



THE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR

A Hosting & Protocol Guide

Every year, present and past officers and international directors travel to districts and multiple districts around the world to deliver informational and motivational speeches, discuss matters of interest with local leaders, and meet as many Lions as possible. This guide was developed to assist you in making their visit to your area as pleasant and worry-free as possible. It contains hosting tips as well as the association's Official Protocol.

A Word About Protocol

The association's Official Protocol is designed to eliminate confusion regarding the proper recognition of Lion dignitaries. Whether for purposes of introduction or head table seating, it provides a simple and definitive answer to the question: "Who comes first?" You should not stray from it without good reason. One of those "reasons" might be a deep-seated cultural tradition in your country that would, for example, find it unacceptable to give precedence to the most recent past holder of an office, rather than to the one with the most seniority. One needs to be flexible in such situations, but where they do not exist, it is much easier to simply follow the Official Protocol.

While there is no hard and fast rule, introductions usually commence with those lowest on the Order of Precedence and end with the highest-ranking Lion present. When non-Lion dignitaries are present, a combination of local custom and common sense should be used in deciding at what point they should be introduced. If the event is a multi-day convention or conference, try to avoid introducing all the dignitaries at every event. Once at a general session and once at a banquet is sufficient. Nor is it necessary to give a full introduction to your principal guest more than once; indeed, this can be both embarrassing to your guest and boring to your attendees.

Clubs, districts and multiple districts are required to extend the same rights and privileges as required under official protocol to resident officers as they would extend to officers visiting from other districts, multiple districts or constitutional areas, irrespective of local custom.

Flags, Anthems and Toasts

If your guest is from a country other than your own and flags are going to be displayed, the guest's should also be displayed in accordance with the flag protocol in your country. The Speakers kit sent when the speaking engagement is officially confirmed includes a small table flag and stand. It also includes a recording of the speaker's national anthem in the event anthems will be played.

At some events, toasts will be proposed. For example, in countries that are members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, it is customary to toast the Queen. To toast the association, it would be appropriate to use the following: "Ladies and gentlemen, please join me as I toast our beloved association. I give you The International Association of Lions Clubs."

Tips for a Successful Visit

Before the Visit

- Provide advance information including:
 - an agenda (make it clear what events your guest is expected to attend)
 - suggested attire or dress code (formal, business, etc.) for each event
 - weather conditions in your area
 - background information (newsletters, bulletins)
- Communicate fully and often
- Keep in mind that local expenses, including special events (tours, golf, etc.), are the host's responsibility

Meeting and Greeting Your Guest

For Air Travel:

- The chairperson of the meeting or convention (council chairperson, district governor, etc.) should head the group meeting your guests.
- Plan on meeting your guests at the gate. If this is not possible, plan a meeting place in advance.
- Make sure you are readily identifiable with Lions clothing and badges.
- Plan on carrying your guests' luggage.
- Make sure your car is large enough to accommodate all guests and their luggage. Many times your guests may have been away from home for awhile and have more luggage than you expect. Having an extra car available in case of extra luggage is prudent.

For Car Travel:

- If your guests are driving, provide them with complete directions, including a map.

Make the Stay an Enjoyable Experience

- Before your guests' arrival, handle check-in and inspect the room thoroughly. Deal with any problems prior to your guests' arrival.
- Amenities are always a nice touch — the personal preference sheet sent by International Headquarters before your guests' arrival will give you ideas for these items.
- Prepare a welcome packet with the final agenda for your meeting or convention, information about the area and some regional publications. Also include a list of room numbers and/or telephone numbers of key Lions.
- Once you bring your guests to their room, plan a time to go over their schedules in detail. Review pick-up times and proper dress for all events.
- Give your guests time to settle in.
- Appoint a full time host and hostess to the couple. This is usually best handled by a past international director and spouse. This will ensure your guests' needs are taken care of and that they arrive at events on time.
- Provide some free time for rest in the schedule.

Program Suggestions

- Your guest's address should be the centerpiece of the banquet or event. In most cases, this means directly after dinner and before any entertainment or other presentations.
- Your guest should only be expected to make one major address.
- It is appropriate to present your guest with a gift at the banquet or other major event. Please keep in mind space and travel considerations. A donation in the guest's name to LCIF is always welcome. If possible, offer to mail larger gifts.
- If you expect your guest to assist in giving out awards during the event, make sure a script is prepared, including background information on recipients.

Departure

- Attend to your guests' departure with the same care you gave their arrival. Handle check out for your guests and arrange for luggage pick-up.
- Escort them from their hotel room all the way to the airport gate.
- Check that your guests' flight is leaving on time. If there is a serious delay, make necessary transportation and hotel arrangements.

Some Final Notes

- Treat your guests as you would a family member or close friend. Ask yourself: how would I wish to be treated if I was the guest? Act accordingly.
- While a gift is optional, remember that a sincere thank you note is not.

General Comments—When a Lion holds more than one title, he or she shall be recognized for the highest one. In areas that have positions in addition to those listed above, they should be recognized in accordance with local customs, provided that elective officers always have precedence over appointive ones. It is recommended that Melvin Jones Fellows be recognized as a group. In introducing speakers, their status as Fellows should be mentioned.

Non-Lion Dignitaries

Non-Lion dignitaries should be given precedence in accordance with local protocol and/or custom, keeping in mind that if the non-Lion is the principal speaker, then he or she should be seated directly to the right of the chairperson (see below).

Head Table Seating

The presiding officer or meeting chairperson must always be seated at the most central seat at the table when there is no central podium, shown as seat number one in the following diagram (Figure 1). The principal speaker would occupy seat number two, then other Lion dignitaries in accordance with the general order of precedence. If possible, there should be the same number of seats to the right and left of the chairperson or presiding officer (who would normally be the club president, district governor, council chairperson or international president).

(Audience)

Figure 1

7	5	3	1	2	4	6
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As shown in figure 2, seating at a head table with a podium is essentially the same, except the meeting chairperson or presiding officer is always seated at the left of the podium (facing the audience) and the principal speaker at the right.

(Audience)

Figure 2

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When spouses are present, they should be seated to the member's left when on the left side of the table, on the member's right when on the right side of the table.

Master of Ceremonies and Meeting Secretaries

At some events, the Master of Ceremonies (emcee) will be someone other than the chairperson or presiding officer. In such cases, he or she should be seated in accordance with local customs, or at one end of the head table. If, however, his or her place in the general order of precedence dictates a specific seat (e.g., he or she is a past international president at a district function), then that should rule. On rare occasions, there will be a meeting secretary; again, local customs should rule.

Multi-Head Tables

If there is more than one head table, the table at the highest level shall be considered the primary one. Care should be taken not to seat Lions of the same rank at different tables.

Head Table Introductions

Introduction of the head table should begin with the meeting chairperson or presiding officer, then continue from the person with the lowest rank on the order of precedence to the person with the highest. When spouses are present at the head table, they should be introduced with the member first (e.g., "Past International Director John Doe and his wife Jane").

National Anthems

When official representatives of the International Board of Directors (whether or not currently serving on the board) from another country are present at an event where national anthems are normally played, they should be extended the privilege of having their anthem played.

District Hosting Responsibilities

You and your district governor will serve as the hosts for all district functions. Though these functions will vary in their size and occasion, it is important to understand general district hosting responsibilities. *These responsibilities vary by district – you are encouraged to speak with your predecessors to confirm the hosting practices in your district.*

Introductions

You may be called on to make introductions of spouses/companions of visiting dignitaries. Be sure to obtain their names with correct pronunciation and titles.

Cabinet Meetings

Cabinet meetings are one of the functions in which you may play an important role. As the governor's spouse/companion, it is your responsibility to welcome all cabinet spouses/companions and see that they become acquainted with each other. Cabinet meetings vary greatly from district to district, so it is best to refer to the spouse/companion of a past district governor to determine your responsibilities.

District Meetings

If spouses/companions are included in the preparations of your district meetings, you should play a role in the planning process. Be proactive and incorporate spouses/companions in these events. It will encourage them to learn more about Lions and the communities they serve, and may even result in increased spouse/companion participation in the growth of Lionism throughout the district.

Tips for Assisting Your District Governor with Hosting Responsibilities

- ☒ Keep in close communication with the chairperson of major events so that you and your governor are informed of changes and/or updates to event itineraries
 - ☒ At social events where spouses/companions are present, it is a nice gesture to have nametags available for spouses/companions who do not have one
 - ☒ If appropriate, suggest/plan an activity for the spouses/companions
 - ☒ If you are hosting visiting dignitaries or other guests and you and your governor cannot escort them, appoint another Lion to act as their escort
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Hosting International Guests



In addition to your district hosting responsibilities, you and your district governor may be called upon to host international guests. Each district is entitled to a visitation by one international officer or director as a keynote speaker during that district governor's term, so it is important to consider how you will prepare for this visit.

The primary hosting responsibilities fall to you and your district governor, but be sure to involve other Lions from your district to ensure a successful visit. Invite the international family of your multiple district (if applicable) and other Lions leaders in your area to socialize with and entertain the international guests.

While there are general guidelines for hosting international guests, many cultures have specific customs to convey hospitality to their visitors. If you are unsure of how to prepare for an international visitor, ask the past district governor in your district and/or his/her spouse/companion how they have historically welcomed guests to your district.

Reminders for Hosting Visitors in Your District:

- ☒ Prior to the visit, the guest should be given information about the meeting/event including an agenda, the dress code for the event, and background information about the district. If your guest is expected to speak at the meeting or event, he/she should be provided with details such as topic suggestions and time limit.
 - ☒ When the guest arrives, plan to meet him/her at the arrival location with your district governor, whether it is an airport, train station, or hotel. Confirm event details with the guest and allow him/her time to settle in. Consider planning a tour of your area or special event to enhance your guest's visit.
 - ☒ If you plan to give a gift to your guest, such as a donation to LCIF in his/her name, the meeting or event would be an appropriate occasion during which to present it.
 - ☒ Following the visit, be sure to send a note expressing your and the district governor's gratitude in a timely manner.
 - ☒ Remember to treat your guest as you would treat a family member or close friend. Extend every courtesy possible to make your guest's visit an enjoyable experience.
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