Hillwood warmly welcomes families. The youth audio tour and family treasure hunts are perfect for families to help engage younger visitors. Provide children with their own copy of the treasure hunt.

Mansion Shift Procedures

Mansion On-station Overview

The goal in the mansion is to extend the same gracious welcome and attentive assistance that visitors receive in the visitor center. While on-station in the mansion, you will:

- Warmly greet visitors and provide directions throughout the mansion.
- Respond to general questions about the mansion and its collection.
- Assist guests with accessing and navigating the mobile audio tour.
- Help gather guests and collect tickets prior to the start of docent-led mansion tours.
- Support coat check operations in coordination with the Security team, as needed.

Mansion On-station Guidelines

While stationed in the mansion, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Sign In and Review Daily Assignments:** Once you've signed in using Volgistics, check the daily volunteer schedule for your assignment and updates regarding the day's activities.
2. **Engage with visitors:** Move and circulate between rooms and floors (1st or 2nd floors) every 10-15 minutes, unless you are actively assisting a visitor. As you move throughout the mansion, make yourself available by smiling, making eye contact, and offering a simple greeting, such as:
 - "Hello. Welcome to the mansion. Please let me know if you have any questions."
 - "What's one thing you're hoping to take away from your visit today?"
 - "I love the [insert favorite room or object]. Do you have a favorite space or piece of art here?"
3. **Answer general questions:** While VSVs are not trained to lead guided tours, they are available to answer general questions on the collection, Marjorie Post, and the museum.
 - **Helpful Tip:** When responding to visitor questions, feel free to avail yourself of the informational resources available in the mansion coat check, which include the audio tour scripts, mansion resource binder, garden docent resource binder, and Hillwood publications.
4. **Coat check assistance:** Assist MAs (Museum Assistants and Associates from Hillwood's Security team) with receiving and returning items at the coat check.

Reference: Please refer to the [Mansion Coat Check Guidelines for Visitor Services Volunteers](#) for detailed steps for assisting the Security team in the coat check.

5. **Collect tour tickets:** Be available in the mansion entry hall at 11:20 a.m., 1:20 p.m., and 3:20 p.m. (depending on shift timing) to help docents collect the tour tickets. Once the docents have provided an introduction and divided the visitors into smaller groups, return to roving and circulating in the mansion.
6. **Communicate mansion guidelines:** Kindly remind guests of Hillwood's policies, including no flash photography, no touching or leaning (including walls, door jambs, and columns), and no eating or drinking. Suggested language:
 - "Please experience the art with your eyes and imagination. Avoid touching any part of the collection or leaning on the walls, doorways, or columns, as many of these pieces are fragile."
 - "Feel free to use your camera, but please photograph without a flash. For the comfort of others, we ask that you refrain from taking photos while walking, so the flow of visitors remains smooth."
7. **Monitor visitor flow and provide assistance as needed:** If a room becomes overcrowded, encourage visitors to begin their visit in another area. When necessary, assist guests who require the elevator by accompanying them, pressing the call button, and opening the outer door upon its arrival.

Additional Notes for Mansion On-Station

- **Estate and museum guidelines:** Familiarize yourself with Hillwood's estate and mansion guidelines as well as the accessibility guidelines (available on Hillwood's website). The Security staff is here for you if you have any concerns regarding a visitor or Hillwood in general.
- **Visitor seating:** Clear chairs are available for visitors to sit on in most of the rooms throughout the mansion; they do not have ropes across them. While volunteers are also welcome to utilize the chairs when needed, please continue to move/rove the floors.
- **Wheelchair accessibility:** The mansion is wheelchair accessible except for the pavilion, Marjorie Post's bedroom suite, and Second Floor Gallery. Photo albums with images of the rooms are available in the **lower cabinet** in the Russian porcelain room and the lower cabinet just outside the bedroom suite. An iPad, located in the mansion coat room, is also available with images of the rooms not accessible by wheelchair.
 - **Please note:** These are the **only** two cabinets volunteers are permitted to open. An iPad with images of all three spaces is also available in the mansion coat check.



Photo album: Pavilion
Location: Russian porcelain room cabinet, to the right of the French drawing room



Photo album: Marjorie Post's Bedroom Suite
Location: Cabinet just outside of Post's bedroom, to the right of the bedroom doorway

- **Resource binder:** A mansion resource book is available in the coat check and on the second floor of the mansion located in the stanchioned off stairway (can be found on the steps just around the corner). Due to the dynamic nature of Hillwood’s display in the mansion, some information in this binder may be different than what is currently on view. In your self-study, rely on recent publications and stay up to date on mansion display changes via ongoing communication from volunteer management.



A mansion resource binder is available on the second floor located in the stanchioned-off stairway.

Onboarding Resources Guide

The volunteer website offers a comprehensive collection of information and resources. To support the orientation process, an “[Onboarding](#)” page is available, providing access to a wide range of training documents, guidelines, and educational materials. An overview of the page’s contents is provided below.

Volunteer Handbooks

- Volunteer Handbook
- Code of Ethics Handbook

Volgistics Training Guides

- Volgistics User Guide
- Update Hours from Home

Visitor Services Volunteer Guidelines & Procedures

- Visitor Services Guidelines
- Sample Script for Visitor Orientation
- Communication Skills
- Welcoming All: Creating an Inclusive Visitor Experience
- Best Practices for Navigating Visitor Feedback and Concerns
- Responding to an Incident
- Mansion Coat Check Guidelines for VSVs
- Mansion Coat Check Restroom Protocol

Educational Resources

- Visitor Bill of Rights
- Hillwood Resources available to Volunteers
- Frequently Asked Visitor Questions
- Further Study Guide for New Volunteers
- Interpretative Approaches to Marjorie Post’s Biography
- Audio Tour Script

Feedback

We greatly appreciate any insights, takeaways, or questions from your volunteers shifts – your constructive feedback helps us continually improve our programs and enhance the volunteer experience. Please share your feedback at volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org or 202.686.8528.