

Visitor Services Volunteer Orientation
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens



May 2026

Housekeeping



Restrooms

C.W. Post Center
Merriweather Café
Administration Building



Water Refills

Small sink in the front right corner



Mobile Devices

Please have on silent



Coat Rack

Available in the C.W. Post Center



Breaks

We will take breaks throughout the session

Training Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- The Hillwood Standard
- Volunteer Shift Overview: Visitor Center & Mansion
- Guidelines and Policies
- Walk Through: Volunteer Lounge, Mansion & Visitor Center
- Next Session: Tuesday, May 12 (via Zoom), 6-8 p.m.

Welcome to the team!

Volunteer Programs



Lisa Leyh,
Head of Volunteer & Employee Engagement



Erin Allen,
Volunteer Programs Manager



Holly Scanlon,
Volunteer Programs Coordinator

Volunteer Department:



volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org



202.686.8528

Volunteer Management Team

Horticulture Volunteer Program



Matt Boyle,
Cutting Garden & Volunteer Manager

Birder Volunteer

Cutting Garden Volunteer

Floral Design Volunteer

Greenhouse Volunteer

Orchid Collection Volunteer

Outdoor Garden Volunteer

Woodland Stewardship Volunteer

Archives and Special Collections



Kendall Aughenbaugh,
Digital Services Archivist

Special Collections Volunteer

Virtual Metadata Volunteer

Education Program



Rebecca Singer,
Head of Youth Audiences

Family Art Volunteer

Introductions

Let's go around the room and share:

1. Your name
2. Why you chose to volunteer at Hillwood
3. Share one fun or interesting fact about yourself

The Hillwood Standard

- Hillwood is a non-profit institution operating solely to serve the public.
- You are part of a distinguished tradition that began when Marjorie Merriweather Post opened her home to college students and art organizations.
- Post had extremely high standards...and a signature style for making people feel welcome.



Our collective goal is to provide the best possible visitor experience.

Volunteer Shift Overview: Visitor Center & Mansion

VSV Shift Overview



Timeframe:

- 4-hour shifts, offered from:
 - 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
 - 1-5 p.m.
- Serve 2-4 shifts per month equating to approximately 100 service hours annually.



Atmosphere:

- Work in teams of 4-5 volunteers per shift.



Location:

- Split time between the visitor center and mansion.



Visitor Center



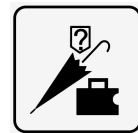
Visitor check-in & orientation



Orientation film



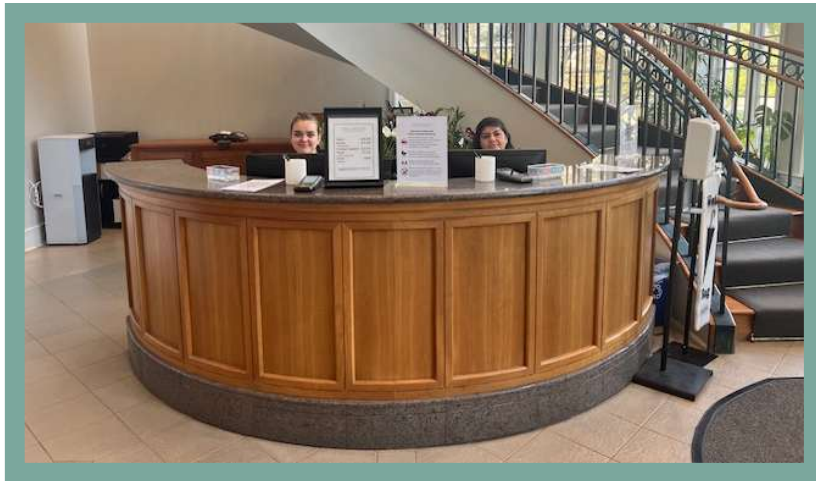
Museum shop



Lost & found (at the front desk)

Visitor Flow in Visitor Center

Visitor Services Staff at Front Desk



VSVs at Tour Desk



Step 1: Check-in with staff

- ❑ Pay suggested donation
- ❑ Receive visitor stickers after checking in
- ❑ Purchase membership, if interested

Step 2: Orientation with VSVs

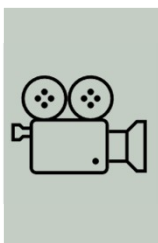
- ❑ Offer gracious welcome
- ❑ Review estate map, touring options, and visitor guidelines
- ❑ Answer questions



Visitor Stickers



Touring Options: Choice & Control



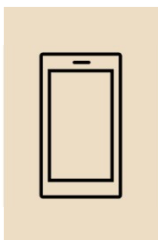
Orientation Film



Foreign Language Brochures

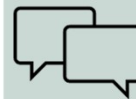
Russian
French

Spanish
Mandarin



Mobile Audio Tours

Mansion tour
Garden tour
Family tour



Docent-led Guided Tours



Brochures

Visitor guide and map
Family treasure hunts



Group Tours

Visitor Guide & Map



Open Audio Tour

For more information about a selection, tap the selection, then tap the play button to play. To STOP the audio tour at any time, press the RED button.

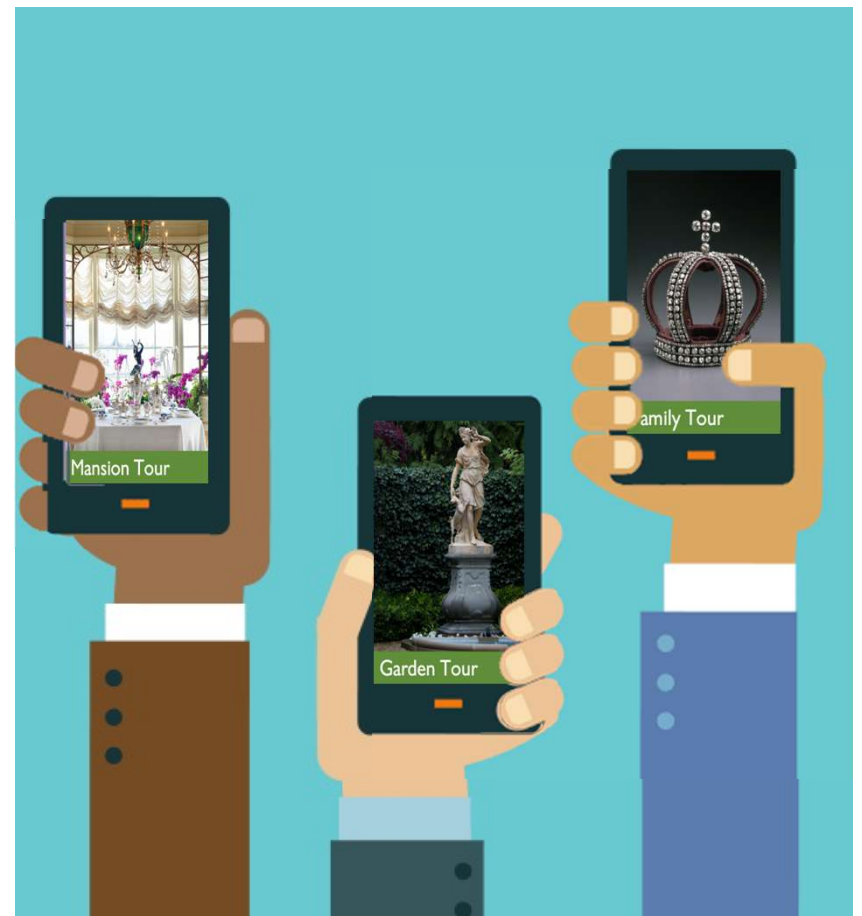
Selections

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| 120. French Parterre | 150. Putting Green | 180. Vista Terrace |
| 121. French Garden Tradition | 151. Japanese Holly and Japanese Snowball Viburnum | 190. Pet Cemetery |
| 122. Diana, Swan Fountain, and Sphinxes | 152. The Lawn Furniture | 191. Sweetbox |
| 123. Boxwood | 160. Lunar Lawn | 200. Dacha |
| 130. Rose Garden | 161. The Lion | 201. Azaleas and Rhododendrons |

Mobile Audio Tour

Download Hillwood's dynamic mobile audio tour.






Make the most of exploring the gardens and mansion!



Mobile Audio Tour

← **List View** ☰

Mansion Tour

-  Introduction to the Mansion Tour 300 ●
-  Motor Court 110 ●
-  Entry Hall 310 ●
-  Two Chests of Drawers 311 ●
- 

☰ LIST MAP SALON

← **Map View** ☰

Mansion Tour

Mansion 1st floor








☰ CHECK ELEVATOR STAIRS

First Floor of Mansion MORE ^

☰ LIST MAP SALON

← **Salon View** ☰

Mansion Tour

-  Introduction to the Mansion Tour ●
-  Motor Court ●
-  Entry Hall ●
-  Two Chests of Drawers ●
- 

☰ LIST MAP SALON

Mobile Audio Tour

← MAP SHARE SAVE Save the image to a personal gallery.

Share via social media (Twitter and Facebook) or via email.

Navigate back to the tour map (i.e. the mansion floor plans) to locate the stop or object.

Return to the entire tour, either the list, salon, or map view.

ZOOM ABOUT Read a caption with more information, including object title, artist, medium, and accession number.

0:00 1:58

▶ Imperial Easter Eggs by Fabergé
Icon Room

Hit zoom or the image itself to see a larger, zoomable photo, including detail shots and other angles.

Hit play to listen to the audio track, or read the transcript written below.

Look down at your screen to see an image of the first egg discussed. Tsar Nicholas II presented this pink and gold

Families at Hillwood

Q MANSION TREASURE HUNT **HILLWOOD**
ESTATE, MUSEUM & GARDENS

Marjorie Merriweather Post

Enjoy exploring the mansion, Marjorie Post's home for many years.

- GO to the rooms shaded in gold on the maps.
- USE the close-ups to find the items in each room.
- READ below to learn more.

A FRENCH DRAWING ROOM
Marjorie Post loved gold boxes like this one. As the owner of Postum Cereal Company, she was able to afford lots of beautiful things and create an art collection.

B PAVILION
Marjorie Post's staff watched movies from this balcony, and her guests sat below. Films were projected from the square opening in the wall onto a screen across the room.

C LIBRARY (FIRST FLOOR)
Marjorie Post had a photograph taken of Scamp, her pet dog, sitting on this bed. Can you find the photo on a nearby table?

A MIRROR COURT
Eros (pronounced air-row), the winged god of love, greets visitors in front of the mansion. He is also called Cupid. In this statue, he pulls an arrow from his quiver, the case on his back.

B FRENCH PARTERRE
This paw belongs to an imaginary creature called a sphinx (pronounced sfinx), which is part lion and part human. Hillwood's sphinx has a fancy hairstyle and clothes from long ago.

C FOUR SEASONS OVERLOOK
This child is wrapped in a blanket to keep warm in winter. Walk to the right in a circle to find statues for the other three seasons: children with flowers for spring, grain for summer, and grapes/vines for fall.

Map created by the Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Trust, 1912-1924, gold, wood, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 204

Map by Peter, 1920, oak, 10 1/2" x 10 1/2" x 10 1/2" © 200

Map by Peter, 1920, oak, 10 1/2" x 10 1/2" x 10 1/2" © 204

Learn more with Hillwood's free audio guide, available in the visitor center or as a mobile app. hillwoodmuseum.org

Q GARDEN TREASURE HUNT **HILLWOOD**
ESTATE, MUSEUM & GARDENS

Outdoor Art and Architecture

- GO to the locations noted on the map.
- USE the close-ups to find the items.
- READ to learn more.

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Q MANSION TREASURE HUNT **HILLWOOD**
ESTATE, MUSEUM & GARDENS

Russian Art

- GO to the rooms shaded in gold on the map.
- USE the close-ups to find the art in each room.
- READ to learn more.

A ENTRY HALL
Catherine the Great, a ruler of Russia, holds a gold wand called a scepter. Below the scepter is a large crown and a golden orb, shaped like a globe with a cross on top.

Painted by Ivan Aivazovsky, 1850-1852, oil on canvas, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 204

B RUSSIAN PORCELAIN ROOM
This squirrel sits on a covered cup. Russians used cups like this to toast honoring knights who were awarded for their bravery. The squirrel works hard to crack the nut, just as people had to work hard to get the award.

Cup from the collection of St. George's Monastery, Golden Hill, Kyiv, Ukraine, 1870s, porcelain, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 213

C RUSSIAN PORCELAIN ROOM
This apple has two heads! It is the official symbol of the Romanov family, who ruled Russia for more than 300 years.

Q Where else do you see double-headed eagles?

Painted by Mikailo Shtrom, 1910, porcelain, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 213

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Q MANSION TREASURE HUNT **HILLWOOD**
ESTATE, MUSEUM & GARDENS

French Art

- GO to the rooms shaded in gold on the map.
- USE the close-ups to find the art in each room.
- READ to learn more.

A ENTRY HALL
A cabinetmaker fit pieces of colored wood together like a puzzle to make it look like a basket of flowers.

Q What other pictures do you see on this sheet of drawers?

Wood of France (unlabeled), 18th century, oak, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 211

B ENTRY HALL
A stork drinks from a tall bottle with its beak, while a thirsty fox, whose snout can't fit into the bottle, watches. This scene is from a fable called "The Fox and the Stork." A fable is a story that teaches a lesson.

Q Whose colors are the birds on the nearby dishes?

Painted by Jean-Baptiste LeBlond, 17th century, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 211

C HALL TO PARLOR
An artist named Pauline Knip painted this bird. She studied real birds at a natural history museum so she could make her paintings as accurate as possible.

Q Whose colors are the birds on the nearby dishes?

Painted by Pauline Knip, 19th century, 11 1/2" x 17 1/2" x 11 1/2" © 211

Learn more with Hillwood's free audio guide, available in the visitor center or as a mobile app. hillwoodmuseum.org

Visitor Orientation

When welcoming visitors:

Start with the map – give visitors their bearings



Review the available tour options

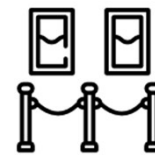


Highlight important visitor guidelines



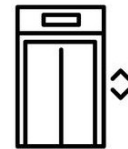
A sample orientation script is available on the volunteer website

Mansion



Main collection

□ Two floors to explore



Elevator



Mansion coat room

On-station in Mansion

- Rove/circulate from room to room and floor to floor every 10-15 minutes, when not speaking with a visitor.
- Answer general Hillwood questions.
 - A FAQs document is available on the volunteer website.
 - Informational resources are in the mansion coat check.
- Assist visitors with the mobile audio tour.
- Make yourself visible and approachable:
 - Smile
 - Make eye contact
 - Offering a simple greeting, such as “Hello. Welcome to the mansion. Please let me know if you have any questions.”



Entry Hall Duties

Assist with Coat Check

- Assist the Security team members in the coat check.
- Security communicates Hillwood's bag policy to visitors and determine which items to check.
- VSVs welcome visitors and assist with checking items in the coat room.



Assist with Start of Mansion Tours

- Help docents collect the tour tickets.
- Return to roving/circulating in the mansion once docent-led tours begin.

Morning Mansion Tour
11:30 am

A volunteer will greet you at the front door inside of the Mansion

Arrive **5 minutes before** your designated tour time.

Please return unused tickets to the Visitor Center.

Afternoon Mansion Tour
1:30 pm

A volunteer will greet you at the front door inside of the Mansion

5 minutes before designated tour time.

return unused tickets to the Visitor Center.

Guidelines & Policies

Mansion Guidelines & Amenities



All ages are welcome



Visitor chairs (without rope across the seat)



Complimentary coat check



Photos of areas inaccessible by wheelchair



Non-flash photography and non-commercial video



Pencils for note taking

Mansion Guidelines



Wet umbrellas should be left in the umbrella holder outside under the porte-cochère



Strollers are not permitted in the mansion



Silence mobile devices



No flash photography



No pens, markers, and other writing instruments

Mansion Guidelines



Respect the Collection

- 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.



Camera Use

- Feel free to use your camera, but please photograph without a flash.
- For the comfort of others, we ask you refrain from taking photos while walking, so the flow of visitors remains smooth.

Coat Check Guidelines

Please refer to the **Mansion Coat Check Guidelines for VSVs** on detailed instructions on assisting at the coat check.



- We offer a secure and complimentary coat check in the mansion.
- A policy regarding bag size is in place to preserve Hillwood's collection.
- VSVs role is to assist our colleagues in Security with the coat check, when needed.

Mansion Coat Check Guidelines for Visitor Services Volunteers

Revised: November 18, 2025

Hillwood offers a secure and complimentary coat check room, located in the mansion entry hall, to support the comfort of our guests and ensure the safety of the mansion, collection, and visitors. The coat check is managed by Hillwood's Security team as they oversee the liability and risk of checked items. When assigned to the mansion, visitor services volunteers (VSVs) assist Security with receiving and returning items, while also offering exceptional customer service and light interpretation to visitors throughout the mansion.

This resource is designed to clarify coat check procedures and address frequently asked questions, ensuring a smooth and efficient experience for visitors, staff, and volunteers.

Questions?

While on volunteer duty, please direct any questions about coat check operations or the bag policy to the nearest Security team member. If you encounter a visitor who is resistant about our coat check policies, kindly refer them to a Security team member for further assistance.

Bag Policy

Visitors must check oversized* bags, totes, backpacks, and bulky items upon entering the mansion. This policy also includes any other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in these spaces:

- Oversized coats and outerwear. These items may not be carried throughout the mansion and must be worn or checked.
- Oversized bags, purses, and backpacks.
- Hillwood shopping bags, regardless of size.
- Water bottles. If a guest asks for an exemption due to medical reasons, please direct them to a member of Security.
- Any other oversized item that does not fit inside the bag check box, such as a selfie stick.

***Oversized** = Any item that does not fit in the bag check box (11" x 14" x 8"). [Boxes](#) are located in the visitor center and the coat check room for easy measurement.

Security staff stationed inside the mansion entrance (by the glass doors) will determine which items must be checked and direct guests accordingly. Hillwood volunteers and staff can also inform guests about the bag policy while in the visitor center, which gives visitors the option to leave items not permitted in the mansion inside their vehicle. Please note that all visitors are instructed to leave luggage in their vehicle.

VSV Responsibilities at the Coat Check

Please follow the guidelines below when stationed to assist Security with the coat check.

- Each hanger and cubby in the coat check are numbered and correspond to a numbered claim tag.

Garden Guidelines

- ❑ Stay on the designated paths
- ❑ Watch your step on the natural stone
- ❑ Not permitted to pick flowers or take cuttings
- ❑ Picnic in designated areas of the gardens
- ❑ Photography and videotaping for non-commercial use



Photo: Erik Kvalsvik

Museum Accessibility

- Elevators in the visitor center and mansion.
- Service animals are permitted on the estate; no pets are allowed.
 - Exception: Sunday morning dog walks for members and Spooky Pooch Howl-o-ween Celebration in October
- Sign language or cued speech interpreters can be hired on a case-by-case basis with advance notice.
- Available first come, first serve in the visitor center:
 - Manual wheelchairs
 - Braille and large print guides for general Hillwood and exhibition information



Dress Code

- Hillwood provides a professional work environment for its staff and volunteers.
- It is important to project a professional image to our donors, visitors, and colleagues.
- All volunteers are expected to dress in a manner consistent with good hygiene, safety, and good taste.
- Any questions regarding the appropriateness of attire should be directed to the volunteer management staff.

Looking Ahead

Volgistics Orientation

Session 2: Tuesday, May 12



- 6-8 p.m. on Zoom
- Zoom link will be sent by email
- Live demo of Volgistics, Hillwood's scheduling software
- Login credentials will be provided after Session 2

Reading Assignment Due



- Complete the materials from the required reading list due for May 12 and come prepared with any questions.

Sign Up for a Mansion Tour

- Continue your training by attending a mansion tour during the week of May 20.
- Select from the available dates that work best for you.
- Please submit your availability using the survey link shared in the resource email from tonight's class.

Photo: Erik Kvalsvik



1st Two Shifts: On-the-Job Training



Look out for tomorrow's email with a survey to submit your availability.



After your sessions, we'll follow up with your scheduled shifts and next steps.



Train alongside an experienced VSV with hands-on support.

Volunteer Identification

During your first shift, you'll receive:

- ❑ Your photo ID badge
- ❑ Secure access card, for entry to Butler's House and side door of the mansion
- ❑ Hillwood lanyard



Walk-Through

**Now we will walk through the volunteer lounge,
mansion and visitor center.**



Please bring your belongings with you.
There will be storage options along the way.
We will exit from the visitor center.