



NEWSLETTER

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Revamped Audio Tour Remembers The Alamo

Over 2 million people a year head to San Antonio, Texas to visit the historic site and complex that commemorates the 1836 Battle of the Alamo. For many, the site is synonymous with the spirit, history, and very identity of Texas itself. So it should come as no surprise that the Alamo is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States.

The Alamo has been a Tour-Mate client since 2010 and began by using our SC550 Audio Wands for their self-guided audio tours and our Group Guide system for their docent-led tours. Their Group Guide system allows group tours to be carried out successfully with no difficulty hearing over the crowd noise or having docents strain their voices. Recently, the Alamo upgraded to the SC600 Mini Audio Wands. These lightweight Wands makes it easier for visitors to hang them around their necks while listening to the audio tour.

Tour-Mate’s Creative Team provided script writing and production services for the Alamo’s original audio tour, offered in English, Spanish, German, French, and Japanese. While still offering the tour in the same five languages, the Alamo has revamped its content, providing more wayfinding for visitors, as well as content for outdoor areas and new exhibitions. The audio tour is complemented by music and sound effects that transport visitors back in time.

The tour also includes snippets from staff interviews, including one with Alamo curator and historian, Dr. Bruce Winders. When asked why we should remember the Alamo, Dr. Winders stated, *“the Alamo represents . . . a definite set of values that cut across culture and nationality: self sacrifice, bravery, devotion, honor. These are things that - doesn’t matter who you are - these are traits that you can say ‘that’s worth remembering.’ And so, it’s convinced me that it may be something that happened out on the Texas frontier in 1836, but yet, it represents, really a universal story.”*



Photo of Alamo staff promoting the audio tour. Photo courtesy of the Alamo.

The self-guided audio tour and the group tours are available at the Alamo to help visitors not only navigate the often busy historic site, but also to provide a deeper understanding of this 'universal story.' To learn more about the self-guided audio tours at the Alamo, or to schedule a group tour, please visit: <https://www.thealamo.org/visit/tours/audio/index.html>

Self-Guided & Group Tours - *Cost of Revolution*

Philadelphia’s Museum of the American Revolution (MAR) will be hosting this year’s International Conference on the American Revolution (October 3 to 5). The Conference brings together historians, writers, and curators from Ireland, Scotland, England, and the United States to explore various themes from the Age of Revolutions (1774 to 1849).

The Conference will coincide with the opening of MAR’s temporary exhibition *Cost of Revolution: The Life and Death of an Irish Soldier*. Running from September 28, 2019 to March 17, 2020, the 5000 square foot exhibition tells the story of Irish soldier and artist Richard St. George, whose life shines light into the physical and emotional toll of the 1776 American Revolution and the Irish Revolution of 1798.

According to Dr. R. Scott Stephenson, President and CEO of the Museum of the American Revolution, “*this exhibit extends the Museum’s internationally acclaimed story-driven approach onto the global stage to examine the broader influence of the American Revolution through St. George’s remarkable personal journey.*”

Cost of Revolution is also MAR’s first international loan exhibition, bringing to Philadelphia one of the largest collections of objects ever displayed from Ireland’s 18th-century revolutionary history and war for independence.



Museum of the American Revolution Photo courtesy of MAR.

The exhibition will be complemented by an audio tour delivered on Tour-Mate’s dual purpose OmniGuide. As MAR’s group tours have steadily increased in popularity since its opening, the Museum requested a dual purpose device that could serve both self-guided visitors as well as those on a docent-led tour.

For such a significant exhibition, *Cost of Revolution’s* audio tour had to be engaging and educational for its visitors while fitting with the exhibition’s mission. To accomplish this, Tour-Mate’s Creative Team worked closely with MAR’s curatorial and exhibition staff to provide script polishing and production services. While the audio tour is narrated from the perspective of Richard St. George, the tour also includes three main narrators, a number of character actors, and archival recordings from MAR’s collections.



Museum of the American Revolution Photo courtesy of MAR.

Self-Guided Tours Offer Lasting Memories Of Temporary Exhibitions

While interpretation for permanent exhibitions tends to receive most of the attention, temporary exhibitions provide an ideal opportunity to connect with, and inform your visitors. Self-guided tours are a great way to add an extra layer of information and sensory connection that can help make a temporary experience last beyond a museum visit.

Tour-Mate offers affordable short term rentals of our Audio Wands, Multimedia Players, and Group Guide systems. Providing interpretation for temporary exhibitions can represent an opportunity for your institution to generate new streams of revenue. Institutions can offer self-guided audio or multimedia tours for a fixed price or a suggested donation. Group guided tours can be marketed as a 'VIP guided experience.'

A few of our self-guided tour rental clients include the Witte Museum (San Antonio, TX), the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, ON), the Denver Art Museum, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) has been a long-time rental client for a number of its temporary exhibitions. In 2019, the VMFA used the SC550 Audio Wands for *Awaken: A Tibetan Buddhist Journey Toward Enlightenment* exhibition. The Museum will be using SC550 Wands for the upcoming *Edward Hopper and the American Hotel* exhibition, which runs from October 26, 2019 to February 23, 2020. This exhibition explores America's hotel consciousness and cultural landscape in the early to mid-twentieth century through selected paintings and works on paper. If you find yourself visiting the VMFA, use the audio tour to enhance your experience of this exhibition's only East Coast appearance.



Considering a Self-Guided Tour? Four Things To Keep in Mind

1. Self-Guided Tours Can Be Multi-Faceted, and not just for one demographic group. Tours can be tailored solely for adults, children, or both (with a tour suitable for the whole family). Adding interactive games to a multimedia tour will appeal to younger visitors, while multilingual tours will attract foreign visitors. Offering described audio and Sign Language tours will also further enhance your interpretive reach. With our Creative Team and translation services, it is possible to provide accessible and engaging tours for all visitors!

2. Don't Repeat Labels. Tell a Story. Self-guided tours are sometimes perceived as "dry" and "boring." Often times, tours simply reiterate what exhibit labels are already saying. The objective of a self-guided tour should be to add that extra layer of interpretation; interpretation accompanied by thoughtfully selected and relevant music, sound effects, character actors, and even stakeholder interviews. Think of your self-guided tour as providing the "ah-ha!" moment to your exhibit or space. A well scripted and produced tour will make the 'visit experience' more engaging, friendly, educational, and memorable.

3. Consider Your Space. Content delivery is often dependent on how you expect visitors to navigate your institution. For instance, the *USS Bowfin* (a Tour-Mate client) uses automatically triggered content for the submarine tour, as the desire is for visitors to safely explore the ship 'hands-free.' Other tours may work best employing random access content accessed by entering a number on a keypad, allowing visitors to pick and choose which stops they would like to learn about. Manual entry also permits 'layered' messaging, which gives visitors who are very interested in a specific stop an opportunity to learn more.

4. Reflect on Content and Space before deciding between audio and/or multimedia. These days multimedia gets a lot of attention. It is not, however, always the best option for every tour or every site. In certain cases, visual elements provided via a handheld device absolutely compliment a tour and enhance the 'visit experience.' In other cases, multimedia content can distract visitors from their physical surroundings and the objects on display. Before choosing an interpretive platform, put yourself in your visitors' shoes. Reflect on your institution's mission, and let your space and collection speak to you!

No Phone? No Wi-Fi? No Problem!

Introducing TourMedia Touch+ 4



TourMedia Touch+ 4

If you have decided that a self-guided multimedia tour is the best option for your site, then your next step is to choose a delivery system. Issues such as potential battery depletion, data usage, and/or a building's spotty Wi-Fi, can deter visitors from using their own phones to tour a space.

Tour-Mate's latest multimedia player - TourMedia Touch+ 4 - does not require the internet to access your tour content. The TMT+ 4 player is extremely rugged and can play a variety of content, including text, audio, video, and images. The clever battery-saving feature on the player lengthens the usability of the player's life throughout the day.

The 4" player weighs 7.1 oz (200 g) and is 6.3" x 3.1". The player comes in a standard black color but can be provided in a customized color for an additional fee. The lightweight player makes it easy for visitors to carry the device around a space, whether it is around their neck or holding it in their hand. The Touch+ 4 is an ideal solution for sites that are seeking an alternative to visitors using their own phones to take a self-guided multimedia tour.

Meet Our Team 🙋

Shahar Chudy



Our Director of Operations, Shahar - also known as Shack, has been with the Tour-Mate team since 2001. Shack oversees hardware development, manufacturing, as well as the service and technical support associated with Tour-Mate products. He consistently ensures that the equipment is assembled and delivered on time to all of our clients, and always makes time to answer clients' technical questions.

Shack can be reached at schudy@tourmate.com

Where & How to Find Us 🔍

FIND US NEXT

Western Museums Association
Boise, ID; October 4-7, 2019

Southeastern Museums Conference
Charleston, SC; October 21-23, 2019

New England Museum Association Conference
Burlington, VT; November 6-8, 2019

National Association of Interpretation
Denver, CO; November 12-16, 2019

Tour-Mate Systems

137 St. Regis Crescent South, Toronto ON M3J 1Y6

www.tourmate.com

☎ 800-216-0029/416-636-5654

✉ info@tourmate.com



@tourmatesystems



@tour_mate



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