

EXPLORE CHARTER BUS DRIVER JOBS



Key information you need to know in
order to become a motorcoach operator



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Introduction



This guide is brought to you by Indian Trails, with the hopes of answering any questions you may have when it comes to driving a motorcoach.

The motorcoach industry is booming, and with the growing demand for group transportation, companies are constantly looking to hire drivers who enjoy people, and who love traveling the open road. Operating a motorcoach comes with its fair share of duties and responsibilities, but it is also a rewarding lifestyle.

Renowned for their beauty, have you ever seen Niagara Falls? Or traveled over to the east coast where you'll find yourself lost amongst the beautiful beaches? What about making an expedition to the Windy City, or a trip back in time to Mackinac Island? Even a day venture to northern Michigan offers a wealth of sights and small wonders.

This guide will answer many of your questions, and help you explore the life of a motorcoach operator. By the time you are finished reading it, you may even find yourself filling out an application. Within each page of this guide, you will find two sections:

1. General information to answer your questions about becoming a motorcoach operator (in plain type over a white background).
2. Information specific to Indian Trails (in white type over a navy background).



Where to Find a Job



If you started looking for a job today, your first step would be to search the Internet for openings in your field. Driving a motorcoach is a job that many people take on as a second career. Unlike truck driving, being a motorcoach operator involves substantial interaction with people of all types.

To search for a job in the motorcoach industry, here are some sites you may find helpful:

- Indeed.com.
- LinkedIn.com.
- Monster.com.
- Careerbuilder.com.
- Simplyhired.com.
- Craigslist.com.
- SnagAJob.com.

You might also look in local newspapers, or keep an ear out for people talking. Keep in mind, you can always visit a website if you have your eye on a specific company.

To learn about a career with Indian Trails, visit:
www.indiantrails.com/careers-indian-trails

To search jobs and apply, visit:
<https://indiantrails.applicantpool.com/jobs/>

Services

The motorcoach industry offers a wide variety of services. The diversity ranges anywhere from commuter to charter trips, and many companies offer more than one type of service.

Here are a few areas of service motorcoach companies may provide:

- Commuter service.
- Special operations.
- Sightseeing trips.
- Shuttles.
- Scheduled routes.
- Airport transfers.
- Packaged tours.
- Charter service.

Indian Trails Services

Bus Charters
Tours
Shuttles
Airport Transfers
Commuter Service
Daily Scheduled Routes

Read more about our services:
www.indiantrails.com/charters



Salary and Compensation

Salary and compensation differs depending on the company you work for. Motorcoach operator's hourly wage estimates can range anywhere from \$13.62 to \$34.98/hour, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With the national average hourly wage coming in at \$23.13.

Many companies pay drivers based on either an hourly rate or a mileage rate. Some companies pay drivers from the time they report to work until they return, even if they are not driving. Others pay solely for actual driving time.

Companies also have the choice of providing drivers with accommodations. This includes an overnight stay at the destination as well as a meal stipend. Some contracts require the chartering group to take care of the driver's meals and accommodations.



Indian Trails Salary and Compensation

A full-time driver for our company earns between \$20.40 and \$30.00 per hour depending on their level of seniority. Our drivers have the potential to earn more than \$50,000 per year.

Most runs average 350 miles a day spread over an average of 10 hours. Some routes operate to a destination city where the driver stays overnight and then operates a return trip the following day. Drivers who stay overnight also receive a **\$30 overnight meal stipend**.

Other routes leave from and return to the same city each day. From sign on until sign off each day drivers are on the clock from the time they report to work until they return. Driving or waiting, drivers are on the clock. All pay is at straight time.

Single day trips of less than eight hours are guaranteed a minimum of eight hours of pay. Single day trips of less than four hours pay a full four hours. On multiday trips, drivers are paid at the same rate as one day trips, with each full day being **guaranteed a minimum of eight hours pay** or actual clock time up to ten hours. All lodging and road costs are covered by the company and drivers receive a **\$30 per day meal stipend**.

All drivers are eligible for additional bonus pay based on individual and company performance.

Licensing

To begin your career as a motorcoach operator, you must have a valid driver's license. Some companies require you to obtain or possess a commercial driver's license (CDL) prior to application. Other companies provide training and testing to assist you in obtaining your CDL.

There are three definitive groups of CDL classes. Each requires a general knowledge test, and the class allows the permit holder to be eligible to drive the corresponding commercial motor vehicle (CMV).

Here is the breakdown of CMV classes:

- Class A: Any vehicle with a semi-trailer or trailer with 2+ axles. This class also includes vehicles with a gross weight of 26,000+ lbs.
 - Class A permit holders are eligible to drive any Group A vehicle.
- Class B: Any heavy straight vehicle with a gross weight of 26,000+ lbs.
 - Class B permit holders are eligible to drive any Group B vehicle.
- Class C: Any vehicle that is designed to transport 16+ passengers (including the driver), or is used in transporting hazardous materials.
 - Class C permit holders are eligible to drive any Group C vehicle.

In addition to the classifications listed above, commercial drivers may apply for different endorsements based on the type of vehicle they intend to operate. There are five available CDL endorsements. The **hazardous materials (H)** endorsement is required for any vehicle required to be placarded for hazardous materials. The **double/triple trailer (T)** endorsement is required for any vehicle towing 2+ trailers. The **tank (N)** endorsement is required for any tank vehicle designed to transport 10,000+ gallons of liquid or liquid gas. The **passenger (P)** endorsement is required for any vehicle designed to transport 16+ persons, including the operator. The **school bus (S) endorsement** is required for CDL class A, B, or C when operating a school bus with passengers.

Indian Trails Licensing Requirements

Driver must have or be able to obtain a CDL license (Class B minimum) with a passenger endorsement. Driver must also pass a separate portion of the CDL test in order to drive a vehicle with air brakes.

Drivers who do not yet have their CDL must pass the written test at the Secretary of State and obtain a commercial learners permit prior to beginning training.

Indian Trails will provide the necessary training and testing during the training period for a driver to obtain their actual CDL B with a passenger endorsement, as well as the training for the separate portion of the CDL test that needs to be passed in order to drive a vehicle with air brakes.

Eligibility Requirements

Requirements differ depending on the motorcoach company.

Here are a few requirements you **may** come across when searching for a motorcoach operating job:

- Minimum age of 21-24 years.
- High school diploma or GED.
- Previous driving experience.
- Federal Department of Transportation drug and alcohol test.
- Criminal background check.
- Clean driving record.
- Passport for border crossing trips.
- Physical exam.

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Minimum Qualifications

Minimum of 24 years of age

High school diploma or GED

Must be able to pass a Federal D.O.T. drug and alcohol test

Must pass a criminal background check

Must have a clean or favorable driving record

Must have no prior drug- or alcohol-related convictions

Must be able to have or obtain either a passport or an enhanced driver's license

Must pass a pre-employment D.O.T. physical as well as a company-sponsored physical assessment to ensure ability to perform job duties

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Pre-Employment Screening Requirements

Criminal background check

National Sex Offender Public Registry check

Motor Vehicle Registry check

Department of Transportation physical exam

Verification of employment history

Drug and alcohol screening

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Disqualifications

Felony

Failure to pass Federal D.O.T. drug and alcohol test

Failure to pass criminal background check

Job Duties



The main duty of a motorcoach operator is to transport passengers safely from point A to point B.

Drivers must perform charter and regular routes depending on their assigned job, ensuring they are operating the motorcoach in a safe manner.

It is important for drivers to keep road conditions as well as traffic in mind prior to beginning a trip.

Drivers may also be responsible for non-driving duties, such as taking tickets from passengers, planning their assigned routes, assisting passengers in and out of the bus, tidying the bus, and disposing of trash.

Indian Trails Job Duties

Drivers must perform charter and regular route operations. They must safely operate company equipment under various road conditions in a timely manner. Drivers must also perform a pre- and post-trip inspection.

Indian Trails abides by Federal Motor Carrier Safety regulations and holds our drivers to all federal and local regulations. Drivers may only drive 10 hours within a duty cycle separated by a minimum of eight hours off duty. Indian Trails strives to provide our drivers with no less than nine hours off duty time between driving assignments.

Job duties aside from driving:

- Drivers need to be in average physical condition and be able to manipulate or lift baggage and objects of up to 75 pounds into and out of the baggage compartments approximately 14" above ground level.
- Physical dexterity to bend, twist, and pull baggage is required.
- Drivers are expected to be able to operate ancillary equipment, including DVR, audio and public address systems.
- Many vehicles are equipped with wheelchair lifts, and operators are trained in the proper procedures for operating the lifts and assisting passengers with disabilities.
- Drivers are expected to keep the interior of the coach in a clean and tidy order. Drivers perform light housekeeping chores, especially on multiday trips, including sweeping and mopping the floor, disposing of trash, and emptying the onboard restroom holding tanks.

Benefits

Many companies also provide drivers with a benefits package. A few of the benefits you may find include the following:

- Medical.
- Dental.
- 401(k) (with or without company match).
- Life and disability.
- Paid vacation.
- Paid holidays.
- Uniforms.
- Paid training.
- Accommodations.
- Competitive pay.

Indian Trails Benefits

Drivers receive **nine paid holidays** paid at eight hours each. New employees are eligible for up to two weeks of paid time off within their first year. Three weeks of vacation are earned after five years, four weeks after 10 years, 5 weeks after 20 years, and 6 weeks after 30 years.

A company 401(k) retirement plan is provided through Fidelity Investments. The company will provide a **3% match** with a **minimum 2% contribution by the employee**. Retirement and investment guidance is also provided for employees at no cost.

The company also provides full medical coverage for employees and their dependents, with the company covering about **80% of the premiums**. Dental, Vision, and Life Insurance plans are also offered at affordable group rates.

Drivers are guaranteed to earn no less each calendar week than the equivalent of their unemployment insurance rate, paid through our regular payroll.

A few extras:

- The company pays for the driver's biennial medical physicals.
- Paid accommodations, plus a \$30 meal stipend for overnight trips.
- Each driver is provided with a free pair of slip resistant work shoes annually.
- Each driver is provided with free uniforms.

Training



Training is the most critical part of becoming a motorcoach operator. For this reason, many companies have extensive training programs conducted in multiple phases.

Training can last anywhere from four to six weeks or more. Some of the training may be done on a computer or in a classroom, while the other portion of training is conducted on the road.

Training programs are focused on safe driving habits, becoming familiar with the equipment you will be operating, and also routes and other procedures. Because you will be transporting hundreds of people, most training programs also incorporate a focus on customer service.

Indian Trails Training

Regardless of prior experience, all new Indian Trails drivers complete four to six weeks of training. This intensive program is focused on the safe and efficient operation of Indian Trails equipment, with a strong emphasis on customer service.

The training includes a minimum of 40 hours of classroom instruction combined with two to three weeks of instruction in the bus (consisting of course work and on-the-road driving with a driving instructor). New hires typically log more than 1500 miles of on-the-road driving by the end of the training period.

Training consists of:

- (2 weeks) Classroom training that entails all federally required items as well as company policies, equipment familiarization and defensive driving techniques.
- (2 weeks) Both closed-course and over-the-road training behind the wheel of a motorcoach with qualified driver-instructors.
- (1-2 weeks) Break-In training to learn procedures and routing for Indian Trails scheduled service as well as common charter drop-off and pick-up locations.

Trip Planning



Many companies provide drivers with mapping software available at home terminals. Still, drivers must be well aware of weather and traffic conditions; this involves planning the trip ahead of time.

Drivers must understand directions, highway markers and street indicators in any and all situations.

Drivers should also be able to analyze situations on and off the road, respond quickly and address the situation at hand.

Indian Trails Trip Planning

Prior to departing and upon returning to their garage or hotel each day, drivers must complete a multi-step pre- and post-trip inspection designed to ensure the safety of the passengers and their equipment.

On scheduled routes, drivers must be conversant about schedule time and connecting buses. They are also responsible for collecting or scanning tickets to a variety of destinations both on and off our routes.

Drivers remain in close contact with our 24-hour manned dispatch office via an ELD electronic logging device. With this technology and our 24-hour operations center, Indian Trails can minimize problems and assist drivers with any enroute issues.

Bus Layout



The amount of passengers each bus can carry depends on the company's equipment. There are a wide range of bus sizes and layouts, each offering different amounts of seating, available amenities, and other features. Coaches also include baggage compartments that can be found underneath the bus.

Some available amenities buses may be equipped with include:

- Power outlets.
- Wi-Fi.
- Seatbelts.
- Wheelchair accessibility.
- DVD players.
- Sound systems.
- Reclining seats.

Indian Trails Bus Layout

Equipment ranges from 30 passenger, 35-foot long mid-size highway coaches, to 35 and 40-foot "shuttle" buses for local transport, to 56 passenger 45-foot long highway coaches.

All equipment is diesel powered with automatic transmissions. Highway coaches are all equipped with Wi-Fi, USB or 110 volt power outlets, DVD players, premium sound and public address systems including cordless microphones and premium reclining seats.

Baggage compartments are found approximately 14" above ground level. Many vehicles are equipped with wheelchair lifts, and operators are trained in the proper procedures for operating the lifts and assisting passengers with disabilities.

Personality Traits

As a motorcoach operator, you will be coming into contact with thousands of customers each year. For this reason, customer service skills are an absolute MUST!

Drivers are expected to be outgoing, but not overbearing. Drivers should also be communicative, but not effusive, accommodating, polite, courteous and helpful.

It is important for drivers to make sure passengers are comfortable throughout the trip. This includes pointing out amenities such as adjustable seats, individual controls, and restrooms if they are available on the coach.

Successful drivers are not only people-persons; they know how to strike the right balance between diplomacy, assertiveness, and authority. They also have a good sense of direction, they are professional in appearance and demeanor, they demonstrate flexibility in scheduling, they can handle basic inspection and maintenance tasks, and most importantly, they always put safety first.

In general, motorcoach operators should project a pleasant and accommodating disposition whenever they are around customers. They must also have a passion for driving. If you can identify with these characteristics, your career as a motorcoach operator is waiting.



Conclusion

Taking on the career of becoming a motorcoach operator is not just a job, it's a lifestyle. If you love interacting with people and traveling the open road, this is the career for you. By reading this guide, we hope you have found answers to many of your questions.





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