



UNWTO
PUBLICATIONS

**Manual on
Accessible Tourism for All:**
Principles, Tools and Best Practices

Module V: Best Practices in Accessible Tourism

translated with the support of:



Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices

Module V: Best Practices in Accessible Tourism

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**Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices –
Module V: Best Practices in Accessible Tourism**

ISBN (printed version): 978-92-844-1808-4
ISBN (electronic version): 978-92-844-1809-1

Published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).
First printing: 2016
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Printed in Spain.

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Citation: *World Tourism Organization (2016), Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices – Module V: Best Practices in Accessible Tourism, UNWTO, Madrid.*

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Acknowledgements

The preparation of this publication was made possible thanks to the sponsorship of the ONCE [Spanish National Organization of the Blind] Foundation for Cooperation and Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, in the framework of the three-way collaboration agreement between the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the ONCE Foundation, and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), signed in 2012.

The contents were researched and written by the ILUNION Consultancy Services team (part of the ONCE Foundation's ILUNION Group), in collaboration with ENAT.

The translation of the original Spanish version of this manual into English was made possible thanks to the Asia Competitiveness Fund granted to UNWTO by the Korea Tourism Organization of the Republic of Korea.

The UNWTO's Ethics and Social Responsibility Programme was in charge of the general coordination and revision of the publication.

Foreword

Direct and personal access by each human being to the discovery of our planet's wealth is an essential prerequisite for all citizens to be able to exercise their right to tourism.

Persons with disabilities and specific access requirements are increasingly calling for a place in tourism activities. In response, many actors in this sector are already committed to initiatives dedicated to adapting their products to different consumer profiles, in support of Tourism for All.

Much still remains to be done for universal accessibility to become a reality in the tourism sector, especially in developing countries and emerging destinations. A change in mindset and in the model for tourism services provision is necessary, not only to respect the human rights of persons with disabilities and their families, but also to meet a major market demand, which could significantly increase the competitiveness and growth of tourism destinations and businesses.

These convictions constitute the basis of the work of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the field of Accessible Tourism for All, and have materialized in a series of specific actions with the signing of a trilateral framework agreement in 2011 with the ONCE [Spanish National Organization of the Blind] Foundation for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT).

Following the "UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All", adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013, the three partners have maintained their commitment to work together to promote universal accessibility through the publication now of this highly comprehensive technical manual.

This manual will be a key tool for the international community to understand the accessibility chain in tourism, the economic impact of accessible tourism, and the steps to follow in order to create accessible destinations in accordance with the Design for All principles.

The crucial components of this work are the long-standing experience – both in awareness-raising and technical know-how and in business development – of the ONCE Foundation and ENAT, as well as the UNWTO's role in the global dissemination of the principles of tourism that is sustainable, responsible and accessible for all.

We trust that this manual will offer all stakeholders basic knowledge, tools and resources to make their tourism destinations, facilities and services accessible for all. We encourage all the stakeholders involved to seek inspiration in these best practices and continue working to make tourism truly a universal right.

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Manual on Accessible Tourism for All

Executive Summary

Persons with disabilities are participating more and more frequently in tourism activities as a result of their growing level of economic and social integration. However, there remain many impediments and barriers of all kinds that hinder access to tourism services.

Accessibility is not a requirement solely and exclusively for persons with disabilities, as they are not its only beneficiaries; tourism destinations that address these requirements and understand them as positive measures will see their product and service offerings evolve, thus facilitating the tourism experience and improving the quality of life of all their residents and visitors.

The idea of providing tools for the implementation and efficient management of accessibility in tourism destinations was at the heart of a collaboration agreement signed between the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the ONCE [Spanish National Organization of the Blind] Foundation for Cooperation and Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) in 2011. One of the outputs of this collaboration – among other actions – has been the publication of this manual, which provides a series of recommendations for ensuring that all persons can access, use and enjoy tourism environments and services under equal conditions.

The recommendations described in this manual constitute intervention guidelines drawn from experience, recent academic studies, international standards, and technological and scientific advances that have been made in this field. The ONCE Foundation has made available to the authors its extensive professional experience of over 25 years in carrying out projects related with the implementation of Universal Accessibility and Design for All in different environments and services. This endeavour also enjoyed the support of ENAT, in which the ONCE Foundation holds the Vice Presidency.

This manual offers a reference framework for the interventions, tools and resources that are necessary for the provision of services and the management of accessible tourism. Through these instruments, the UNWTO aims to encourage the key actors in the tourism sector to implement measures that will result in greater participation by different groups of people in tourism activity, including persons with disabilities.

The publication is divided into five separate modules, each addressing key issues regarding accessibility in tourism: the general context, recommendations, key intervention areas, indicators for national tourism administrations, and international best practices.

Module I establishes some theoretical foundations and discusses the barriers to accessibility that can be found in tourism-related activities. It describes the wide range of beneficiaries of accessible tourism, highlighting the emergence of “senior tourists”, whose tourism activity is similar or even greater than that of other population segments, and whose needs and demands

require accessibility measures. This first module also provides a breakdown of the economic impact of accessibility on tourism and a set of statistical data backing up the fact that accessibility, in addition to being a right, is also a highly significant business opportunity in quantitative terms.

Module II presents recommendations in accordance with the specifications of Universal Design based on the most current international standards, including ISO FDIS 21542 on Building Construction – Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment. These recommendations constitute the foundations for creating accessible tourism destinations, and place special emphasis on the value chain of accessibility in tourism, to which end five key points are discussed: planning and information, transport, accessibility to the environment, accessibility to common spaces, and accessibility to specific spaces. Each one of these sections responds to the accessibility needs of different tourism environments, ranging from hotels, tourist information offices and sports facilities, to natural environments, beaches and transport, among others.

Module III reviews the intervention areas that constitute the cornerstone of success in achieving accessible tourism, and is aimed at those responsible for the management of tourism destinations. These intervention areas specifically involve five key points:

1. Legislation, highlighting the need for the existence of equal rights legislation;
2. Research, as a starting point to know the impact of accessible tourism;
3. Awareness-raising and training, in formal and vocational education plans;
4. Promotion of tourism products and services through marketing strategies; and, therefore
5. Management, as an element applicable to all tourism sectors, so that it becomes a practice that is maintained over time.

Module IV of the manual describes a set of indicators, meant for the use of national tourism organizations, so that they can assess the development of accessibility in tourism destinations. These indicators, accompanied by the corresponding methodology for their application, constitute an unprecedented contribution in the field of the management and evaluation of accessibility in tourism.

The last section of the manual, **Module V**, presents a selection of good practices that will serve as examples for stakeholders interested in implementing and replicating accessibility improvements in tourism. The ONCE Foundation, together with ENAT, conducted a study based on diverse sources and proven experiences, which made it possible to put together a selection of outstanding examples, categorized both by geographical area and by tourism subsector.

The Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices is one of the World Tourism Organization's first manuals to provide a comprehensive overview of accessibility, which like tourism is a cross-cutting global issue.

The ONCE Foundation has applied its professional and practical real-life experience in accessible tourism to the content of this manual. In this regard, it is worth noting the work the Foundation has done in the organization of four editions of the International Congress on Tourism for All, the creation of more than 700 accessibility plans in municipalities, diverse actions related with accessibility in transport, including the implementation of assistance services, and its collaboration with many accessible tourism initiatives in both the public and private spheres.

Note: *The Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices* may be used as a single publication with its five modules, or as five independent volumes explaining the different aspects of accessible tourism. All the modules share the same acknowledgements, foreword, executive summary and general bibliography of the entire project.

Who is this manual for?

This manual is for all stakeholders, whether public or private, involved in the tourism sector at the international, national, regional and local levels:

National and international tourism management agencies: to provide them with useful and practical information on how to implement and develop accessibility in all tourism-related areas.

Legislators at the international, national and regional levels: responsible for implementing international organization directives, national legislation, and regional legislation.

National, regional and local governments: that are the administrators of public infrastructure, including buildings.

Public administrations and entities: including all publicly funded institutions and any bodies that tender contracts for building works through public procurement procedures.

Economic operators: as a source of information on how procuring administrations must approach the achievement of objectives when conducting public and private tenders.

Private companies and entities: that carry out their activities mainly in the tourism sector, so that they may have information on measures and requirements, be encouraged to implement them and, as a result, participate more fully in Accessible Tourism for All.

Module V

Best Practices in Accessible Tourism

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Introduction

Module V of the *Manual on Accessible Tourism for All* is based on the results of a study identifying and selecting best practices in accessible tourism, in which several public and private entities linked to accessibility in tourism took part.

On the basis of this study and of the assessment of experiences at the international level, the primary goal of this module is to provide more in-depth knowledge of a series of actions that have been successful in the context of accessible tourism and which are hoped to be able to produce comparable results in similar contexts.

Likewise, this document provides the opportunity to understand the key principles inspiring these practices, identify the advantages and disadvantages of each of them, and analyse the conditions that favour or hinder them. Moreover, it will show that accessibility-related actions can be carried out, avoiding the difficulties that end up having an impact on public policies.

This module of the manual seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Increase the visibility of actions, programmes and projects, whether public, private or mixed, that contribute to achieving accessibility in tourism;
- Disseminate best practices that have served, as a response to needs arising in different areas of tourism, and have led to outstanding innovation projects;
- Serve as a guide and support, setting examples for all professionals; and
- Motivate public and private agents in the tourism sector to implement initiatives aimed at accessibility.

Methodology

The documentary sources used to obtain the first examples of best practices were the most relevant and up-to-date publications on accessible tourism, including the best practices presented at different conferences and seminars held on this topic, as well as the different projects learned about through the professional experience of the ONCE Foundation and ENAT.

The majority of the examples in these sources showed that the most consolidated best practices could be found in mature tourism destinations, which had adopted policies on social issues and on defending the rights of persons with disabilities.

Other more recent sources showed an increase in accessibility-related interventions in emerging tourism areas. Following their selection on the basis of the evaluation criteria, the latter were taken into account for inclusion in this compilation given the interest in representing the diversity of geographical areas.

In shortlisting the projects exemplifying best practices, the following criteria to be satisfied were established:

- **Innovation:** the intervention has to be novel and meet the needs or goals set out, either because it is a new initiative, or because it proposes a creative form of organization or intervention in the sphere of disability;
- **Transferable models:** the intervention has to be relatively easy to export and implement in other similar geographical contexts;
- **Enhanced tourism experience for persons with disabilities:** the action has to have an impact on dimensions of the quality of life of persons with disabilities, as regards their physical, emotional or material wellbeing, interpersonal relations, social inclusion, personal development, self-sufficiency and enjoyment of rights;
- **Long-lasting:** it should not be a one-off, isolated initiative but rather be designed as something ongoing and permanent;
- **Planning of the process as regards design, implementation and evaluation:** the planning of the different intervention phases must make it possible to identify the different actions to be carried out in the process;
- **Positive effects resulting from the implementation:** the experience has to have an impact on other tourism-related aspects, such as job creation, an increase in visitors, and the socio-economic revitalization of the territory;
- **Active participation by persons with disabilities:** the projects must take into account the participation of persons with disabilities, their carers, families, and professionals or other community members. This participation must be in all the phases of the initiative; and
- **Efficient use of resources:** the projects must make good use of the resources offered by the local industry through their sustainable management.

In an initial phase 39 different projects located in all five continents were identified which had the potential to be considered examples of best practices, before conducting thorough research to substantiate that assumption.

When selecting different experiences, the aim was for the chosen examples to cover the different areas involved in tourism. Nine categories were established:¹

- Promotion;
- Research;
- Travel agencies;
- Transport;
- Accommodation;
- Training;
- Destinations;
- Tourist information; and
- Tourism activities.

The best practices selected after reviewing the questionnaires were distributed into the pre-defined different categories.

Finally, nine case studies were chosen, and the strengths and challenges of each initiative were described in detail, in addition to nine examples of other best practices, with a brief summary of information of interest as regards universal accessibility.

¹ In certain cases, the best practices could have fallen within several categories, but they have been included in the category which best represents the activity. For example, the *Wettervik* company's accessible cruises could be included either in the category of *transport* or in *activities*, or the inclusive *Perfil* project, studying training capacities, could have been included either under the heading of *research* or *training*.

Chapter 1

Promotion

The promotion of accessible tourism is part of the strategies aimed at fostering awareness-raising among stakeholders from the public and the private sector, as well as other spheres of society. One of the primary goals of this promotion is to supplement campaigns supporting the adaptation of tourism infrastructure, especially when it involves the physical environment, means of transport and relevant services.

Moreover, such initiatives serve to establish new labour relations among all sectors of society and of the business world, setting new standards for tourism management based on the impact of the best practices in accessible tourism.

This section highlights examples of public or private entities that provide incentives for accessibility in tourism sector companies through awards or distinctions recognizing the efforts made by different actors.

The creation of an accessible tourism award or distinction benefits companies as they can leverage on the prestige they gain through the award, as well as from the organization granting it to promote accessibility. Depending on the scope of this type of awards (at the national, regional or local level) and on whether they have been created by private, public or mixed initiatives, the “health” of accessible tourism in the region can be evaluated, and the evaluation criteria can improve.

Case study:
Awards for Excellence, “Access for All” category
VisitEngland (United Kingdom)



Description

The VisitEngland Awards for Excellence (VEAE) represent the highest accolade in England's tourism sector. The Awards recognize companies that incorporate best practices in their operation, and acknowledge aspects such as quality and innovation, thus contributing to raising the profile of the entire tourism industry and enhancing England's position as a world-class tourist destination.

Within these Awards, the “Access for All” category is aimed at tourism enterprises that have promoted the added value of accessibility, providing access for all visitors, particularly persons with disabilities and other specific access requirements.

Entities involved

The entity responsible for organizing and granting these Awards is VisitEngland, the national board for promoting tourism in England, both nationally and internationally. This entity focuses on improving England's tourism product offering, and, therefore, works directly with municipal tourism offices.

Background

VisitEngland has shown particular interest in finding different ways of involving companies in accessibility when it comes to England's tourism offering.

One of the premises of the VisitEngland distinction is to help showcase accessible places among people with disabilities or with specific access requirements. Furthermore, it recognizes the huge

commitment to accessibility made by certain business owners, thus helping to raise standards across the entire industry.

In addition to creating the “Access for All” distinction, VisitEngland also undertook to include a question on accessibility in all the categories of its Awards for Excellence. This initiative was fundamental in positioning accessibility as a key feature of quality.

In the design of these Awards, the intention was for any company directly involved in tourism that had implemented an outstanding accessibility-related action to be eligible. Such companies include: accommodation, tourist attractions, restaurants, cafés, tourist information providers, transport, and any other type of tourism enterprise.

Activities

In order for the Awards to be granted following common criteria, a questionnaire was produced, covering the three pillars of accessible tourism, to be answered by the entities submitting applications. In addition to these three pillars, other aspects were covered, such as adequate information, customer service, and facilities meeting people’s needs.

An expert in accessibility is responsible for classifying results according to their score, and for conducting an on-site assessment of the shortlisted entities. The final grades are adjusted after these visits. The expert presents his or her conclusions to a jury comprising previous Award winners, public relations professionals, and personalities from the country’s tourism sector.

The fact that VisitEngland has an expert in accessibility is key to being able to produce the criteria and scores for the jury in an impartial manner.

Afterwards, the finalists are invited to an Awards Ceremony, where the winners in the categories Gold, Silver, Bronze and Highly Commended are announced. In addition to the Awards, all applicants are offered guidance and advice to help them further strengthen their offering.

The funding of the Awards for Excellence is provided by VisitEngland, although there are sponsorship packages for the Awards and for each category within them.

The greatest challenges involved in these Awards is often ensuring appropriate representation of tourism businesses, highlighting the efforts made by the private sector.

Conclusions

All the work on accessibility done at VisitEngland is based on research with people with specific access requirements, through discussion groups and surveys.

The fact that high-level national awards with a track record of more than 20 years include an award category for “Access for All” guarantees that the winners will benefit from the publicity associated with these awards. It also helps to integrate accessibility so that companies do not perceive it as something irrelevant to them.

The impact of this Award is very significant in the local and national media, which helps finalists and winners promote themselves and increase occupancy rates.

VisitEngland reviews the Awards categories every year. Since accessibility is one of the 12 priority areas for increasing the value of tourism in England, the “Access for All” Award has become a regular award category in these past years.

The establishment of an award like this could be particularly easy to implement in countries and/or areas that already have an established awards programme in the tourism sector. The key tasks are producing the questionnaire and the evaluation criteria, and then evaluating the applications.

In addition to promotional actions involving awards, it is essential to provide the tourism sector with practical and real information on the benefits entailed by investing in accessibility. This is another example of work done by VisitEngland regarding promotion, which involves publishing the brochure *At your service*¹. This publication describes the main economic benefits resulting from the implementation of accessibility measures in establishments, through the findings of market studies, information on possible low-cost improvements, and proposals for an action plan. All of this is underpinned by a key argument, based on the Great Britain Tourism Survey 2009, which estimates potential income resulting from accessibility in tourism at two billion pounds.

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Useful links:

VisitEngland website: www.visitengland.com
Information service on accessibility for tourism businesses:
www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/access/index.aspx
Brochure *At your service* available at: www.visitengland.com

1 VisitEngland (2011), *At your service – Your business case and guide to improving accessibility for customers*, British Tourist Authority, London (online), available at: www.visitengland.com/sites/default/files/at_your_service_17.12.10.pdf (10 07-2015).

Chapter 2

Research

As mentioned in chapter 4 of Module III of this Manual, initiating activities in the field of accessible tourism for all or suggesting adequate improvements in the already existing supply, implies a systematic and continuous research and analysis of the value chain elements it includes.¹

Within the variety of research that can be carried out in this field, to date three issues have led data collection on accessible tourism:

1. Studies on tourists' behaviour;
2. The economic impact of accessibility on tourism; and
3. The accessibility status of tourism infrastructure and services.

All of them constitute an excellent instrument to get a clear picture of the state of the tourism sector and the needs of persons with disabilities, as well as to evaluate the economic potential it represents.

Research studies provide understanding of the fact that accessible tourism is a complex and multidimensional issue, involving stakeholders in the business, governmental and non-governmental sectors. Therefore, both the methodology and the analysis of results must be developed collaboratively and with an understanding of the perspectives of all stakeholders.

By promoting and disseminating this type of research, greater awareness can be raised and many companies in the tourism sector can start implementing measures aimed at meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Moreover, appropriate follow-up of results over time offers a general overview of the evolution, making it possible to implement adjustments subsequently.

Research into accessible tourism, whether at the local, regional or national level, makes it possible to assess needs in each area, identify difficulties and, consequently, find solutions that are satisfactory for customers and businesses.

¹ *Module III: Principle Fields of Intervention (Principales áreas de intervención)* is currently available only in Spanish (as of July 2016) and can be downloaded from www.e-unwto.org.

Case study:**Market study of tourists with disabilities****Open Doors Organization (ODO)/Harris Interactive (United States of America)****Description**

This project reflects ground-breaking studies on travel and hospitality among American adults with disabilities. Until the first study was conducted in 2002, there had never been a major, statistically reliable survey on the disability travel market of the United States of America.

Entities

Open Doors Organization (ODO) is a non-profit organization based in Chicago, Illinois. It was founded in 2000 for the purpose of creating a society in which all persons with disabilities have the same consumer opportunities as everyone else. One of ODO's goals is to teach businesses how to succeed in the disability market, while simultaneously empowering the disability community.

Harris Interactive was responsible for designing the communication tools to obtain information about consumers and interpret the data. The studies conducted encompass a variety of topics, involve many companies, and make it possible to obtain crucial information in a short period of time.

Background

Before these studies were conducted, the travel industry in the United States of America did not have robust figures regarding the market of customers with disabilities, nor were they aware of the significant barriers facing this population segment in transport, for example. One of the main goals of this study was for companies to focus their attention on persons with disabilities, and so consider them a market to be borne in mind.

The travel industry in general was under many misconceptions, such as believing that persons with disabilities did not have financial resources to make it worth implementing accessibility actions beyond those required by law. The study aimed to change that mistaken belief by showing actual figures.

The 2002 and 2005 studies measured general travel behaviour and included questions such as: how often do people travel, with whom, how much they spend on their trip, what means of transport or accommodation they use, and what sources of information they base their decisions

on. The first study, conducted in 2002, provided information that the tourism sector would find extremely valuable in attempting to halt the huge losses suffered following 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

The second study, conducted in 2005, confirmed the size of the market and the travel patterns shown in the 2002 study. The 2005 study extended the surveys to new areas, including travel abroad, and the process of booking by disabled people.

Through this study, ODO focused on a wide variety of travel sectors, including aviation, cruises, hotels, restaurants and car rental companies.

Activities

To carry out its 2005 study, Harris Interactive polled 1,037 persons with disabilities. Half of these polls were conducted online, and the other half, over the phone, with an average duration of 21 minutes. The study was preceded by focus groups.

Open Doors Organization resorted, as sources of support, to consultations with other tourism industry associations in designing the study, as well as working in close collaboration with Harris Interactive, which had long-standing experience in conducting online and phone surveys among adults with disabilities in the United States of America.

The participants in the development of the project were mainly ODO staff, a collaborator from the US Travel Association, and a Project Director at Harris Interactive. Working with a renowned research organization, which already had prior research experience with the community of persons with disabilities, played an important role in the project's success.

The project was funded by ODO through private donations. This was considered the only salient difficulty about the project, because it was not possible to obtain public funds.

Conclusions

The principal outcome of the study is the proof that persons with disabilities are an important market segment that must be catered for by the tourism sector. During a trip, an adult with a disability spends an average of USD 430, which means that the ordinary travel expenses of people with disabilities amounts to more than USD 13.6 billion per year. This does not include other travel expenses, such as those of travelling companions, which could easily lead to doubling that figure. Furthermore, by highlighting the principal barriers to the movement of persons with disabilities the industry gains a better understanding of how to reach these customers. The study also shows that the market has the potential to become a significantly larger one. The economic profits of airlines and hotels could double if the appropriate adaptations are made.

As it was the first research of its kind, the resulting impact enjoyed excellent media coverage and, therefore, widespread dissemination of the information both in the travel industry itself and among the general public.

The intention is to conduct a follow-up study to reassess the travel and consumption patterns of persons with disabilities and evaluate the barriers that continue to hinder travel.

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Open Doors Organization website: www.opendoorsnfp.org

Chapter 3

Travel agencies

Planning a trip involves searching for information about the destination and the services offered there.

For persons with disabilities it is essential to have information about accessible resources that they can enjoy. Being able to access that information and hire those services means having a guarantee that the services will have the necessary quality and flexibility to meet the customers' needs, so that customers may demand and evaluate the services provided.

Given the frequent lack of information, an indispensable resource are travel agencies and tour operators that offer information on all kinds of tourist services and products satisfying stringent accessibility criteria at a reasonable and competitive price as compared with other tourist market prices.

The expectation is that all agencies will eventually have this type of information. However, specialized travel agencies are currently the focus.

The services offered by travel agencies with regard to accessibility are an economic opportunity in terms of job creation and offerings of services tailored to their customers, as is the case of other specialized travel agencies.

Currently there are not many agencies specializing in accessible tourism offerings. However, there is an increasingly widespread trend in the creation of inbound tourism companies. These companies provide specialized services welcoming tourists with disabilities, meeting their needs while at the same time promoting the accessible services and infrastructure existing at that destination.

The basic premise of both of these modalities – travel agencies or inbound tourism companies at the destination – is that persons with disabilities or specific access requirements are not the “objects” of social tourism, but, rather, subjects of tourism in the broadest sense. Just like any other tourist, they are willing to pay for services and activities, but they are also entitled to be treated in a way that is appropriate for their needs and their financial outlay.

Case study: Viajes AcceSibles, Viajes 2000 (Spain)



Description

Viajes AcceSibles is a trademark of Viajes 2000, S.A., a travel agency that organizes all kinds of activities: hotel stays, aeroplane or train tickets, packages, tours, tickets to museums or plays, both for individuals and for groups, at national or international destinations.

In order to better respond to their customers' new needs and to take new steps towards accessibility in booking tourism services, Viajes 2000 has launched an accessible booking search engine for hotels in Spain and abroad.

This project guarantees that people with disabilities will have accessibility when searching for and booking hotels. This search engine offers an accessible hotel reservations engine, specifically designed to enable fully self-sufficient online booking for persons with visual, motor, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

Indeed, the Viajes 2000 accessible search engine has features that set it apart from any other website in the sector. Its most outstanding features are:

- Accessible browsing: It is the first online tourism portal in Spain for bookings that has adapted its booking engine to make browsing accessible. As a result, people with visual impairments or who find it difficult to use a mouse can browse the website without any difficulties;
- Compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0: www.viajes.ilunion.com complies with the standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium;
- Some of the aspects developed in the portal in this regard are as follows:
 - The font type, colour and background, are defined in the style sheet so that users may adjust the text to their preferences;
 - The font size can be increased or reduced with the browser options; and
 - The HTML and CSS codes used are adjusted to formal grammars so as to guarantee that content is displayed correctly in different browsers.
- Accessible products and services: Viajes 2000 offers its customers the possibility of booking hotels in a completely accessible manner, in addition to offering tourism packages

- that are accessible for persons with different disabilities, to both national and international destinations; and
- It also features the section “Outstanding accessible establishments”, with information on the accessibility of these establishments, and offering the possibility of filtering by type of establishment or by province. In order to guarantee the accuracy of this information, the Viajes 2000 team of experts and their collaborators have previously visited each of these hotels and establishments to certify and provide this information.

Entities

The Viajes 2000 travel agency is a member of GEBTA (Guild of European Business Travel Agents), which has more than 300 members in seven different countries. It is Spain’s official travel agency for the Paralympic Games, the ONCE Trips for Seniors, and the National Wheelchair Basketball League.

Background

Since 1986, when it entered the business world, the ONCE [Spanish National Organization of the Blind] has been seeking to promote its presence in Spain’s economy by purchasing shares in and managing profitable companies that generate jobs and contribute, directly or indirectly, to the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market.

Viajes 2000 was created in 1977, and in 1993 the ONCE became its sole shareholder, in order to create sustained and long-term value, since it was a profitable company capable of contributing to the labour integration of persons with disabilities. Moreover, the travel agency met a particular need: accessible tourism for all, including people with any type of disability.

Viajes 2000 undertook to develop and consolidate a relevant position as a travel agency specializing in providing services for the market segment of persons with disabilities, both Spanish and foreign. The company succeeded, by enabling people with disabilities to access tourism destinations, and by providing all the necessary information.

The “Viajes AcceSibles” project has matured over the years and is outstanding as an innovative project that not only offers accessible information about tourism activities and destinations, but is also the first accessible website where blind people, or people who find it difficult to use a mouse, can buy tourism products online on their own, independently.

Activities

Viajes 2000 organizes and runs the ONCE’s social holiday programmes for seniors nationwide, and responds to requests for all kinds of tourism services by associations of persons with disabilities. It also caters for individuals with specific access requirements, including the elderly and people with temporary reduced mobility due to an accident, among other customers. Furthermore, Viajes 2000 has an Events, Conferences and Incentives Department, with long-standing experience in organizing conferences for persons with disabilities.

In its social holiday programmes, the company offers the following value-added services:

- Seamless communication with the associations' group leaders, to address any possible incidents;
- Guaranteed adapted accommodation and transport, where necessary, and normal acceptance of persons with disabilities under competitive pricing conditions;
- Assistance at departure, for groups at airports and train stations, during the main transfers;
- Collaboration with the associations in defining the holiday programme (planning destinations, means of transport, shifts);
- Quality control, through surveys for group leaders to assess services; and
- 24-hour service in the event of any contingency that may occur.

All programmes for individuals and groups also offer:

- Verification of the accessibility of accommodation, transport, restaurants and programmes;
- Arrangement of accessible products and programmes for individuals and groups;
- Transformation of all the documents uploaded to the website into accessible documents; and
- Personalized service.

The Viajes 2000 agency has the institutional support of the ONCE and its Foundation, although it is funded out of its own resources.

Its staff includes experts specializing in accessible tourism, an IT expert team, and experts who test the accessibility of services, as well as the information from users themselves. Viajes 2000 currently has more than 50 employees on its staff.

Conclusions

Specialized services in travel agencies such as “Viajes Accesibles” are rather complex. In the first place, this type of agency needs to be very flexible and have well-qualified professional staff, because there are many kinds of disabilities. At the same time, establishments must be carefully selected, ensuring good value for money, and directly contacting the end suppliers or specialized counterparts.

One of the driving forces behind the continuity of this activity has been the significant presence of associations of persons with disabilities in this segment. Work is currently being done on inbound tourism from other countries to Spain.

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Viajes 2000 website: www.viajes.ilunion.com

Accessible search engine page: <http://viajes.ilunion.com/es/buscador-accesible>

Best practice:
PREMIKI, ŠENT Mental Health Association (Slovenia)



PREMIKI is a collection of different European projects led by Slovenia's Mental Health Association, ŠENT. It offers disability promotion services at tourism facilities, improved accessibility through tourism training, and a travel agency for persons with specific access requirements.

The initiative began during the implementation of the first two projects, when the need to improve tourism accessibility in Slovenia became clear. For this reason, a travel agency was created to welcome tourists with disabilities, offering accessible holidays in Slovenia, by means of resources certified as "Disability Friendly" by the company.

In 2011, the Slovenian Mental Health Association was awarded the UNWTO Ulysses Prize for Innovation in Non-Governmental Organizations, thanks to its development of the Premiki project. It is worth highlighting that, as of 2012, the number of employees with disabilities in the agency is five.

All the profits of this institution, besides operating costs, are used for developing accessible tourism in Slovenia and the integration into the labour market of persons with disabilities.

The process of implementing accessibility in Slovenia is systematic, albeit slow. Much remains to be done in order to make it a more accessible destination. However, this company's projects enjoy a high degree of motivation and cooperation between users and experts.

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Accessibility information service: www.premiki.com/?page_id=5605&lang=en

Chapter 4

Transport

Any tourism activity involves travelling to the location where it is to take place. Transport is one of the key elements with the greatest impact on the quality of travel by persons with disabilities and specific access requirements.

Likewise, at the destination itself, moving around may constitute a challenge for any person, but for persons with disabilities or specific access requirements it may be an insurmountable obstacle if the infrastructure and the movable elements are not adapted.

It is of the essence for all stakeholders in society – ranging from associations of persons with disabilities, to city councils, governmental organizations and the transport companies themselves – to make a commitment to achieving suitable conditions in transport.

This commitment should take the form of actions affecting the environment and the information, stations and means of transport themselves, so that seamless travel is possible.

Transport is usually left out of research on accessible tourism. However, adapting infrastructure and services, as well as providing information on transport, constitute key factors in the value chain of accessible tourism.

The success of actions aimed at adapting transport is not only reflected in the sphere of tourism. The advantages of accessibility in transport clearly prove that its beneficiaries are not only persons with disabilities, because such accessibility benefits all users in general, especially the entire local population.

A direct relation has been observed between increased accessibility in transport and enhanced efficiency of use and frequency of means of transport.

Case study: Accessible Taxis, Eurotaxis, ONCE Foundation (Spain)



Description

The programme to implement accessible taxis, or Eurotaxis, was developed in Spain by the ONCE Foundation with the support of IMSERSO [Spain's Institute for the Elderly and Social Services]. This programme enables wheelchair users to in ride taxis without needing to transfer or leave their wheelchairs.

Taxi services are a key element in meeting “door-to-door” travel needs in all transportation systems worldwide. In the past three decades, adapted taxis have been a solution supplementing the usual public transport means, whether adapted or not. Moreover, taxis constitute an advantage for tourism, as they make it possible to access places outside traditional routes.

Entities

The ONCE Foundation for Cooperation and Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities was created in February 1988 following a resolution agreed in the ONCE General Council. It is an instrument for cooperation and solidarity by the Spanish blind towards other groups of persons with disabilities to improve their living conditions. In addition to the ONCE itself, as the founding institution, through its Board of Trustees the ONCE Foundation also comprises the principal organizations of persons with disabilities in Spain.

IMSERSO is the Social Security Management Body that manages the social services supplementing the Social Security system benefits, and for the elderly and the dependent.

Background

The idea of introducing accessible taxis in Spain began to take shape around 1980, when commercial companies started offering vehicles to people with lower limb paralysis. These vehicles included technical modifications and adaptation, such as a knob on the steering wheel and an automatic gear shift. Private adapted vehicles already existed in Spain, but not public service vehicles.

The first adaptation took place thanks to Nissan Spain, which took as a reference the adapted Nissan Prairie that already existed in England. The basic modifications carried out on the vehicle consisted in raising the roof and lowering the floor to obtain more height inside and incorporating an access ramp.

The first adapted car was launched on the market in 1990. That same year, the ONCE Foundation and IMSERSO signed the first accessibility agreement to grant financial assistance.

Meetings with taxi driver organizations and with individual taxi drivers were held in order to promote Eurotaxis. Eurotaxis were also promoted in the public administrations, by city council. A significant step forward took place between 1999 and 2001, when 100 new Eurotaxis were introduced in Madrid thanks to the financial assistance provided by the ONCE Foundation.

The Eurotaxi project has grown significantly in the past decade, thanks to technical developments and to the new vehicle models that allow easier and more versatile adaptation.

Activities

Through the agreements signed between the ONCE Foundation and IMSERSO, financial assistance was granted to taxi drivers who wanted to start running an accessible taxi service. The taxi drivers' applications had to come through the corresponding city council. If assistance was granted, IMSERSO, the ONCE Foundation and Madrid City Council signed a Special Agreement. Afterwards, documentary support for the use of the assistance had to be provided.

The biggest obstacle at first was the lack of interest shown by taxi drivers themselves. However, in recent years demand by taxi drivers has improved, so the main difficulty has been the lack of public funding.

Professionals have become increasingly involved in the project, after having seen the benefits, and have even started to purchase adapted vehicles without receiving any subsidies. The new decade has a clear reference point in 2017, when 5% of all existing taxis will have to be accessible.

One of the secrets of the success of accessible taxis is that they benefit everyone: from people with permanent or temporary disabilities, elderly people, people with prams or pushchairs, to tourists with lots of luggage who need roomy transportation.

Conclusions

The fleet of Eurotaxis has grown significantly in the past decade, thanks to the progress made, in parallel, on the different fronts involved.

Participation by city councils in granting assistance to make adaptations has increased, and agreements with the ONCE Foundation-IMSERSO have been renewed. At the same time, taxi drivers' interest has also grown with enhanced adaptations.



The publication of *El libro blanco del Eurotaxi*¹ [Eurotaxi White Paper] in 2010 described the collaboration experience between the ONCE Foundation, IMSERSO and city councils in Spain, as well as containing an assessment of the functioning of this type of taxis by their users.

Generally speaking, at the international level, taxi services constitute a transportation sector whose peculiarities make them vary considerably from country to country. Sometimes they are privately managed, on other occasions they constitute the principal public transport system, their use is shared and their functioning is at times chaotic, with no central management or formal organization (especially in developing countries). Nor are there uniform criteria regarding the type of vehicle to use that can range from four-seater cars to minibuses.

In recent years there has been an attitude shift among policy planners and authorities, which have started to consider taxis as solutions, instead of sources of problems. This interest is also being felt in other countries that are seeking accessible transport solutions. Many of these solutions are based on information technologies such as GPS location, online booking systems, and mobile phones, to coordinate passengers and vehicles.

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Publication *El libro blanco del Eurotaxi* [Eurotaxi White Paper] available at: www.fundaciononce.es

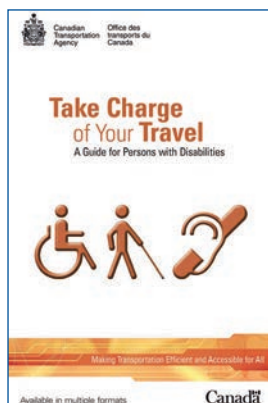
1 Fundación ONCE (2010), *El libro blanco del Eurotaxi – Un taxi para todos*, Madrid.

Best practice:**Take Charge of Your Travel - Guide for persons with disabilities, Canadian Transportation Agency (Canada)**

Canadian
Transportation
Agency

Office
des transports
du Canada

The Canadian Transportation Agency is responsible for eliminating accessibility obstacles at the federal level, involving air, rail, sea and bus transportation services at the interprovincial level, and at the facilities themselves.



The Agency has published the *Take Charge of Your Travel - Guide for Persons with Disabilities*,² providing information for persons with disabilities to plan their travel and make it easier to get from A to B. It describes accessible services and their characteristics for travellers with disabilities using airplanes and trains, as well as passenger ferries and buses to cross provincial borders within Canada and also to travel abroad. It includes a “Reservation checklist” establishing some 60 possible travel-related services, such as accessible seating, requests for assistance, and information on service animals.

The publication is promoted on the Agency’s website and forms part of the materials distributed in dissemination initiatives. There are also accessible versions of the guide, in simple language and alternative formats. The guide is updated regularly to make sure that the information is relevant and conforms to reality. Thanks to this initiative, persons with disabilities can plan and prepare their routes and, consequently, are less likely to have negative experiences.

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Canadian Transportation Agency website: www.otc-cta.gc.ca

Publication *Take Charge of Your Travel – A Guide for Persons with Disabilities* available at:
www.otc-cta.gc.ca (10-07-2015)

² Canadian Transportation Agency (2009), *Take Charge of Your Travel – A Guide for Persons with Disabilities*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, Ottawa.

Chapter 5

Accommodation

Accommodation services constitute an essential part of tourism activity. Types of accommodation can vary from hotels, bed & breakfast and equivalent establishments, to campsites, youth hostels and country houses, to name a few. The main goal of all of them is to provide a welcoming space that guests can consider an extension of their own home during their stay.

Therefore, it is crucial for accommodations to have certain services enabling guests to carry out daily tasks with full autonomy, privacy and comfort, thus ensuring customer satisfaction.

These spaces provide services aimed at achieving their goals through their facilities and personalized assistance service.

In the case of persons with disabilities and specific access requirements, it is indispensable not only to have an environment facilitating that autonomy and privacy, but also to offer a personal welcome service so that these persons' needs are met, just like those of any other customer.

There is a major lack of information about accessible establishments. Provisions made for accessibility are usually the minimum required by law, and the establishments themselves tend to reject adaptations. This is due to the belief that adapted rooms will not be as profitable, and that guests with no specific access requirements do not feel comfortable in them.

This is why establishments that have planned their facilities using accessibility parameters following non-exclusive, design-for-all standards, and have an attractive and inclusive design, are the most successful in making accessible spaces profitable.

Moreover, the promotion of accessibility in these establishments makes them a model for welcoming all kinds of customers and an example of efficient implementation of accessibility.

Case study: Scandic Hotels (Sweden)

Scandic

Description

Scandic Hotels is a hotel chain that has implemented smart design in the services offered, so that they meet the needs of any person with disabilities. On the understanding that each disability is different, the Scandic chain has set a common standard of 101 accessibility measures that are applied to all the hotels in the chain, while working towards continuous improvement.

The accessibility actions taken are aimed, firstly, at the more than 50 million people in Europe who have some kind of disability and at the elderly citizens, and, secondly, at recruitment agencies for staff with disabilities.

Entities

Scandic Hotels is a hotel chain based in Stockholm, with its principal operations in northern European countries. It is present in 10 countries, with a total of 160 hotels.

Scandic's aim is to offer quality accommodation with a high level of service and amenities for holiday, business or family stays. In 2007, Scandic Hilton Hotels Corporation was acquired by the Swedish company Private Equity, EQT.

Loyal to its commitment to the environment, Scandic has developed an ambitious sustainability and accessibility programme and puts into practice sound environmental, economic and social considerations in its daily decisions. This attitude has led to good business results, and it proves that high profits can be achieved through this commitment to the environment. Furthermore, all its hotels in Scandinavia bear the Green Swan distinction for environmental sustainability, and in other countries, the EU Ecolabel.

Background

Scandic Hotels' direct relation with accessibility began a decade ago. Back then, Magnus Berglund, a chef in the Scandic chain, was on sick leave due to a muscle disease for five years. When he was able to start working again, he contacted his former employer with his ideas on how the hotel chain could improve accessibility and use it to gain a competitive advantage. In 2003, he was appointed Disability Ambassador for Scandic, reporting directly to the Group's Executive Committee.

The disability ambassador's work on making the hotels more accessible and publicising the work done has been recognized internationally and been awarded many prizes with an impact on the tourism sector and also outside the accessibility community.

Today, Scandic Hotels are known internationally for their full accessibility, and their ambassador is invited to give talks on this subject. In autumn 2010, he was invited as keynote speaker on accessibility at the United Nations in Geneva, where he shared his work experience since 2003.

The goal of implementing accessibility at hotels is to learn more about what guests with disabilities may need when they stay at hotels, and to expand the segment of potential customers.

Activities

Some highlights of Scandic Hotels' specific accessibility activities are the following:

- Creating and implementing of an accessibility standard, common to all hotels, consisting in a proposal of 110 mandatory points;
- Training hotel staff in serving customers with disabilities and specific access requirements; and
- Making all accessibility-related information available on the website. This information includes a specific brochure targeted at customers with specific access requirements, the publication of standards for consultation, and different suggestions on preparing trips for persons with disabilities.

In order to implement accessibility, the hotel chain sought advice from organizations of persons with disabilities, the hotel guests themselves, and the experience of the team members.

At the same time, specific training programmes have been developed for the staff in all the hotels so that everyone is aware of accessibility issues.

One important point here is the fact that all accessibility-related work is included in the hotels' general budget, making it just as relevant as quality. Therefore, this is not a one-off project, but, rather it forms part of the hotels' daily work and so there is a process of continuous improvement. The ultimate aim is to design hotels that work for all customers under the Design for All parameters.

Conclusions

One of the principal outcomes of the continuous work on accessibility has been the raising of awareness regarding disability and the continuous improvement of accessibility in all areas of the company, the different departments, the head office, and the hotels. Moreover, this has been made possible thanks to the support of the Group's Executive Committee for the initiative from the very outset.

In economic terms, the increase in room sales has meant that many of the investments have paid off in less than one year.

Measures have been put in place in order to monitor the work continuously, such as a yearly review of the accessibility standard, and training for all the team members.

The main difficulty that has arisen in implementing accessibility in a chain of hotels located in different countries has been the difference in legislations and accessibility standards in each country. Therefore, a major challenge is to design a standard that works in every European country.

Scandic Hotels' ambition is for customers, whether with or without disabilities, to consider their hotel a smart hotel. Their motto, which states that they do not welcome "customers with disabilities", but only welcome guests, further reinforces their mission.

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Useful links:

Scandic Hotels website: www.scandichotels.com

Accessibility information service: www.scandichotels.com/Always-at-Scandic/Special-needs/

Scandic's publication on accessibility standards:

Scandic (2010), *Scandic's Accessibility Standard, Stockholm*, available at: www.scandichotels.com

Best practice:
ILUNION Hotels (Spain)



ILUNION Hotels, a company formerly known as Confortel Hotels, is a Spanish hotel chain created in 1988, and belonging to the ONCE business corporation. ILUNION Hotels currently has 22 hotels.

The main goal of this initiative is to provide hotels with universal accessibility, so that all customers, with or without disabilities, can use both the environment and the services.

After conducting a full diagnosis of each hotel, an action plan is designed, where all the necessary actions to make all areas of the hotel accessible are assigned and planned.

Through regular internal and external audits, the ILUNION hotel chain has achieved excellence in accessibility, namely obtaining the UNE 170001-2:2007 certification in accessibility for its 20 hotels. It is the only hotel chain in Spain to have implemented an Accessibility Management System committed to continuous improvement.

To this end their underlying premise is all about using innovative and integrated design for all, which also proves that accessibility is compatible with modern and attractive design.

The hotel group's staff has received training on accessibility in order to offer qualified and high-quality service to their customers.

In parallel, the hotel chain's staff includes a number of persons with disabilities. The ILUNION Suites and ILUNION Hotel Valencia 3, for example, are the first hotels that are also special employment centres, with more than 70% of staff with disabilities.

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Chapter 6

Training

There is growing awareness in the tourism sector that the elimination of architectural barriers is one of the first steps to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

However, another just as essential need is the training of management and customer service staff on quality of service and on how to welcome guests with disabilities and specific access requirements.

Providing high-quality tourism services (accommodation, restaurant and catering services, sports-related activities, services of tour operators, tourist information, transportation, among others) for people with specific access requirements requires tourism and hospitality professionals to have professional skills over and above the basic professional training skills.

With appropriate training, customer service staff can make persons with disabilities and elderly persons feel welcome, and, in some cases, even overcome some of the physical and sensory barriers still existing, for example, in older buildings.

Accessible tourism training can help change the attitude barriers that people with disabilities constantly come up against in tourism sector staff. This type of barriers are mainly due to lack of knowledge and, consequently, lack of understanding.

Accessibility training gives staff the knowledge, competence and skills to address the customers' different circumstances and needs, so they are just part of the characteristics that any other type of customers might have.

In this way, management and customer service staff will be able to handle more confidently situations that are currently perceived as a major challenge.

There are currently no common standards on the content and scope of training in accessible tourism. However, certain initiatives can be highlighted given their innovative teaching method and attractive presentation of contents adapted to the tourism sector.

The use of new technologies is a fundamental tool to increase the scope of training without neglecting the fact that classroom-based courses provide participants with equally enriching and fundamental practical experiences.

Case study:**ETCAATS European Training Certificate Accessible for All in the Tourism Sector
European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), European Commission project****Description**

The European Training Certificate Accessible for All in the Tourism Sector (ETCAATS) is an online training project aiming to offer tourism providers a variety of online training instruments and professional training certification, enabling them to be more confident in welcoming persons with disabilities and specific access requirements.

This training project is transnational in participation and pan-European in scope. It has been carried out thanks to the European Commission's support, financed through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme funds.

Entities

The European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme offers assistance for different types of training activities. These initiatives include international cooperation projects for knowledge transfer and networks focusing on current topics.

It includes the Leonardo da Vinci programme, aimed at addressing the education and learning needs of all people involved in vocational education and training, as well as the institutions and organizations offering or facilitating such training.

The ETCAATS project is run through this programme, with the participation of entities from different countries. The lead entity coordinating the project is Vellinge Kommun from Sweden. The other participants with expertise in the subject area are: Access Sweden (Sweden), EWORKX S.A. and Disability Now (Greece), Toegankelijkheidsbureau and Association Nationale pour le Logement des Personnes Handicapées (Belgium), Work Research Centre (Ireland). The project also benefits from the collaboration of the European Network for Accessible Tourism, ENAT.

Background

The implementation of this training tool arose out of the tourism sector companies' need to work with the accessible tourism market. To achieve this goal, the entire staff must be made aware of and have the knowledge, skills and competences to cater for people with disabilities, elderly people, and other customers with specific access requirements. The aim was, above all, to solve the awareness problem and make accessibility no longer be perceived as a problem but as a social development.

This training initiative was targeted at small tourism companies, their owners, managers and employees in general. The idea behind the project was to develop a short introductory course, which would serve as a first point of contact for motivating staff to delve more deeply into this area.

To ensure wider dissemination of the course, the aim was to offer it free of charge for all the potential students. Therefore, an application was made to the European Commission for funding although the project partners also provided financial support.

The project partners also contributed their expertise on training resources and all of ENAT's members and partners provided additional training materials.

During the two years in which the project was carried out, the focus was not only on developing an innovative and attractive training course for the sector, but also on creating a "road map" for an EU certification system for the area of accessible tourism vocational training, in line with the European Qualifications Framework.

Activity

To make the design of the course attractive, different strategies were used to keep the students engaged: interviews, videos, multimedia resources and exercises. Furthermore, one of the key elements of the project is that the e-learning platform was developed on an accessible website, and most of its materials were also made accessible (only a few videos do not have subtitles).

The collaboration and participation of persons with disabilities in the project was high – more than ten people with disabilities worked on developing training materials.

The course is still running and is currently available at www.accesstraining.eu, thanks to ENAT's maintenance of the platform.

One of the key challenges in implementing this project was the lack of a Europe-wide certification in accessible tourism training. Therefore, it was necessary for the project to create an agreed system of certification of its own, even at this introductory level.

The project's primary tools included its web-based online teaching resources and a research database with related bibliographical and documentary resources.

Conclusions

Three key elements have led to the project's success:

1. European Union grants;
2. The experience of the members of the project team; and
3. Continuous contacts with training organizations, NGOs and companies.

As for participation results, 200 students from all over Europe, most of whom achieved the certificate, have enrolled on the course and companies have been helped to access the European tourism market.

Another milestone is that the Themis Foundation, which is part of UNWTO, has used the ETCAATS training course as part of its online training programmes for managers of tourism destinations.

The outlook for this project is very positive. A certification process is currently being worked out and new modules are being developed. Furthermore, ENAT has the possibility of carrying out new EU-funded projects that will complete the training programmes on the www.accesstraining.eu web platform.

One of the advantages of the platform is that both the website and the course contents can be translated into different languages and other related training courses can be included in the same platform at the same time.

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Useful links:

ETCAATS project website: www.etcaats.eu/?i=etcaats.en.e-learning

Access Training website: www.accesstraining.eu

Research database: www.etcaats.eu/?i=etcaats.en.etcaatslibrary

Best practice: Inclusive Tourism Study, PERFIL (Portugal)



The CECD-MIRASINTRA Education Centre for Citizens with Disabilities, together with the Portuguese entity PERFIL and two public institutions – the National Rehabilitation Institute and Tourism of Portugal – carried out a “Turismo Inclusivo” [Inclusive Tourism] study in 2009 on skills in the hospitality industry to cater for customers with disabilities.

The project was part of the Portuguese Government’s Action Plan for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, and established three goals:

1. Identify the customer service needs of tourists with disabilities;
2. Identify the necessary professional skills; and
3. Create a training package aimed at tourism professionals.

The different training outputs include diverse teaching materials, from the study’s findings to the trainer’s guide, the training guide and the development of the course in an interactive online format. All of these have been made available to tourism professionals in the public and private sectors.

It was a ground-breaking project in Portugal, as it was carried out nationwide, with the support and participation of Portugal’s key stakeholders in disability and tourism.

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PERFIL website: www.perfil.com.pt

Accessibility information service: www.perfil.com.pt/turismoacessivelinclusivo.htm

Chapter 7

Destinations

Tourism destinations are at the heart of all tourism activity. All travellers should be capable of travelling to a destination and, once there, move around and visit any sites or attractions they wish to get to know.

An accessible tourism destination is one that has implemented accessibility in all the links of the tourism value chain, including infrastructure and transportation systems, communication formats and promotion of the destination. This is achieved through the systematic implementation of enhancements in every element, and the collaboration of all agents, both public and private, to carry them out.

There are different tourism management models that may be applied in carrying out specific actions such as tourism accessibility plans, financial assistance, specialized advisory services, and promotion of pro-accessibility initiatives; but what all models share is that they constitute a gradual process lasting over time, requiring systematic data collection and continuous evaluation.

A series of success stories have been recorded for decades now in destinations that meet these requirements and have been pioneers in developing these measures.¹ If a destination is not only residential but predominantly a tourism destination, the efforts made by places like these to adapt has led to an increase in the number of tourists, which will make it possible for accessibility to be integrated within mainstream tourism in the medium-long term.

Developing accessible tourism destinations also constitutes an advantage for national tourism administrations. They collaborate in promoting and disseminating accessible tourism, which has a positive and significant impact on the quality of the regional and national tourism system and leads to obvious competitiveness gains for the country in terms of its tourism products and services.

¹ Examples of this are the winners of the Access City Awards.

Case study:**Destination Japan, Japan Accessible Tourism Centre (Japan)****Description**

According to the World Health Organization's *World Health Statistics* report for 2013, life expectancy in Japan is one of the highest in the world, ranking second, with an average life expectancy of 84.6. One of the major consequences of the ageing of the Japanese population is the concern for creating more accessible environments and services. In addition, the number of tourists overall in Japan has increased in recent years as has the number of European and tourists from the United States of America visiting the country. This has prompted the authorities to be concerned about how to improve the quality of welcome for tourists.

These two factors have inspired Japan, as a tourism destination, to include a series of accessible elements in the whole tourism value chain. They range from creating a tourism centre with specific information on accessibility in Japan, to innovating their transport systems based on Design for All, making their tourism resources accessible, and extending a warm welcome to their visitors in every area of the tourism sector.

Entities

The information on this destination's accessibility has been forwarded by three different entities.

The Japan Accessible Tourism Centre is a non-profit organization that provides accessibility information in multiple languages, thereby serving as a gateway for foreign tourists with disabilities. They also deal with hiring assistants for persons with disabilities, booking accommodation, giving travel advice, providing assistance in the event of emergency situations during trips, among other services. All of these services are free of charge for tourists.

The Universal Design Committee at Tokyo's Haneda International Airport is responsible for ensuring compliance with the accessibility standards required by the government, so as to make the airport a comfortable transition between Japan and other countries.

The Office for Overseas Marketing and Strategy of the city of Takayama has endeavoured to adapt the city to a population with a large number of elderly people (27% of the total population), creating a barrier-free city open to all kinds of tourists as a result.

Background

Japan has been an outstanding international tourism destination for several decades. Japan's concern for design and particular interest in new technologies have made it possible to integrate accessibility measures seamlessly and unobtrusively in the tourism sector that can also be extremely useful for the entire population.

Activities

In transportation, as well as making its systems efficient, frequent and safe in a country with some of the world's most populated cities, Japan is committed to compliance with accessibility measures based on design for all.

As regards railway transportation, most stations in the city of Tokyo, for example, have lifts connecting the entrance and the platforms, coaches in trains reserved for wheelchair users, and specialized staff to help people access them. Moreover, they have navigation strips for blind people, and written and acoustic information in Japanese and in English.

Another example in the field of transportation is Haneda airport, which has accessibility services that are useful for all passengers. In addition to the usual accessibility measures, it includes fixed, level boarding bridges, toilet facilities for service animals, and visual emergency systems that make travelling safe and pleasant. Urban environments – for example, cities like Takayama – are committed to building a safe and comfortable environment in response to the needs of their elderly residents. Accessibility for local residents is promoted through tourism, with the motto “a city that is easy to live in is a place that is easy to visit”. Likewise, a barrier-free information project is also being developed, aiming at achieving mutual understanding between visitors and the local community.

As regards tourism attractions, the vast majority have implemented accessibility measures for persons with physical and sensory disabilities that respect the heritage environment with only minor aesthetic variations.

Given that language constitutes a barrier for tourists, part of the work done to improve tourist welcome in Japan has consisted in the widespread use of visual icons, making it easier to convey important messages to all tourists.

Lastly, the Japan Accessible Tourism Centre provides accessibility information to the growing number of persons with disability and elderly persons travelling to Japan.

Even though there are many services and environments operating under universal design parameters, information about them is often only available in Japanese. Therefore, the Centre offers tourists with disabilities information services, and intermediates to overcome the language barrier.

The specific information provided by the Japan Accessible Tourism Centre includes transportation systems, accommodation, leisure activities, and advice for travellers, and links to tourist information about Japan and to entities involved in accessible tourism.

This information is not only very detailed but is also accompanied by a list of visual materials showcasing the design quality. However, the key to its success is the availability of the communication. The office keeps the information updated and provides visitors with a continuous service.

Conclusions

Increased accessibility in Japan has been a response to the needs of its own inhabitants. Fortunately, this has made the country one of the most accessible countries in the world.

Under the Design for All paradigm, accessibility actions have been included in a project whose motto is making things usable by everybody, with no distinctions regarding abilities, age, height, language, etc.

All of this has contributed to creating a welcoming atmosphere for tourists, with or without disabilities, making Japan an outstanding accessible tourism destination.

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Useful links:

Japan Accessible Tourism Centre website: www.japan-accessible.com

Accessibility information service at Haneda airport in Tokyo: www.tokyo-airport-bldg.co.jp/en/barrierFree/

**Best practice:
The League of Historical and Accessible Cities (LHAC),
European Foundation Centre (EFC) (Belgium)**



The League of Historical and Accessible Cities (LHAC) is a project focusing on improving the accessibility of historic cities while at the same time promoting the development of sustainable tourism and the protection of cultural heritage in Europe.

This initiative was launched in 2010 through the European Foundation Centre (EFC), and is being simultaneously implemented by 11 foundations in 6 cities in 5 different European countries. Its main aim is to find ways of reconciling the protection of cultural heritage and accessibility, through innovative solutions. This is the one of the greatest accessibility-related challenges in Europe. This initiative proves that travel and tourism in historical cities is available to everyone and can become a competitive advantage.

Its members are: The Banca Monte di Lucca Foundation working with Lucca (Italy), the CRT Foundation with Turin (Italy), the REUNICA Foundation with Mulhouse (France), the Realdania Foundation, the Bevica Foundation, the Labour Market Holiday Fund and the Danish Disability Foundation with Viborg (Denmark), the Sozopol Foundation with Sozopol (Bulgaria) and the ONCE Foundation con Ávila (Spain), which has won the first European Commission Access City Award.

In each member city a project is carried out consisting in an accessible tourist route for people to stroll around, do sightseeing, visit museums, parks, restaurants, shops, hotels and other key tourist attractions in an independent manner, in addition to finding their way easily and interacting with their surroundings. Each project is implemented in accordance with its own legislative specificities, and by promoting collaboration and public-private partnerships among all the different organizations, such as municipal authorities, non-governmental organizations, disabled peoples' organizations, architects' associations, and experts in city planning.

The project began with a common methodology developed by an expert entity, although each country's participation in the project is very different, so enriching the initiative.

Some highlights of the project outcomes are:

1. The establishment of nearly 15 km of accessible routes;
2. The participation of more than 50 experts; and
3. The use of innovative accessibility-related technologies applied to tourism, including smart canes, audio guides, cyber passes, tactile maps and websites.

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Useful links:

League of Historical and Accessible Cities website: www.lhac.eu

Chapter 8

Tourist information

The Internet has become one of the most popular tools people use when searching for information to plan a trip as a supplement to printed information and other promotional materials.

In the case of persons with disabilities and specific access requirements, this information is crucial for them to be able to take the decision to travel.

The idea here is that best practices under this heading should not only be about offering the relevant information, but should also involve more in-depth complementary work in order to provide updated, accurate and sufficient information on accessibility.

Consideration has also been given to initiatives showing synergies between knowledge of users' needs and the professional experience of tourism sector enterprises.

Some of the activities complementing the efforts made prior to creating information materials for tourists are:

- Initiatives carried out with the collaboration of the most representative public and private entities relating to tourism and organizations of persons with disabilities;
- Systems identifying establishments' degree of accessibility, so that they may be sorted by resources offered or by degree of accessibility;
- General promotion of the initiative so that it is integrated into the tourism promotion materials in the region or country;
- Initiatives with a well-defined working methodology and a series of awareness-raising activities to enhance obtaining information; and
- Initiatives that have been planned to last over time, so that the information does not become obsolete.

This category is currently both necessary and useful, given the general lack of information. However, it is hoped that in the future information provided to tourists with disabilities or specific access requirements will be part of the general information provided to tourists, so that it will also be integrated in the most widely used search engines.

Case study:***The Accessible Road, Kéroul (Canada)*****Description**

The Accessible Road is a travel guide designed to promote accessible tourism in Quebec. This guide provides information on trips and getaways for travellers with disabilities, including cultural and tourist attractions, accommodation, restaurants, transportation services, tourist information offices, and travel advice. All the places it includes are accessible, and the staff are certified under the Kéroul training programme designed to ensure that their services meet the travellers' needs.

Entity

Kéroul is a non-profit organization whose mission is to make tourism and culture accessible to persons with disabilities and specific access requirements. To achieve its goals, Kéroul participates actively in different promotional, research and training activities.

Since 1991, working in collaboration with Tourisme Québec, Kéroul has been awarding the "Mention Kéroul" distinction, recognizing private and public tourism and cultural initiatives that improve accessibility. In the field of research, two studies were carried out, in 2001 and 2010, on the behaviours and attitudes of tourists with disabilities in the province of Quebec.

Kéroul also provides training in hospitality and customer service for front-line professional tourism staff working directly with customers. This training is certified by the provincial labour integration body, Emploi Québec, and the Quebec Human Resources Council. The course, called "Welcoming Ways", has several modules, adapted to the professional profiles of the tourism sector.

Lastly, *The Accessible Road* guide provides accessible tourist information with the aim of raising awareness in the tourism industry and urging the sector to adapt its infrastructure to respond to the needs of this market.

Other services offered by Kéroul to tourism service providers include consultations, evaluations and certifications on the accessibility of tourism establishments. Once an establishment has

complied with all of Kéroul's accessibility criteria, it is published and promoted in the guide and so benefits from the enhanced visibility.

Background

One of the major barriers affecting people with disabilities when taking the decision to travel is obtaining information on accommodation, restaurants and the activities associated with that destination. Making this information available is a big challenge. In 1998, Kéroul developed the idea of this website as a way of providing clear and useful information about accessible establishments.

The Accessible Road project, accordingly, was carried out in order to achieve the goals of fostering an environment where every single person may travel comfortably and safely while being independent and self-sufficient, and increasing the demand for accessible tourism sites, and their revenues as a result.

This project was carried out with the collaboration of other entities such as: Tourisme Québec, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, and Quebec's regional tourism associations.

Activities

The Accessible Road was consolidated in 2006 with a 28-page tourist brochure available at tourist welcome centres and at the websites www.keroul.qc.ca and www.theaccessibleroad.com. The subsequent online publication of the guide with a search engine made it possible to book online.

The unique characteristics of this project were recognized by UNWTO, which granted it the 2011 Ulysses Award in the category of innovation in non-governmental organizations.

The participation of regional tourism associations helps to identify and reach out to companies in the sector through benefit galas or direct contributions. Moreover, promotion outside Canada is supported by Tourisme Québec and Canada Economic Development.

Kéroul also organizes media events, distributes information, publications and news releases to its partners and members, and also participates in conferences. All these initiatives are aimed at steering customers towards www.theaccessibleroad.com, an interactive website that is updated regularly.

A total of 110,000 Canadian dollars have been invested in developing, distributing and promoting this guide. This amount was financed in full by contributions from regional tourism associations, fundraising activities, sponsors, Tourisme Québec, and advertising sales.

The main obstacles and difficulties encountered while implementing the project were, firstly, the lack of fully accessible establishments in certain regions and the lack of financial support for those establishments wishing to become accessible. Another factor affecting implementation was the lack of figures proving the advantages of being accessible. A further future challenge is ensuring that the product is financed in each subsequent edition, and continues to be offered free of charge.

Conclusions

One of the keys to this project's success is the involvement of different stakeholders, including 36 people with disabilities. The most visible outcome of the project is making knowledge of what an accessible establishment is more widespread in this sector.

In order to develop and promote a tool like *The Accessible Road*, it is crucial to take into account the following:

- Involve local tourism authorities;
- Improve the economic advantages of offering services to persons with specific access requirements;
- Obtain funding from sponsors and governmental institutions;
- Ensure the evaluation of establishments by qualified staff;
- Be creative; and
- Carry out continuous promotion and marketing.

Given the project's success, the future developments have been defined in line with the following goals: maintain the project over time, build more information and resources into it, involve other sectors (such as the restaurant industry), use external funding, and extend the initiative to other regions to promote "destinations for all".

This product may be appropriate for any region with a minimum number of accessible establishments, willing to attract and serve customers with limitations, and respond to the ageing of the population.

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Useful links:

Kéroul website: www.keroul.qc.ca

The Accessible Road guide website: www.theaccessibleroad.com

"Mention Kéroul" award website: www.keroul.qc.ca/en/awards/mention-keroul/

Best practice 1:
Sydney for All, Destination New South Wales (Australia)



Sydney for All is a website that offers information on accessibility conditions in Sydney for visitors with disabilities, based on expert validations and recommendations on tourism activities for visitors.

This website stemmed from a research project on the accessibility of tourism destinations, which commenced in 2007 through an Industry Reference Group (IRG) made up of the principal authorities of Sydney City Council and the city's main leisure and tourism associations. The project sought to provide a better understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities and establish accessible information systems to address their needs.

The website currently belongs to Destination New South Wales. Its primary innovation has been to highlight the fact that everyone should and can experience a tourism destination. It has also shown that for persons with disabilities to participate in activities, they need accurate information tailored to their specific needs. The tourism industry has also been advised on how to offer its information in the most accessible manner possible with the resulting increased the rate of participation of persons with disabilities and a series of social, cultural and community benefits.

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Useful links:

Sydney for All website: www.sydneyforall.com

Best practice 2:
All In guide, Flanders Tourism Office (Belgium)

VISITFLANDERS

The *All in* guide is an initiative of the Action Plan for Accessible Trips, providing information on accessible accommodation in Flanders and Brussels in a brochure that has been published since 2008.



Flanders Tourism is a governmental institution, whose main mission is promoting and marketing Flanders as a tourism destination within Belgium and abroad, and developing tourism products. For more than a decade it has awarded grants to improve the accessibility of tourism services.

The reliability of the information published in the *All in* guide is linked to compliance with legislation and the creation of an accessibility distinction recognising achievement of tourism for all.

The *All in: Accessible holiday accommodations in Flanders and Brussels* guide offers information about establishments using three levels of distinction, in addition to detailed information on each establishment. The guide is available in print and online, and the 2013 edition was expanded with the inclusion of French, English and Dutch.

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Useful links:

Flanders Tourism website: www.visitflanders.com
Accessibility information service: www.accessinfo.be
Publication *All In*, 2013
www.accessinfo.be/fileadmin/bestanden/docs/Engels_logies.pdf

Chapter 9

Activities

One of the main reasons for travelling to any destination is to enjoy the activities offered therein.

Many initiatives could be included in the category of activities. These range from outdoor activities, including natural areas, beaches, guided tours, zoos, amusement parks, and sports activities, to indoor sites such as museums, monuments, planetariums, sports stadiums, conference halls, concerts, religious sites, palaces and other cultural heritage sites.

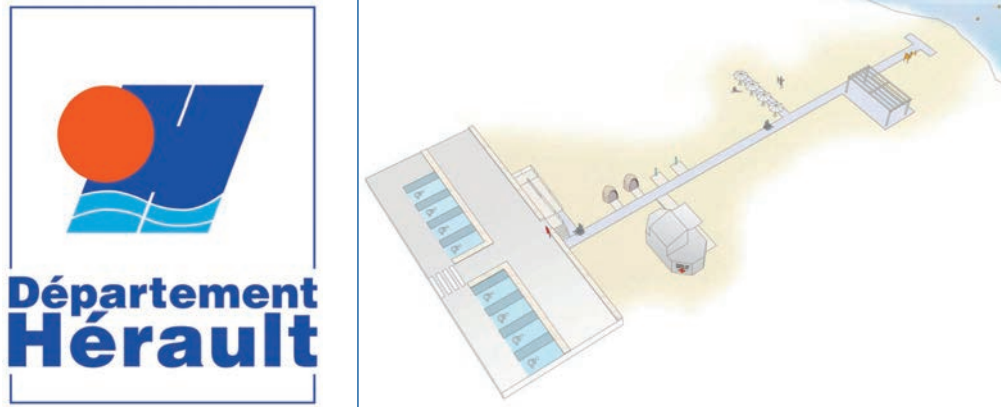
Disability is not a barrier for feeling the sand under your feet, enjoying the peace and quiet of parks, and getting to know new cultures through exhibitions or monuments. That means any person's participation in this kind of activities is solely dependent on its degree of accessibility.

When considering accessibility in this type of activities, a management methodology must be devised to make it possible for persons with disabilities to not only access sites, but also to interact and enjoy the content in a comfortable and dignified manner and under the same conditions as other people.

Best practices at beaches, museums, parks or any other tourism-related activity must include specific elements enabling access to the content of the activity itself, both for people with physical disabilities and for people with sensory and cognitive disabilities.

This has been the major challenge facing cultural institutions in recent years. Once the vision of architectural barriers has been overcome, activity management has to work on a way to overcome sensory, cognitive and attitudinal barriers.

There are currently different methods to achieve this goal and enable activities to be enjoyed by people in the most independent, self-sufficient way possible. All of them must include accessibility elements at all stages, including planning, promotion, user registration, and information about facilities, and personal customer service for users before, during and after the visit.

Case study:***La mer ouverte à tous*, Hérault General Council (France)****Description**

La mer ouverte à tous [An open sea for all] is an initiative of the Hérault General Council in France, which has been running for 15 years now. Its goal is to make the beaches of this French Department on the Mediterranean coast fully accessible with a system that integrates solutions comprehensively, from the external perimeter, access to the services area and to the beach itself, the provision of specialized staff, and the possibility of bathing as independently as possible, whatever the person's disability.

Entity

The Hérault General Council is the entity responsible for launching this initiative in southeast France, together with Hérault Tourisme and the Hérault Department Tourism Development Agency.

This initiative is also promoted through the brands "Tourisme & Handicap" and "Destination pour tous" [Destination for all].

Background

La mer ouverte à tous [An open sea for all] began in 1999 with the aim of encouraging coastal communities to improve accessibility to their beaches. At first, work was done at three beaches thanks to the technical and financial support received. The process steadily increased, and there are now 48 accessible facilities.

The initiative is based on public-private collaboration involving the coastal towns' technical services, associations of persons with disabilities, municipal tourism offices, and organizations associated with Hérault Tourisme and the Regional Observatory on Disability.

Moreover, financial support is also provided by Hérault General Council, the Languedoc-Roussillon Region, representatives of regional tourism, and the ERDF European funds.

The difficulties initially encountered when implementing the project were the lack of knowledge about disability and the lack of coordination between towns and their accessibility policies.

However, *La mer ouverte à tous* has succeeded in achieving greater efficiency throughout the development of beach activities for all four types of disability, and compliance with the legislation in France, Act of 11 February 2005.¹

Activities

The methodology developed includes measuring levels of accessibility, monitoring financial assistance, planning a broader development framework for beaches in the future, technical support for municipalities, mainstreaming accessibility, and publicising the efforts made by municipalities.

Work was carried out with a group of people with different types of disabilities and the participation of more than 75 associations through the Departmental Liaison Committee for persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

The methodology used in the project coordinates accessibility to beaches in different ways:

- Access to the beach from the town centre, with particular attention to signage, public transport and parking;
- Dimensioning of the environment, taking into account the peripheral pedestrian traffic around beaches and access to adapted walkways;
- Adoption of adapted available services, such as toilets, showers and changing rooms, lifeguard posts and shaded areas, as well as assistance services for bathing and safety;
- Use of an *audioplage* system, enabling persons with visual impairments to swim freely, independently and safely. This system was invented by the “Cap Horizon” association and is manufactured by Urtech. A total of 45 accesses to beaches are equipped with 3 *audioplage* systems; and
- Evaluation of the degree of accessibility by an evaluation team approved by the “Tourisme & Handicap” Association. In 2010, 45 accesses were evaluated, and another 7 accesses were evaluated in 2012; quality controls were conducted using the “mystery shopper” technique.

The ultimate goal is to foster independence and self-sufficiency and comfortable use for the greatest possible number of tourists with or without disabilities.

The Hérault General Council’s coordination of the project makes it possible to distribute financial and technical resources through administrative procedures in town councils and associations of local authorities. This enables long-term savings on investments in wholesale purchasing. This coordination also makes it possible to align coastal accessibility with accessibility standards that meet the requirements for European funding.

¹ Act on equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of persons with disabilities.

One of the most noteworthy projects has been the creation of a multi-activity beach in Villeneuve. It was carried out by the “Roule Nature” association and the city of Villeneuve, with the sponsorship of the Hérault General Council. It offers innovative sailing activities for people with and without disabilities.

Conclusions

The most innovative component of this initiative is the inclusion of the concept of an accessibility chain from the very start of the route, including transport, parking and services.

One advantage of this initiative is that it offers the possibility of participating in the project through the signing of a contract that guarantees full investment in the project and quality controls. This contract also promotes communication-related activities (brochures, websites, smartphone apps). Therefore, the process created is applicable to all coasts.

One of the fundamental measures is to have an evaluation system. An audit firm made a diagnosis of the coasts in Hérault department for summer 2012. This work helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing facilities and kick off a thought process on possible improvements through a multiyear work programme.

The beaches and coastal towns that have joined the initiative benefit from advice on the procedure to be followed and an evaluation system to monitor the progress of implementing accessibility, in order to be awarded or to keep the label “Tourisme & Handicap”.

In addition to adapting the beaches, the project publicizes accessibility through the creation of communication and promotion tools with the slogan “An open sea for all”, which include the provision of information and the publication of seasonal offers through the tourism offices.

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Useful links:

Hérault tourism website: www.herault.fr

Accessibility information service: www.herault.fr/tourisme/tourisme-handicap

Best practice 1: Iguazú National Park, Puerto Iguazú (Argentina)



Iguazú National Park was created in 1934, and fifty years later it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The National Parks administration called a public tender in 1995 to provide the park with new accessible infrastructure in the 40 hectares surrounding the Iguazú Falls, following stringent ecological criteria, improving services for visitors from around the world, and at the same time preserving nature. The Iguazú Argentina® company was awarded this tender.

In the specific area of accessibility, different actions have been carried out involving the walkways, the interpretation centre, and the associated shops, restaurants and accommodations, with the advice of people with disabilities and including accessibility as an integral part of the general management of the park.

The park's social and economic success story is now a national and international reference through its advisory and capacity-building activities offered free of charge for other municipalities in the Misiones province as well as in other provinces. The Iguazú Argentina company participates in talks, seminars and conferences both in Argentina and abroad.

Information provided by:

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Useful links:

Iguazú website: www.iguazuargentina.com
Accessibility information service: www.iguazuargentina.com/accessibility/

Best practice 2:
Accessible boat trips in the Vätterns archipelago,
Askersunds Skärgårdstrafik (Sweden)



The Wettervik company offers cruises in the northern Vätterns archipelago for persons with disabilities. Askersunds Skärgårdstrafik Ltd was responsible for renovating the fleet in 2003.

This is an outstanding example of public-private collaboration to achieve accessibility. The Askersund municipality has adapted part of the public urban environment, such as the boardwalk, the fishing docks and a pier adapted for swimming.

The work on adapting the fleet of boats included installing a wheelchair lift, induction loops, an adapted toilet, and a design to make more space for tables in the lounge in an initially challenging infrastructure. The Askersund municipality also built a wheelchair-accessible boardwalk in Grönön.

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The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. UNWTO's membership includes 157 Member States, 6 Associate Members, 2 permanent observers and 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

The ONCE Foundation's main objectives are training and labor inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as the attainment of universal accessibility by promoting accessible environments, products and services. We work towards the removal of barriers in the spheres of culture, leisure and tourism, and undertake awareness-raising actions through publications and organization of international conferences on Tourism for All.

The European Network For Accessible Tourism – ENAT, is a non-profit organization which gathers organizations and individuals from the private, public and non-governmental sectors. Our mission is to make European tourism destinations, products and services accessible to all travelers, while promoting inclusive and accessible tourism worldwide.



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