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Tourism Access and Inclusion: Best Practice Guidelines for Tourism MSMEs in APEC

APEC Tourism Working Group

April 2022

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APEC Digital Workshop Series Report: Online event, September and November 2021
Accompanying resources available at www.apec.accessibletourism.academy

Contents

Executive summary

This is an APEC Tourism Working Group self-funded project (TWG 05 2020S), proposed by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and co-sponsored by Malaysia and Peru. This project has produced guidelines and a suite of online resources for tourism MSMEs across the region to provide better service to tourists with access needs, including those living with disability. These outputs aim to help grow the market for tourism MSMEs and provide tourists with access needs, including disabled travellers, with greater choice and control in their travel planning and purchase decisions.

The guidelines and the online resources are complementary. While the guidelines replicate some of the information that is covered in the presentations, as well as pointing to many other third-party online resources from across the globe, the panellists and presenters are thought leaders in the field of inclusive tourism, many with rich lived experience of both disability and travel and tourism. The reader of these guidelines is therefore strongly encouraged to click on the links that will take them to different sessions. The many quotations used throughout this document are taken directly from the online resources, and give only a taste of the presenters' knowledge, experience and wisdom.

Approximately one billion people – 15% of the world's population – experience some form of disability. Although Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities specifically recognises the rights of persons with disability to 'enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and *tourism services*, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance', change has come slowly. This is despite the efforts of several organisations both within and outside APEC working expressly to make tourism services more accessible to people with disabilities since the 1970s. One of these organisations, Kéroul, was commissioned by the APEC Tourism Working Group to produce 'Best Practices in Tourism Accessibility for Travellers with Restricted Physical Ability' in 2003, which the current chairperson of Kéroul, Isabelle Ducharme, refers to on Day 3[1] of this workshop series.

Over the past decade, progressive destination management organisations in Europe – notably, in Germany, England, Spain and Belgium – have invested resources into developing accessible tourism experiences and information portals to allow people with access needs to plan their trips. These examples of best practice in terms of policymaking, destination marketing, support for businesses to become more accessible and provision of access information have much from which APEC economies can learn at the macro level.

A major milestone was reached in 2016, when the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) dedicated World Tourism Day to 'Promoting Universal Accessibility', with the then UNWTO Secretary-General saying that, 'Accessibility for all should be at the center of tourism policies and business strategies not only as a human right, but also as a great market opportunity.' The then UN Secretary-General underscored the message that, 'Accessibility is both an important market opportunity and central to responsible and sustainable tourism policies and business development strategies. I encourage policymakers, destination planners and companies working with people with special needs to work together to remove all barriers, mental and physical, to travel.' The subsequent recognition of the importance of accessible or inclusive tourism among tourism-related non-government organisations (NGOs), such as the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the Pacific Asia Tourism Association (PATA) and the International Air Travel Association (IATA), has been noticeable.

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[1] *Day 3 The Role of NGOs in Accessible Tourism: APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/8iqzqhmjeyg>

The culmination of this increased interest has been the publication of ISO 21902:2021, *Tourism and related services – Accessible tourism for all – Requirements and recommendations*, by the International Organization for Standardization and the dedication of World Tourism Day 2021 to Tourism for Inclusive Growth by the UNWTO. It has also been marked by the release of two sets of seminal guidelines: the WTTC's 'Inclusive and Accessible Travel Guidelines', and the *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide*, whose first issue examines the sociocultural impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities. We hear from the organisations that released these guidelines (and contributors to the drafting of the new ISO) on Day 1, and their salient points are summarised below.

While 'accessible tourism' has become the most commonly used term, 'inclusive tourism' has been an alternative term since at least 2006, when the first history of the field was written. Both terms are used interchangeably throughout this document. However, 'inclusive' is increasingly gaining favour as it de-emphasises physical accessibility in the built environment (ie compliance with building codes and standards) and instead highlights the need for the tourism industry to create products for the broadest possible range of persons operating under the broadest possible range of conditions – a 'whole-of-life approach' that aligns with broader universal design principles.

Tourism professionals are increasingly realising that inclusive tourism offers an economic opportunity by tapping into a market that is neither niche nor small. Moreover, the recovering tourism industry cannot afford to neglect a market segment made up of people with disabilities and an ageing but affluent demographic. On Day 1 of this workshop series, we hear from the authors of three of the most significant studies of the size of the inclusive travel market: the Open Doors Organization (USA), Tourism Research Australia and VisitEngland. These studies reveal not only the surprising size of the market segment, but also its diversity, characteristics and behaviour. These are just a few headline figures from a more extended introduction to the studies that follows in this document:

- In 2018 in the USA, 27 million travellers with disabilities took 81 million trips and spent US$58.7 billion – up from US$34.6 billion in 2015
- 59% of adults with disabilities in the USA took an overnight trip, amounting to 23 million travellers taking 68.7 million hotel-based trips, spending on average US$100 per night on accommodation
- Annual expenditure by tourists with a disability (*excluding* overseas visitors) in Australia is estimated at A$3.2 billion (US$2.3 billion). Using a multiplier effect of 2.5 to account for members of the travel party, the true value of the sector is approximately A$8 billion (US$5.8 billion).
- In 2018, the total expenditure generated by those with an impairment and their travelling companions in the UK was estimated to be £15.3 billion (US$20.8 billion)
- Day visitor spending by this group was £11.6 billion (US$15.8 billion) in 2018.
- This group was responsible for 2% of all inbound trips and expenditure, and 20% of day visits and expenditure.

The second part of these guidelines gives practical guidance to micro, small and medium-sized businesses to assist them to provide better service to tourists with access needs, including those living with disability.

Importantly, given the very broad range of access needs, no business will ever be 'fully accessible', and should not advertise itself as such. It's also important not to make assumptions about who may or may not be able to use facilities: people should be able to decide for themselves whether or not a business will be able to accommodate their needs if sufficient access information is available via websites or product brochures. Simply by undertaking an informed audit of existing facilities and making this information available to potential customers, businesses can become more accessible and

expand their customer base with little or no capital investment. We introduce a number of organisations and third-party online resources – transnational, within APEC and outside APEC – that explain and can assist in this endeavour.

Primarily, this requires the creation of a detailed access guide that lets visitors know what access will be like when they visit somewhere. Once created, it will answer many of the questions that people with access needs have if they want to visit an establishment, and staff can refer to it so they can respond accurately and consistently to requests for information regarding accessibility. An access guide is the best marketing tool to promote services to the inclusive tourism market. Several accessibility checklists are highlighted that will assist in creating an access guide. There are also private companies operating in some economies that will create an access guide for a fee. Enterprises that organise or host meetings or events are pointed to third-party online resources that will assist them to make them more accessible.

A recurring theme throughout the webinar series is the importance of accurate, up-to-date information, particularly on the Internet. This leads to the important consideration of website accessibility. A recent UK survey found that almost 70% of people with access needs will click away from an inaccessible site, while the Bureau of Internet Accessibility estimates that brands are losing billions of dollars by not being digitally accessible. We present a few of the more important third-party online resources to assist with improving the accessibility of websites.

To show how this translates into practice, we present a few real-world examples from a broad range of tourism-related service providers: an amusement park, an NGO, two regional park authorities, a small and a medium-sized accommodation provider, a mid-size hotel chain, a major art gallery, a major sporting event and even a mid-size city. These are examples of best practice, not only in terms of the accommodations and facilities they offer, but also in terms of the access information that is prominently available on their websites.

Finally, looking at the bigger picture – which may be of particular interest to policymakers and destination management organisations – we present some best-practice examples of information portals at the destination level. These information portals provide broad-ranging and rich access information covering everything from transport and accommodation to tourist attractions and itineraries. Many include searchable databases. Some of these examples are taken from APEC economies, but with Europe in the vanguard of inclusive tourism, there is much to learn from destination management organisations that have devoted resources to the promotion of inclusive tourism for several years. Indeed, Tur4All, which originated on the Iberian Peninsula, has issued an open invitation for other economies to join its scheme, which APEC member Peru has already taken up.

> *What we mean by accessible tourism is tourism experiences that can be enjoyed by everyone – people with physical, sensory and cognitive impairments, but also others with a range of different accessibility requirements.*
>
> *Ross Calladine, VisitEngland*

I Context

Introduction

Approximately one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, with prevalence higher in developing economies.[2] In the APEC region, disability prevalence is slightly higher than the global average, at around 16.7%.[3]

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was the first UN human rights treaty of the 21st century, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 December 2006 to protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities. As of January 2022, it had 164 signatories and 184 parties. Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport – 'recognises the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and … enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.' When the UN published the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016, 'disability' is specifically mentioned 11 times, and is embedded throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 11 has a particular relevance to tourism: 'Creating accessible cities and water resources, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, providing universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces.' While these may seem reasonable aspirations, improvements in the accessibility of tourism products and services to people with disabilities have come slowly. This is despite accessible tourism having been a field of both academic research and advocacy for more than 40 years.

Background

Following on the efforts of some pioneering travel agents providing services to people with disabilities, the Society for the Advancement of Handicapped Travel (SATH; now Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality) was founded in 1976 in the USA as a nonprofit educational organisation, with its mission to convince a highly sceptical travel industry that accessible travel was not only the right thing to do morally, but also commercially. Although SATH has not been very active in recent years, its mission continues and is a core message in this workshop series.

Meanwhile, in Canada, Kéroul – whose chairperson Isabelle Ducharme appears in the third workshop[4] – has strived since 1979 to make tourism and culture more accessible to persons with limited physical ability. In 2003, Kéroul published the APEC Tourism Working Group report, 'Best Practices in Tourism Accessibility for Travellers with Restricted Physical Ability'. This organisation also mounted the first global accessible tourism conference, the Destinations for All World Summit in 2014, several delegates to which are also presenting at this workshop series. A second Destinations for All World Summit was held in Brussels in 2018.

Another pioneer, the Open Doors Organization, published a groundbreaking study into the spending of travellers with disabilities in the US market in 2002, which was repeated in 2005, 2015 and 2020, the results of which are presented on Day 1[5] of this workshop series by its founder and executive director, Eric Lipp.

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[2] The World Bank, 2020: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability#1

[3] 'Advancing employment in APEC for persons with disabilities', Nathan Consulting, December 2018

[4] *Day 3 The Role of NGOs in Accessible Tourism: APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/8iqzqhmjeyg>

[5] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=3891>

Across the Atlantic, in 1979 the Holiday Care Service was established to provide information services to consumers with accessibility needs. Its successor organisation, Tourism for All UK, established in 2004, continues that mission and supports the tourism industry to deliver tourism experiences that can be enjoyed by everyone, as well as working with policymakers to ensure that tourism and travel policies take full account of relevant needs, and are coherent and coordinated. Chris Veitch, who delivers the opening keynote[6] to this workshop series, was this organisation's vice chair.

Scott Rains is widely regarded as a pioneer of inclusive tourism, developing the concept in the early years of the 21st century as an extension of the concept of Universal Design. He was a consultant to South African tourism officials in the run-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Although he passed away in 2016, RollingRains.com, remains a rich and useful resource, with thought-provoking articles, case studies and travelogues.

Probably the world's leading NGO working in accessible tourism is the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), founded in 2006 by nine sponsoring organisations in six EU member states, including the venerable Spanish Once Foundation, which is itself a prime mover in the accessible tourism field. Although based in Europe, with projects funded largely by the European Commission, ENAT has members from all over the world. Its managing director, Ivor Ambrose, appears in both Days 1[7] and 3[8] of this workshop series. Apart from many project-based initiatives, ENAT maintains Pantou, a large, worldwide accessible tourism directory of accessible tourism service providers, open to any organisation that wishes to register its accessibility information.

Over the past decade or so, progressive destination management organisations – particularly VisitEngland, Visit Flanders, the German National Tourist Board, Portugal and Catalonia – have invested significant resources into developing tourism experiences and information portals to enable people with access needs to plan their trips more easily. Their marketing strategies – and, importantly, choice of imagery – are specifically targeting both a disabled and an ageing demographic. VisitEngland has also developed a suite of resources to assist tourism service providers to learn more about the accessible tourism market and how to cater better to tourists with access needs. It has also conducted two seminal 'Purple Pound' studies into the size and diversity of the accessible tourism market, which its head of business development, Ross Calladine, presents on Day 1[9] of this workshop series.

The UNWTO dedicated World Tourism Day in 2016 to 'Promoting Universal Accessibility'. The then UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, delivered the following message:

> Everyone has the right to access leisure and tourism services on an equal basis. Yet 1 billion people around the world living with disability, along with young children, seniors and persons with other access requirements, still face obstacles in accessing fundamentals of travel such as clear and reliable information, efficient transportation and public services, and a physical environment that is easy to navigate. Even with modern technologies, those with visual, hearing, mobility or cognitive impairments are being left behind in many tourism destinations.

> Accessibility is both an important market opportunity and central to responsible and sustainable tourism policies and business development strategies. I encourage policymakers, destination planners and companies working with people with special needs to work together to remove all barriers, mental and physical, to travel. On this World Tourism Day, let us

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[6] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ldQ7PYKN4E&t=770s>

[7] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=5667>

[8] *Day 3.3 The Role of NGOs in Accessible Tourism: APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/8iqzqhmjeyg>

[9] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=3162>

recognize that all people can and should be able to participate in tourism and enjoy unforgettable travel experiences.

The then UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, added:

> 15% of the world's population is estimated to live with some form of disability. That is 1 billion people around the world who may be unable to enjoy the privilege of knowing other cultures, experience nature at its fullest and experience the thrill of embarking on a journey to explore new sights.

> Accessibility for all should be at the center of tourism policies and business strategies not only as a human right, but also as a great market opportunity.

> With the world's population ageing, all of us will benefit sooner or later from universal accessibility in tourism.

> As we celebrate World Tourism Day, let us recall that all of the world's citizens have the right to experience the incredible diversity this planet has to offer.

> We thus urge all countries and destinations, as well as the industry, to promote accessibility for all in the physical environment, in transport systems, in public facilities and services and in information and communications channels.

These messages are as relevant today as they were five years ago. These calls to action have resulted in greatly increased interest in accessible tourism, with mainstream travel-related global NGOs such as the WTTC, PATA, IATA and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) all ensuring it is on the agenda for their regional and global summits. John Sage is the principal author of the WTTC's 'Inclusive and Accessible Travel Guidelines', published in May 2021, and introduces them on Day 1[10] of this workshop series.

Spearheaded by the UNWTO with participation from organisations such as Kéroul, ENAT and ONCE, the International Organization for Standardization published ISO 21902:2021, *Tourism and related services – Accessible tourism for all – Requirements and recommendations*. This document establishes requirements and provides guidelines for 'accessible tourism for all' with the aim of ensuring equal access and enjoyment of tourism by the widest range of people of all ages and abilities. It provides information on the key aspects of policymaking, strategy, infrastructure, products and services and is addressed to all stakeholders involved in the tourism supply chain, whether from the public or private sector. It applies at local, regional, national and international levels. Igor Stefanovic, Technical Coordinator in the UNWTO Ethics, Culture and Social Responsibility Department introduces this ISO and the 2020 *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide*, the first issue of which examines the social cultural impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities, on Day 1[11] of this workshop series.

It's significant that the UNWTO dedicated World Tourism Day on 27 September 2021 to inclusivity in tourism.

> The COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive social and economic impact. Both developed and developing economies have been hit. And marginalized groups and the most vulnerable have been hit hardest of all. The restart of tourism will help kickstart recovery and growth. It is essential that the benefits this will bring are enjoyed widely and fairly.

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[10] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=6529>

[11] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=5667>

UNWTO has therefore designated World Tourism Day 2021 as a day to focus on Tourism for Inclusive Growth. This is an opportunity to look beyond tourism statistics and acknowledge that, behind every number, there is a person. UNWTO invites its Member States, as well as non-members, sister UN agencies, businesses and individuals to celebrate tourism's unique ability to ensure that nobody is left behind as the world begins to open up again and look to the future.[12]

Amadeus

Amadeus is one of the top ten travel technology companies in the world, providing search, pricing, booking, ticketing and other processing services to travel providers and travel agencies. It services customers including airlines, hotels, tour operators, insurers, car rental and railway companies, ferry and cruise lines, travel agencies and individual travellers. In 2017, Amadeus produced one of the most comprehensive studies on accessibility in the travel industry ever conducted, interviewing more than 800 travellers and experts about travellers' accessibility needs and experiences in Europe, Asia and the USA. 'Voyage of Discovery. Working towards Inclusive and Accessible Travel for All' was commissioned to better understand the needs of travellers with accessibility needs, and to identify a framework for action to the travel industry. It offers insights into the pre-travel stage (planning), what happens in transit and what happens in destination, providing a comprehensive framework for how the travel industry can think more strategically about accessibility.

The study identifies four key elements to make travel more accessible:

- Effective communication; the study highlights the lack of relevant content on accessibility and inaccessibility of information as major barriers to travel for people with access needs.
- Good customer service is crucial; customer service teams should be trained in all aspects of accessibility and have clear guidelines on how to serve customers with different needs.
- Standardised content and services are essential, so the development of internationally recognised standards for accessible travel and tourism should be a priority. (The subsequent development and release of ISO 21902:2021 goes a long way to answering this need.
- A personalised travel experience is a key component of accessible travel; each part of the travel process should be tailored to the individual and their specific needs.

Its premise is that:

> Accessibility offers the travel industry a *golden opportunity*: to do the right thing, as well as driving increased revenue. The combination of social imperative and economic opportunity provides a unique incentive to build a more accessible travel industry.

Its conclusions are:

> Accessibility has the potential to create a lot of good, and a lot of value in travel. Realising the potential means addressing the key challenges of content standardisation, technical standards, communication, personalisation, customer service,

CUSTOMER SERVICE

What you need is a customer service component so that the staff helps the disabled person navigate those accessibility barriers. So when I show up with my wheelchair at the front desk at the hotel, I would like them to ask, 'Hey, would you like to have a portable chair put into the roll-in shower?' I don't really want it to be my responsibility to go to the room, have to see that the chair is missing and then call and have it delivered.

John Sage

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[12] https://www.unwto.org/wtd2021

training and education outlined in this report require collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors across the global travel industry. Nothing can be achieved in isolation.

Building a truly accessible travel market requires ambition and a different way of thinking. The industry needs to move beyond seeing accessibility as solely about facilities, but instead about every step in the customer journey. It needs to step into the shoes of those with accessibility needs and truly understand what is needed to allow them to travel independently and with dignity. By doing so, it will be able to take a more holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing accessibility needs in every sphere: customer service, information, personalisation and standardisation.

Definitions and nomenclature

Although Laurel Van Horn of the Open Doors Organization cowrote the first history of inclusive tourism, ['Toward a Global History of Inclusive Travel'](#), in 2006, without doubt the world's leading academic in the field is Professor Simon Darcy, who gives the closing keynote speech.[13] He has been publishing books and articles on accessible tourism for more than 20 years and provides the following definition of accessible tourism:

> Accessible tourism enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people including those travelling with children in prams, people with disabilities and seniors.
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> Darcy, S., & Dickson, T. (2009) 'A Whole-of-Life Approach to Tourism: The Case for Accessible Tourism Experiences', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 16(1), p34.

The link between accessible tourism and universal design is important, particularly through the lens of a whole-of-life approach. Following is a definition of universal design:

> The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialised design … The intent of the universal design concept is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by more people at little or no extra cost. The universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes and abilities.

Center for Universal Design, North Carolina State University

In short, accessible tourism is the application of universal design principles by the tourism industry to create products for the broadest possible range of persons operating under the broadest possible

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So this is the point I make continuously: accessibility is no longer for disabled people, but for all of us … We should not be thinking that, 'This is not about us. It's all about them.' No, this is about us either now or sometime in the future. So we all have an interest in this.

Chris Veitch

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[13] *Day 3.4 Keynote: Simon Darcy, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021,* YouTube, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CFbNiNDAsg>

range of conditions. Importantly, this definition encompasses but does not focus on people with disability; equally importantly, reference is made to the broad range of access requirements, not just those with mobility impairments. The whole-of-life approach is the only way to capture everyone who might have access requirements, from toddlers to the temporarily incapacitated to parents with strollers to seniors who are ageing into disability – none of whom might regard themselves as disabled.

The term 'accessible tourism' is in widespread use. It has become an area of study to which researchers can contribute, and an area of policymaking and government funding that the above-mentioned destination management organisations are embracing. It also identifies a market segment that can be quantified and targeted. In a world driven largely by economic rather than social principles, this has been useful to convince policymakers and the tourism industry that accessible tourism offers an economic opportunity by tapping into a market that is neither niche nor small.

While access is vital, the whole-of-life approach tells us that it is inclusion we should be striving for. By emphasizing *access*, with its reliance on legislation, the stress is immediately put on *compliance*, not *inclusion*. This is where – in both the built and online environments – 'inclusive design' has come to supersede 'accessible design' and 'barrier-free design'. Inclusive design is less logical and objective, and more emotional and subjective: it requires much higher levels of understanding and empathy. Exactly the same may be said of the difference between accessible tourism and inclusive tourism. Microsoft's definitions encapsulate the difference:

- Accessibility: the qualities that make an experience open to all
- Inclusive design: a design methodology that enables and draws on the full range of human diversity.

If this travel segment were thought of as 'inclusive tourism', it would put the focus on making sure travel experiences are able to be enjoyed by as many people as possible (inclusion) rather than on the costly business of installing elevators, ramps and accessible toilets (access). Disability – or rather a lack of functional ability – affects us all at some point in our lives. In the words of Gregg Vanderheiden, who compiled the first web accessibility guidelines, 'We all will have disabilities eventually, unless we die first.'

It is for this reason that we have chosen to use both terms – accessible/inclusive tourism – and why the title of this workshop series is 'Tourism Access and Inclusion'.

Market potential

Tourism professionals are increasingly realising that accessible/inclusive tourism offers an economic opportunity by tapping into a market that is already large and set to grow further. As the world – and tourism in particular – recovers from the ravages of COVID-19, there's a lot of talk about 'building back better', and this is particularly important for tourism. This

> *It's not only an important human rights issue … the access market is effectively a group of people that are across all market segments [and] provide a 20–25% buffer above other businesses in your region if you have a degree of universal accessibility, or accessibility just for a number of those groups.*
>
> *Simon Darcy*

was signposted by the UNWTO with its inclusive recovery guides and its dedication of World Tourism Day 2021 to inclusivity in tourism. The recovering tourism industry cannot afford to neglect a market segment made up of people with disabilities and an ageing but affluent demographic. An inclusive mindset in the tourism industry that caters to customers who have infinitely diverse desires and needs shifts the focus from creating tourism product that caters to a market segment, and instead encourages tourism service providers to cater to the entirety of the market. That's not just a sensible

business strategy, but a compelling business imperative in the post-COVID recovery phase. These are some of the key messages from Chris Veitch in his opening keynote.[14]

It's a misconception that people with a disability don't travel. In fact, their travel aspirations are very similar to the general population and although it's true that the unemployment rate for people with a disability is higher than that for the general population, many people with disability have jobs and disposable income.[15] In fact, according to Tourism Research Australia's National Visitor Survey in 2017, 84% of travellers with a disability took an overnight trip, with more people saying they would like to travel if products or technologies existed to support them. What's more, Carolyn Childs assessment that 'accessible tourists stay longer, spend more and typically travel in larger groups' is fully supported by the VisitEngland studies.

What the following studies have also underlined is the 'multiplier effect' – many people, especially those with a disability, don't travel alone – which means that if a business cannot cater for a person with a disability, they actually lose the business of, on average, two to four people in total.

The following studies are introduced by their authors on Day 1.[16] While the raw statistics are reproduced below, the presentations themselves contain a lot more information as well as insights into the breakdown and behaviours of this market segment.

VisitEngland

A number of studies, in particular those by VisitEngland presented in the first workshop by Ross Calladine, have shown that the value of the so-called Purple Pound is already large and, importantly, that it's growing as a proportion of the overall tourism spend.

Total spend

- The total expenditure generated by those with an impairment or those travelling within a group where a member had an impairment is estimated to be £15.3 billion (US$20.8 billion)[17]
- Inbound visitor spending by this group was £0.5 billion (US$0.7 billion) in 2018
- Domestic overnight visitor spending by this group was £3.2 billion (US$4.4 billion) in 2015
- Day visitor spending by this group was £11.6 billion (US$15.8 billion) in 2018.

Contribution to tourism – volume

Trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions made up:

- 2% of all inbound trips in 2018
- 15% of domestic overnight trips in 2015
- 20% of day visits in 2018.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

You only need perhaps one person in a group of 10 that says, 'I need this', and that group of 10 people don't necessarily go and have that meeting in that place. Or you might need 10 or 100 people or more just to say, 'We have access requirements', and you may lose thousands of people through conferences and events that are just taken elsewhere to competitors who have addressed this issue and do have the ability to serve those people with those access requirements.

Chris Veitch

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[14] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ldQ7PYKN4E&t=770s>

[15] See 'Understanding the Opportunity for Australia in Accessible Tourism', p. 11.

[16] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ldQ7PYKN4E&t=3199s>

[17] All currency conversions are as of 19/1/22.

Contribution to tourism – spend

The spend from trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions made up:

- 2.2% of all inbound trip spending in 2018
- 16% of domestic overnight trip spending in 2015
- 20% of day visit spending in 2018.

Average spend

- The average spend per inbound visit was £660 (US$898) for all trips, compared to £740 (US$1006) for trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.
- The average spend per domestic overnight trip was £191 (US$260) for all trips, compared to £210 for trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.

Average length of stay

- The average length of stay per inbound visit was 7.3 nights for all trips, compared to 11.6 nights for trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.
- The average length of stay per domestic overnight trip was 2.9 nights for all trips, compared to 3.3 nights for trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.

Age of traveller

- Those aged over 65 made up 7% of all inbound visits, compared to 39% of trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.
- Those aged over 65 made up 16% of all domestic overnight trips, compared to 35% of trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.
- Those aged over 65 made up 17% of all day visits, compared to 26% of day visits taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions.

Tourism Research Australia

The recent study for Tourism Research Australia presented by Carolyn Childs found that the accessible travel market is already larger than the much-vaunted Chinese inbound market *and* is growing more quickly. Its key findings are as follows:

LIFETIME VALUE

More than four out of five people are saying, 'I am going to come back.' So you get this customer, and once you've got them for a long, long time, they are going to be key as customers. So the dollar that you get is going to keep giving over that lifetime value of a customer…

Getting in now really positions you to capture that loyal market before other people start to do it. But as this sector gets recognized, that window is going to close.

… The opportunity to stand apart here is truly truly enormous

Carolyn Childs

If we look at developed economies, which are many of the biggest sources of inbound international markets, the estimate is by 2050 we'll all have ageing populations. Thirty-five percent of those populations will be in this older age category that we've heard is a major source of travellers who need inclusive or accessible tourism experiences.
Carolyn Childs

- 14% of the Australian population (c 3.4 million people) have need of accessible tourism experiences.
- Annual expenditure by tourists with a disability (excluding overseas visitors) in Australia is estimated at A$3.2 billion (US$2.3 billion). Using a multiplier effect of 2.5 to account for other members of the travel party, the true value of the sector is approximately A$8 billion (US$5.8 billion).
- The estimated spend by travellers with a disability in the state of Victoria was A$680 million (US$488.6 million), while the spend for the travel party (ie using the multiplier effect) was A$1.7 billion (US$1.2 billion), or 10% of the total domestic travel spend.
- The estimated spend by travellers with a disability in the state of Queensland was A$781 million (US$561 million), while that for the travel party was A$1.9 billion (US$1.4 billion), or 10% of the total domestic travel spend.

Open Doors Organization (USA)

The four studies undertaken by the Open Doors Organization since 2002, presented by Eric Lipp, show the remarkable growth in the number of trips taken and the total spend by people with disabilities in the US market. Following are the results of 2018/19 surveys:

- 27 million travellers with disabilities took 81 million trips and spent US$58.7 billion – up from US$34.6 billion in 2015
- 38% of adults with disabilities took a flight (up from 31% in 2015), which amounted to almost 15 million air travellers taking 29.6 million flights, spending US$11 million – up from US$9 million in 2015
- 59% of adults with disabilities took an overnight trip – up from 53% in 2015 – amounting to 23 million travellers taking 68.7 million hotel-based trips, spending on average US$100 per night on accommodation
- 13% of adults with disabilities took a cruise, which amounted to 5.2 million travellers taking 10.4 million trips, generating US$10.4 billion in fares, and US$3.1 billion on excursions.

In 2020, 37% (28% in 2015) of travellers with disabilities travelled outside the US in the past five years, with a median spending of US$3000, as compared with US$2500 in 2015.

It's notable from their statistics on overseas travel that relatively fewer international trips taken by people with disabilities were to economies in Asia (19%) or Central and South America as compared with North America and Europe. This represents a clear opportunity for businesses in the APEC economies.

Guidelines

The two recently released guidelines for inclusive and accessible travel by the UNWTO and WTTC will undoubtedly assist tourism MSMEs across the APEC region to grow capacity by being better able to cater to tourists with access needs, including those living with disability. This is particularly important as the tourism industry recovers from the ravages of COVID. These two important new sets of guidelines are introduced by their authors on Day 1.[18]

After COVID, I expect to see numbers of people with disabilities [travelling] going through the roof.
Eric Lipp

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[18] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=5667>

UNWTO

The headline messages to the _UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide_ are important; it's also significant that the first of four issues in this recovery guide series is dedicated to the inclusive response for persons with disabilities.

> Ensuring good accessibility is not a 'favour' to visitors with access requirements but rather a game-changer for businesses, helping them to combat the effects of COVID-19.

> All guests will be able to appreciate the accessibility and safety measures that are put in place, as our abilities vary over time, due to health conditions, ageing and many unpredictable factors.

> Destinations and companies should see travellers with disabilities, seniors and families with young children as important source markets for their businesses to thrive again.

> …

> Tourism for all brings many benefits to visitors and local communities and a better quality of life for all.

Following are the recommended policies to foster inclusivity in a post-COVID tourism era.

- Gather data on accessible tourism: quantitative data collected globally will make the business case of Tourism for All much stronger.
- Adjust accessibility policies and strategies: it's important to mainstream accessibility in marketing and training programs because customers with disabilities are not a niche market.
- Treat accessibility as a competitive advantage: designing inclusive experiences produces personalised services and accommodates the widest possible range potential visitors, ensuring economic sustainability.
- Improve customer service: training staff to cater for the variety of needs and aspirations of customers with disability will give them confidence and enable companies to adapt activities that are not fully accessible to cater to a more diverse clientele. Never make statements such as 'We are 100% accessible'.
- Provide potential clients with accurate and up-to-date information so that travellers with access needs can make informed decisions with confidence.
- Encourage feedback from users … and act upon it!
- Apply international standards which support a common understanding accessibility (ie ISO 21902:2021).
- Ensure training for front-line staff includes appropriate and up-to-date training on health, safety and precautionary measures in the COVID era.
- Ensure labour inclusion: adaptations, and measures such as teleworking will facilitate employment of people with disability, which will transform perceptions of and attitudes towards disability in an organisation and bring valuable fresh insights into the business.
- Embrace innovative technology that facilitates accessibility.
- Employ alternative formats for information, including large-print, easy reading, plain language, subtitles, audio descriptions and Braille. Translations into widely spoken languages and sign languages would be ideal.

There's low supply versus growing demand because the accessibility market is huge and its transversal, it's cross-cutting. It's not a niche market because accessibility needs are everywhere, disability happens everywhere.

Igor Stefanovic

WTTC

According to the principal 's author John Sage[19] the WTTC guidelines are 'intended for executives to be four or five pages, really high level, something that's readable that was not overly technical, that executives could take away and really understand what the needs are for people with disabilities and how businesses and destinations can succeed'. They are divided into four pillars.

Developing an inclusive and accessible system

This pillar focuses on systemic support for accessibility needs, with an emphasis on:

- ensuring access to accurate and detailed accessibility information throughout the travel cycle so travellers can decide for themselves whether products and services are suitable for them
- developing a long-term accessibility vision and short-term accessibility targets
- dedicating sufficient resources to achieve the vision
- appointing an accessibility expert and/or champion, preferably at a senior level
- offering accessible products, services and facilities to international accessibility standards where possible
- providing general disability awareness training, and specific training regarding on-site accessibility features.

Creating safe spaces

This pillar focuses on ensuring the environment is safe and free of discrimination, which can be achieved by:

- fostering a respectful and welcoming attitude towards people with disabilities
- providing clear signage/information in multiple formats to cater for different abilities (including text, Braille, photos and audio where possible)
- developing accessibility features that can be used independently
- using feedback and information from travellers with disabilities to make accessibility decisions and test accessibility features.

Designing an engaging and relevant system

This pillar emphasises the need for flexibility and adaptation, achieved through:

- engaging travellers with disabilities to co-create accessible products and services, and using their feedback to make appropriate changes
- ensuring an accessible booking process, with trained staff being able to assist in ways appropriate to customers' physical, cognitive, intellectual and sensory needs
- providing accessible communication channels to facilitate feedback for speedy resolution of accessibility issues
- building on the flexibility in services and itineraries wherever possible.

Exemplifying inclusion and accessibility

This pillar addresses *how* organisations offer inclusive and accessible travel experiences; that is, by:

- engaging with accessibility stakeholders and incorporating their feedback where appropriate
- engaging with accessibility specialists and other businesses to share knowledge
- becoming champions for accessibility within their own sector

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[19] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=6530>

- actively marketing to travellers with access needs through inclusive marketing, media and communication channels
- liaising with industry bodies and local governments to improve destinations' accessibility
- partnering with like-minded organisations.

If you don't have that collaboration, top-down and bottom-up, working in a good way, you're hardly going to succeed to make your destination and your businesses accessible. … We talk about the chain of accessibility and we talk about the value chain in tourism: you're part of the chain and if you don't perform at the right level then you're going to be the weakest link.

Ivor Ambrose

John Sage has highlighted his top seven take-outs from the guidelines.

The Sage Seven™

1. **Be Accessible** – All trip components should have minimal accessibility barriers.

2. **Show Accessible** – Clear, detailed accessibility information should be publicly available so disabled travellers can decide for themselves if their accessibility needs will be met.

3. **Talk Accessible** – Staff should be trained on how best to serve disabled customers.

4. **Lead Accessible** – The CEO should communicate an accessibility vision with near-term targets and adequate resources.

5. **Market Accessible** – Marketing to disabled travellers should be active, welcoming, and targeted.

6. **Involve Accessible** – People with disabilities should be involved in decisions about accessibility.

7. **Standardize Accessible** – Accessibility features should be standardized across products, across the industry, and across borders.

II Putting it into practice

How to make your business more accessible

The second session on Day 2[20] features a panel of tour operators working in inclusive tourism, whose experiences will assist tourism service providers to better understand how to serve and access this market. As Clair Crowley of Push Adventures says, there 'still needs to be so much work done with operators so that they understand … what is access, what is inclusion … how they can do more and how it actually has an impact on the user at the end of the day.'

Several of the key messages that come out of this session reiterate those of Chris Veitch in his opening keynote[21]: primarily, that good access is good business and catering to the inclusive tourism market is really only an extension of good customer service. Push Adventures 'work[s] with industry professionals to help them be more inclusive. So you know, it often starts with helping them identify what they currently have, where they might be, some barriers and gaps that they can improve upon and how they can literally create that welcoming environment. So once the operator understands how inclusive they are, then it gives confidence to the traveller to book that experience … And once they understand the impact of getting it right or being welcoming, it changes the game. Once they start to realize that it's not all about perfectly physically accessible environments, there is so much they can control that they can do tomorrow without spending too much money to be inclusive.' Jezza Williams agrees: 'At Making Trax, we believe that it's about customer service and we call it advanced customer care.'

> *If you don't listen to your customer, you can't understand what the customer needs. If you don't understand what the customer needs, you can't deliver excellent customer service and inclusion is all about delivering excellent customer service. So it means we need to know our customer. We need to know the different needs that are out there. In other words, let's see the customer not the disability.*
>
> *Chris Veitch*

The most important point to make is that no business is 'fully accessible': the range of access needs is so broad that even with the best will in the world and unlimited resources, not everyone can be catered for. Including the moderator, six wheelchair users were represented in Session 1, Day 2[22] and the needs of each are vastly different, and that is not to mention people with other mobility needs or travellers with hearing, vision or intellectual impairments. Following on from this, the next most important point is not to make assumptions about who may or may not be able to use facilities: simply ensuring that as much access information as possible about a business is easily available – via a website or product brochures, for example – then people can decide for themselves whether or not it will be able to accommodate their needs.

There may be further questions that potential customers need answering with regards to their access requirements, and this is where it's vital that public-facing staff are fully apprised of the facilities on

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[20] *Day 2 Panel: Bloggers, Advocates and Tour Operators, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1z4_9H5eUQ&t=3398s>

[21] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ldQ7PYKN4E&t=770s>

[22] *Day 2 Panel: Bloggers, Advocates and Tour Operators, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1z4_9H5eUQ&t=131s>

Document your accessibility, make it publicly available and you will be doing your business a service, people with disability a service, and it will get you thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of your service and product offerings for a variety of people with disability and areas you can improve on in the future.

Simon Darcy

offer and any accommodations that might be possible. Taking this approach can make a business more accessible and expand its customer base without any capital investment at all: it simply requires an informed audit of existing facilities and making information available to potential customers.

This section presents a number of resources that assist and explain how to go about this process, together with ideas and suggestions for changes that can help to make a business more accessible at little or no cost.

UNWTO

UNWTO's Accessible Tourism portal provides rich resources to assist both public and private sectors to better include accessibility into their policies and business strategies. Primary among these is the *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide, Issue 1: Persons with Disabilities* that was presented on Day 1.[23] Another essential COVID-era read is 'Reopening Tourism for Travellers with Disabilities: how to provide safety without imposing unnecessary obstacles'. Apart from high-level documents with recommendations on accessible tourism and accessible information on tourism, there are detailed manuals developed in a partnership between UNWTO, Fundación Once (Spain's influential and foremost disabled people's organisation), the Spanish ACS Foundation and ENAT to assist tourism stakeholders to improve the accessibility of tourism destinations, facilities and services. These cover:

- public–private partnerships and good practices
- definitions and context
- accessibility chain and recommendations
- principal intervention areas
- indicators for assessing accessibility in tourism
- good practices of accessible tourism for all
- accessible tourism for all: an opportunity within our reach

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* is a landmark civil rights law passed in the USA in 1990 that prohibits discrimination based on disability. The ADA National Network gives information, guidance and training on the ADA through its website as well as 10 regional centres around the USA. Importantly, the Network offers training at all levels on a broad range of topics, including accessible information technology, accessible architectural design, employment, emergency preparedness and hospitality. On this page, is a long list of training resources – including webinars, web courses, workshops, conferences and symposia – as well as a list of further resources, publications and successful case

Training … is one of the things that gives the biggest return on investment. If you can put this information into people's minds and get them to start thinking about it, you're going to have a great multiplier effect there without making large investments in infrastructure.

Ivor Ambrose

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[23] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=5925>

studies. The 2.5-hour, self-paced web course, 'At Your Service: Welcoming Customers with Disabilities', is particularly relevant to tourism service providers and costs just US$5.

Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES)

GAATES is a leading international organisation dedicated to promoting accessibility and universal design for the built, social and virtual environments, in line with the CRPD. Founded in 2007, GAATES collaborates closely with relevant UN departments. Links to resources for the built environment on its website include *The Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces* and *International Best Practices in Universal Design: a Global Review – 2007 Edition*. Links to resources for transportation range from the macro level for policymakers ('Benchmarking Accessibility in Cities') to the micro level ('Accessible Transportation Information – Small Buses and Tiedowns'). Its tourism-related resources are listed and described elsewhere in this document.

GAATES' experts and certified consultants, based in numerous economies around the world (including representatives in APEC economies Canada, Chile, Mexico, the Philippines and the Russian Federation), can assist with accessibility audits and assessments, guidelines and policy development, and training and education.

Kéroul (Canada)

This nonprofit organisation, referred to above, has been working since 1979 to make tourism and culture more accessible to persons with limited physical ability, and is a key accessibility consultant for Tourisme Québec. This organisation offers a suite of services to tourism-related businesses to assist them to better serve people with access needs. There are further tools and resources available on its French-language website, but these should soon be available in English as well.

Evaluation and certification

Kéroul offers the only certification recognised by Tourisme Québec. An expert evaluation assesses the accessibility of establishments/services and, once certified, a business will be eligible to be included on the Tourisme Québec website, on the Québec for All website, as well as in Kéroul's searchable web database of accessible facilities and in the organisation's quarterly magazine.

Advisory service

Once an accessibility expert has visited a business, if barriers have been identified, Kéroul will provide a report containing recommendations to improve its accessibility and assist it in its journey to become accessible.

Tourism Establishment Accessibility Program

Grants of up to C$100,000 (US$79,500) are available to tourism businesses in a programme administered by Kéroul that runs to 2022 to assist them to improve their infrastructure in order to earn Kéroul's accessible rating. Other deductions and subsidies may also be available; visit this French-language page for more details.

Destinations for All

'Destinations for All' refers to a town, a city or a delineated area that offers a variety of quality services for people with disabilities. Following an evaluation that determines whether people with disability are able to sleep, eat, shop, visit attractions and accomplish daily activities in a safe environment without obstacles and in a welcoming environment, a star rating is given by Kéroul and assistance can be provided to those who wish to obtain the top ratings.

Training programmes

The Welcoming Ways disability awareness training program is designed specifically for front-line, customer facing employees. The training is adapted according to the work environment of the employees and is also delivered in colleges and universities to students who will be working in the

If one destination or one business is getting more customers because they're more accessible, then it's going to make other ones jealous and that probably the best reason, or the best trigger, to get people to act. They're going to see that others are successful if they follow the standard and if they prove that it makes a difference to the bottom line.

Ivor Ambrose

tourism field. There is a version specifically designed for travel agents and tour operators. All programs are available either in person or online.

Speakers can be engaged either in person or virtually to deliver talks on many subjects related to tourism accessibility and inclusion, including:

- Tourists with limited mobility: a growing market

- Quebec tourism for all: a matter of hospitality and accessibility

- Accessible hotels: standards and best practices

- Accessible events: standards and good practices

- Outdoors for everyone: inspiring practices and adapted equipment.

Australian Tourism Industry Council Accessibility Self-Assessment Module

The Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC) has recently developed an accessibility self-assessment module that aims to help businesses evaluate how inclusive their offerings are for people with a disability. Australian businesses with formal accreditation through the Star Ratings or Quality Tourism Accreditation (QTAB) programs can complete the accessibility self-assessment via the online portal. Eligible businesses pay A$100 per annum on top of their annual accreditation fee. For businesses not already formally accredited under the Quality Tourism Framework programs, annual fees are based on the number of full-time equivalent persons working within the organisation.

The accessibility self-assessment module explores provisions across a range of disabilities, including:

- limited mobility
- wheelchairs and scooters
- low vision
- impaired hearing
- cognitive impairment/autism
- allergies and intolerances

On completion the business will receive two reports:

- A report to help identify improvements that will make a business more accessible.
- An Accessibility Guide tailored for each business, highlighting the provisions in place. This report can be shared with potential guests to help them make informed choices.

Businesses that complete the module and address all essential criteria in a disability category will receive a category-specific (cognitive/autism; allergies/intolerances; low hearing; limited mobility; wheelchairs and scooters; low vision) Accessible Tourism badge to use on their website and in promotional material.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC; Australia)

To support the launch of the ATIC accessibility self-assessment module, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has prepared a comprehensive guide to accessible tourism covering the

market size, the needs and aspirations of a traveller with a disability, and how to engage in the process of becoming accredited. Find it here. QTIC is also offering the first year free to existing Star Ratings and Quality Tourism Accredited Businesses.

In addition QTIC has published 'Inclusive tourism – making your business more accessible and inclusive', which includes a checklist for accessible accommodation, tips on making places, attractions and activities more accessible, and examples of best practice.

Business Victoria (Australia)

The Victorian government has also published an accessibility toolkit with a broad audience. Tourism businesses are the primary audience, and they can learn how to:

- assess their business, buildings and facilities to identify barriers, gaps and areas for improvement
- make low-cost changes to make their business more accessible
- develop strategies to incorporate access into their core business
- improve and better target marketing and promotion of their business to the accessible travel market segment, including how to better describe their businesses for this purpose.

Regional tourism boards and associations can learn how to:

- provide leadership to the tourism industry in the region
- plan and deliver a coordinated regional approach to accessible tourism
- support local tourism businesses to promote and market their accessibility.

Visitor information centres can learn how to:

- provide positive first impression is to visitors
- promote accessible local businesses and attractions
- encourage local businesses and attractions to become more accessible.

Local governments can learn how to:

- bring together, support and promote accessible businesses, festivals and events
- incorporate accessible tourism into broader tourism, business and economic development plans
- link tourism businesses to relevant local grant, award and accreditation schemes.

State government departments and statutory authorities can learn how to:

- support accessible tourism-related activities
- promote the importance of accessible tourism to staff and funded organisations.

So no matter what the disability, there is a cultural change within the industry that just sees dealing with people with disability and the different types of disability and the different levels of support as standing operating practice and that requires … an open attitude and … an empathetic experience of wanting to understand and be responsive to that group of people.

Simon Darcy

Accessibility Tick (New Zealand)

The Accessibility Tick Programme has been developed by a social enterprise to assist New Zealand organisations to become more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities. It isn't tourism-specific. Member organisations are assisted in assessing their current accessibility, and supported in

developing and implementing a plan to improve disability inclusion. Members become part of the Accessibility Tick Employers Network and may seek to be awarded the Accessibility Tick, the programme's seal of approval. This social enterprise also offers broad-ranging business-facing disability confidence training programmes.

Be. Lab (New Zealand)

This Auckland-based organisation supports businesses and organisations to become more accessible. Their website hosts a free 30-minute self-assessment tool that will return a report, following which there is the option to undertake a consultation or an on-site assessment by an expert. The site also has some free business tips and resources.

VisitBritain

VisitEngland/VisitBritain are front runners in catering to the accessible tourism market. They have developed an extremely useful and free-to-use suite of resources to assist businesses to better cater to the inclusive tourism market, including separate, downloadable guides on:

- how to welcome people with dementia
- easy and cheap changes to make to improve businesses' accessibility
- how to make attractions more accessible
- how to make hotels accessible
- tips for welcoming people with hearing loss
- how to welcome autistic people
- how to make pubs more accessible
- how to make destinations more accessible
- how to plan an accessible event
- how to make music events more accessible
- how to create an accessibility guide.

Service providers need to be trained. Sometimes it's maybe the first thing to think about: how do I train my staff?
Igor Stefanovic

On this page, there are also accessibility case studies, training programs and slides, and a draft brief for an accessibility champion within a business.

European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)

ENAT offers five free self-guided online courses in accessible tourism.

- European Training Certificate Accessible for All in the Tourism Sector (requires registration with the training platform, which is free of charge)
- Tourist Guides for People with Learning and Intellectual Difficulties in Europe (requires registration with the training platform, which is free of charge)
- The Ability Advisor
- New Skills for Customised Accessible Tourism (register first at https://dlot.eu/)
- Games without Barriers – Teachers' Training Kit for Accessible Tourism

The courses are at two levels: vocational and educational training for 18–30-year-olds, and continuing professional development for professionals working in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. However, these courses do not lead to official accreditation.

Access guides

What is an access guide?

A detailed access guide (sometimes called an access statement) lets visitors know what access will be like when they visit somewhere. It looks at ways in which visitors can reach an establishment, the route visitors can use getting in, how to get around and what is available inside. As Chris Veitch tells

us in his opening keynote[24]: 'It's a statement. It doesn't say the business is or is not accessible. It's a description that takes the customer on a journey around the business … It helps communicate a business's facilities and services to disabled people and others with specific accessibility information and it helps [them] to make an informed decision.' Once created, it can be loaded onto a website and will answer many of the questions that people with access needs will have if they want to visit and establishment. Staff can refer to it rather than having to learn about and remember all the accessibility features themselves, and respond to each request for information individually. If describing accessibility is left to frontline staff, there's not only a need for increased training, but also a greater danger of incorrect and inconsistent information being given to the public. An accessibility guide is the best possible marketing tool to promote business's services to the inclusive tourism market.

More information on how to create an access guide – together with a video explaining its benefits and example guides – can be found here. Importantly, access guides are not limited to descriptions; photos are an essential part of such guides and can be a much better tool for people to judge whether or not facilities are suitable for them. Chris Veitch adds that, '[Disabled people] say we like floor plans because that helps us, especially wheelchair users, understand space and scale to manoeuvre, but another key one is photos because photos will tell the picture that perhaps thousand words can't; or [create] a video tour as well.'[25]

> *We've been trying for years to get hotels and other service providers to put pictures up.*
>
> *Ashley Lyn Olson*

How to create an access guide

Only businesses located in England and Scotland can use the VisitEngland/VisitBritain tool to create and publish an access guide. However, ENAT has created an open resource for tourism suppliers who offer accessible services, which can be downloaded from this page. There's not only a template to create an access statement, there's also a photo and measurement guide, which could form an invaluable tool in an arsenal of resources. ***Importantly, tourism-related businesses that complete the ENAT access statement are eligible to be listed on the global Pantou database of accessible tourism suppliers.***

Accessibility checklists

It's also possible for tourism MSMEs to create their access guide by using accessibility checklists as a guide. There are a number of extensive and useful checklists that can show business owners – and their customers – what accommodations are in place. It may be surprising how accessible any given venue or facility is, or how easily and cheaply it can be made more accessible. It should be remembered, however, that these checklists should be used to gather data to create an accessibility guide that should be given the same attention as any other marketing collateral – they should not simply be put up on a website as if they were an access audit checklist, but should instead be incorporated into an accessibility guide that will be used as a marketing tool, with the information integrated seamlessly into a website and easily found through a prominent accessibility menu.

Sernatur (Chile)

Chile's destination management organisation has created a National Accessible Tourism Network, open to any tourism company or service in its economy that meets four simple criteria. Access a number of Spanish-language accessible tourism resources from this page to assist making a business more accessible, including a 37-page guide to accessible accommodation, and Spanish-language

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[24] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ldQ7PYKN4E&t=770s>
[25] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ldQ7PYKN4E&t=770s>

versions of the detailed UNWTO manuals covering different areas of the tourism supply chain referred to above.

Rick Hansen Foundation (Canada)

Canadian track and field Paralympic athlete, Rick Hansen – who completed a 26-month, 34-economy40,000 km Man in Motion world tour in 1985 in his manual wheelchair – subsequently set up a foundation to remove barriers and liberate the potential of people with disabilities. It has a rating and certification system to measure and certify levels of access of buildings and sites. A short article posted on the website highlights 10 ways to make your business more accessible at little or no cost. There's much more detail in the four-page accessibility tip sheet. For those who want to delve even deeper, there is a library of resources under four headings:

- universal design recommendations for accessible ramps
- universal design recommendations for accessible entrances and automated doors
- universal design recommendations for accessible elevators
- universal design recommendations for accessible reception/service areas.

MIUSA (USA)

Mobility International USA has produced a disability access and inclusion checklist for self-assessment. Although it has been designed for a particular programme, it's a very useful and broad-ranging list that covers planning, policies and programmes; inclusion of people with disabilities and disabled people's organisations; outreach and awareness; communication; meetings and events; websites; transportation; monitoring, evaluation and reporting and facilities. The checklist is also downloadable as a Word document.

Americans with Disabilities Act (USA)

Based on the 2010 *Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design*, this detailed 88-page document is a comprehensive checklist for ADA compliance for existing facilities. 'Renewing the Commitment', a 128-page ADA Compliance Guide for Nonprofits upon which the MIUSA checklist is based, will not only help businesses not to breach the ADA, it's also full of useful information regarding disability, accessibility and legal issues. Importantly, there are also links to many other resources scattered throughout the document.

ACT Inclusion Council (Australia)

The Australian Capital Territory Inclusion Council has created a manual to provide technical guidance to businesses that wish to serve the disability communities better. Following a useful general discussion about what access means and why it's important, as well as recapping different types of disability, it contains lists of tasks and checklists to self-assess an organisation's suitability for people with disability. While there are references to Australian building standards that might not be relevant in other jurisdictions, the checklists themselves are generally stand-alone and are also accompanied by explanatory diagrams that will assist understanding of what is being asked for.

Yarra City Council (Australia)

Another progressive local authority in Victoria, Australia, has produced practical and easy-to-follow advice on how to make your business more accessible to customers with access needs. Many of the suggestions to assist potential customers with mobility, hearing or sight impairments are cost free and simple common sense.

Eurobodalla Shire Council (Australia)

This tiny local government area in New South Wales (population 38,000) shows that size is no impediment to wanting to create a more inclusive community. Its commitment to eliminating barriers that prevent residents and visitors from participating fully in community and civic life led it to create a checklist to help identify and respond to barriers that may prevent people using their service or

group. It provides guiding questions to draw attention to some of the more obvious barriers people with a disability face which, sometimes, can be easily altered or avoided.

Access Ability Australia

Access Ability Australia has developed a fairly unique business creating 'Access Keys' as a way to decrease barriers to those with access needs by providing accurate and easy-to-understand information about accessing venues and events. Their belief, echoed by many participating in this series of workshops, is that 'Improving access to visitor information benefits not only people with disability but also the wider community. The provision of convenient and accurate information enables informed decisions to be made about the suitability of venues and events and allows opportunity for adequate preplanning to ensure smooth and enjoyable visitor experiences.'

While accessing their business services is open only to Australian businesses, their library of Access Keys shows what a detailed access guide could look like and can be used as a template to create one tailored to different businesses.

This company recently introduced an online, digitally produced, abridged version of their Access Key called an Access Key Assist, which is ideal for small to medium-sized enterprises and is suited to a range of industry sectors, including tourism, hospitality, health and beauty, gymnasiums, medical clinics and retail. The Access Key Assist step-by-step online development tool is convenient and quick and educates operators to become leaders in the diversity market by providing venue owners and staff with an increased sense of disability awareness and education. An expression of interest can be registered here.

Their library also contains related 'social stories' that help to prepare individuals for the social interactions they may encounter at any given venue. They have been created specifically for people who live on the autism spectrum, have specific language disorders, social communication difficulties or cognitive delays and disability. They can be used by parents, carers, support workers and educators as well as by individuals themselves. Download them here.

The final items in their library of resources are 'communication boards' tailored to specific venues that assist people who find it difficult to communicate verbally. Communication boards can be developed quickly and easily through the company's online platform.

To further complement their range of resources, the company also offers an online Communication Access & Awareness training module, which teaches why communication is a two-way process and a shared responsibility. It provides a range of strategies and tools to support organisations to service

> *Another form of presenting information is through story or easy read [plain English]. This is especially useful for guests with autism … You use minimal text, you use images and you use photos. What's the other benefit of this? Well, it can also be very useful for people whose first language may not be your own so it can be actually quite useful as a guide for international visitors as well.*
>
> *Chris Veitch*

the needs of the wider community with communication challenges. Each section contains a series of easy-to-follow, step-by-step, captioned video lessons that include interactive activities, resources and quizzes. Enrol here.

Employment Law Lookout (USA)

To celebrate 25 years of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* in 2015, this company listed 25 easy and affordable ways to make a business more accessible to customers with disabilities.

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

In 2018, the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) introduced new accessibility data for its database to encourage operators to become more aware of the inclusive tourism market. Crucially, this will provide additional information for online distributors to share across their consumer-facing websites. It will now become mandatory for all operators registered with the ATDW to respond to the additional accessibility questions in the revised data set. These questions can be used as an extensive set of checklists that address specific access needs, from vision and hearing through to allergies and intolerances. Once again, completing these checklists will assist in creating an individualised access guide.

City of Melbourne (Australia)

Under its Good Access Is Good Business programme, the City of Melbourne has developed the following detailed access checklists. Unlike the ATDW checklists, which are arranged according to functional need, the City of Melbourne checklists are aligned to type of venue:

- cafes and restaurants
- retail outlets
- banks, financial and legal services
- theatres and cultural venues
- late-night entertainment venues
- tourism services, facilities and venues
- educational institutions
- hotels
- festivals and events.

Its high-level tips, applicable to a wide variety of venues, include the following.

Information
- Is your signage clear for toilets, pay stations, change rooms?
- Is information easy to read on your website and accessible for people who use a screen reader?
- Are your menus and brochures in at least size 12 font?
- Is the layout of your store easy to get around?

Of course the best thing that you could ever do for your customer service is ask customers, 'How can I help you?' That's going to be the best advice that any tool could give you. In effect, that's what could be the training for accessible tourism: 'How can I help you?' And then listen and respond accordingly. But also ask the customers, 'How are we doing? What could we do better?' But then … tell customers what action you've taken as a result of listening to their feedback.

Chris Veitch

Attitude
- Simply asking 'Can I assist you?' in a respectful manner can make people feel more comfortable and welcome.
- Could you incorporate training and information on the importance of disability awareness into staff induction and development?
- Are staff aware where the nearest accessible facilities are such as toilets, car parks and seating?

Building
- Are your aisles and shop displays set up to accommodate people in a wheelchair?
- Is there step-free access to your business?
- Do you have a low customer counter or can you provide a chair for customers to sit on while waiting to pay?

Travel for All (Australia)

This Australian company sells its accessibility toolkit globally. Its assessment tools help to document the accessible features of a property and they create a tailored accessibility statement from the information provided.

Mobility Mojo

Based in Ireland, but catering to a global clientele, this company specialises in assisting hotels with their accessibility. They have developed a self-audit tool to gather together the accessibility features of a hotel (or workplace), which can then be incorporated into an accessibility button/menu that can be accessed by potential guests. An example of the resulting framework for one of their main clients – Virgin Hotels USA – is given on page 32.

National Disability Authority (Ireland)

The Irish National Disability Authority has produced a free-to-access, broad-ranging Accessibility Toolkit with an accompanying explanatory video that will help make services, buildings, information and websites more accessible to customers with disabilities. There's also an accessibility statement template that will help to detail the accessibility of websites and mobile applications, based on the recently released European regulations.

Show Me the Access (UK)

An innovative and effective way of showing the accessibility of facilities to potential customers is to go beyond pictures and use video. Show Me the Access is a UK company that promotes this approach and has a library of examples from a wide variety of business sectors, including travel. While UK companies are invited to share their videos with Show Me the Access to include in their library, there are tips and instructions – particularly under the Help menu – to help create videos that can be loaded onto YouTube or onto a website.

> *If a picture is worth a thousand words, I think a video is worth even more. And I think it's especially valuable for our community of wheelchair users just to be able to actually see what's there.*
>
> *Cory Lee*

With advances in technology, it's now possible for anyone with a smartphone to walk through their premises and take videos that can be uploaded to their website or sent to potential guests.

How to create an accessible event

Following are just a few of the numerous resources on the Internet that can assist in ensuring meetings and/or events are as accessible as possible.

Eventbrite

This global booking platform has produced a 15-page guide covering the basics of event accessibility, including:

- making an event listing as accessible as possible
- providing comprehensive accessibility information for customers
- making online ticket purchasing more accessible
- planning for on-site accessibility.

Cornell University (USA)

Cornell University has produced an accessible meeting and event checklist that can also be downloaded as a PDF. Notably, the first item on the list is simply called 'Ask!'

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

This Washington-based nonprofit has produced a concise, practical 14-page guide to accessible event planning that covers universal design, physical accessibility, sensory accessibility and cognitive accessibility. There's also a useful table that will help long-term planning for multiday conference preparation, as well as a simple site visit checklist. There's a short list of further resources at the end of the document.

Meetings and Events Australia

The 38-page guide produced by Meetings and Events Australia gives information and guidance on best practice. It is not designed as a technical checklist covering detailed specifications; rather, it outlines principles that will lead to the development of best practice and increase access for people with disabilities, whether they are presenters, delegates or participants. While there are references to Australian building standards and legislation, the guide will assist organisations in any jurisdiction to:

- think about access and participation when planning an event
- identify features that make it impossible or difficult for people with disabilities to access an event
- understand what can be done to ensure the best possible access
- find further sources of advice, information and assistance.

Zero Project (Austria)

The Zero Project was established by an Austrian NGO to further the implementation of the CRPD, with a commitment to the creation of a world with zero barriers. In 2019, they published the 29-page 'Zero Project Conference Accessibility Guidelines', which they acknowledge are not exhaustive – they don't cover, for instance, the use of Braille or communication support for participants who are deaf/blind – but they are nonetheless thorough and broad ranging.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland

The successor to the Scottish Health Council works alongside the UK National Health Service in the development and delivery of health and social care services. Those organisations unable to commission a professional access audit of venues can use their relatively short accessibility checklist to assist in making meetings and conferences as accessible as possible. Although not comprehensive, it covers all main areas from transport links through sound, lighting and air quality to overnight accommodation and emergency evacuation procedures.

Importance of information

As highlighted by numerous panellists in the online resources, the importance of accurate information about accessibility cannot be overstated. As quoted by Chris Veitch in a section devoted to the importance of information,[26] 'Accurate information gives you the power of choice, which we don't have at the moment.'[27] Indeed, it was a primary motivation for the travel bloggers who appear on Day 2[28] to set up their websites in the first place, and then to populate them with information, verified first-hand, since reliable access information was almost impossible to obtain before the Internet provided a platform for pioneers such as Ashley Lyn Olson. As John Morris says, 'I view my primary role as connecting disabled people with the information and resources that can be used to ease their journey and bring opportunities.' And the stakes are high, as highlighted by Sylvia Longmire, 'It's my job to provide [other disabled travellers] with the resources that will allow them to travel safely and confidently, and I have to get that right.'

It's not enough just to have accessible facilities. It's equally important to make sure that people know about them … It's not a question of if we build it, they will come. Nobody will come unless they know about it. So build it and then let people know about it.

Julie Jones

Arguably, information about accessibility is as important as accessibility features or accommodations themselves: if potential customers and clients are not able to find out about the accessibility of services and facilities, and whether they are personally suitable, they simply won't come.

No matter what the level of accessibility, it's vital that as much detail as possible – using the above access checklist resources – is prominently displayed on websites and in product brochures. Ideally, websites should have a dedicated and easily identifiable Accessibility or Access & Inclusion menu where all relevant information can be easily located.

It's equally important that staff are fully aware of and trained in all accessibility features and accommodations so that they are equipped to answer questions when asked by potential customers. Due to what's known as the 'digital divide' – which refers to people with disability and seniors not being as digitally connected as the general population for several reasons – it's important to provide alternative means of accessing information related to accessibility. Primarily, this would involve staff members answering queries by phone, email or text message. In addition to including information in product brochures or catalogues, it's a good idea to produce a stand-alone PDF (with accessibility features enabled; see here for full instructions) that lists all accessibility features and accommodations, with pictures, that can be mailed or emailed to potential customers and/or inserted into a product brochure or catalogue.

Accessible websites

An extremely important consideration is to ensure that websites are accessible to as broad a range of users as possible, particularly those with vision or motor impairments. This is not just for altruistic reasons: the most recent UK Click-Away-Pound survey found that the percentage of people with

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[26] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=2264>

[27] http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk/media/163174/visitscotland_report__final_.pdf

[28] *Day 2 Panel: Bloggers, Advocates and Tour Operators, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021,* YouTube, <https://youtu.be/P1z4_9H5eUQ?t=131>

*If your website's not accessible, it's almost like saying, don't come here because …
everybody's reading things on the Web and people are actually booking: 55% [of people
with disability] are using websites or apps to book, not just find information.*

Eric Lipp

access needs who will click away from an inaccessible site is almost 70%, at an estimated cost to businesses of £17.1 billion. The Bureau of Internet Accessibility estimates that brands are losing billions of dollars by not being digitally accessible, and that digital accessibility is crucial to customer retention.

There is a huge amount of information on the Internet regarding digital accessibility; we present only a few of the more important resources in the following section. As with the built environment, incorporating accessibility at the design phase rather than trying to bolt on accessibility features to a finished product will achieve much cheaper and more effective results. A short, layperson's introduction to the topic, with five simple steps to improve website accessibility and links to further resources was published in 2015 by Emerge.

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative

The foremost worldwide resource and information portal for accessible websites is the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). There's a great overview of the business case for digital accessibility that is a must read for any business that is interested in enhancing their brand, extending their market reach and minimising their legal risk. In addition to a comprehensive overview and introduction to standards and guidelines, particularly the web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.1) themselves, there are tailored resources for content writers, designers, developers, managers, policymakers, trainers and users (among others) in numerous languages.

The A11Y Project

The name of this community-driven effort to make digital accessibility easier was created by replacing the 11 central characters from the word '**a**ccessibilit**y**' with the numeral 11. There is a wealth of material on this site regarding digital accessibility that will assist in making a website more accessible. Of most immediate, practical use is the checklist based on the WCAG 2.1 guidelines to assess the accessibility of individual websites. There is also an extensive library of resources in various formats that cover all elements of website accessibility.

Adobe

Adobe has a strong track record of catering to access needs. They not only maintain a library of resources to assist users of Adobe products to make the most of their accessibility features, they also give a fabulous and broad-ranging introduction to digital accessibility and accessibility standards, as well as detailed advice on how to create an accessible website. Follow the links from this landing page.

Google

Google also has a strong track record for accessibility and its accessibility landing page is a great resource for information. Primarily, there are guides for:

- developers and publishers – information and resources to help develop accessible products and apps
- customers and partners – guides and resources for using Google products
- initiatives and research – articles covering internal and external research efforts.

Microsoft

Microsoft's landing page for accessibility resources has links to all their resources for maximising the accessibility of all Microsoft products, as well as other informative articles, including a comprehensive overview of the concepts and technologies related to accessibility scenarios for Windows apps.

WebAIM

This company, whose goal for the last two decades has been to make the web more accessible to individuals with disabilities, provides training, consulting, evaluation and certification services. There is a huge library of articles discussing all aspects of digital accessibility and remediation solutions, including a comprehensive and extremely informative 'Introduction to Web Accessibility'. It also hosts a thriving blog and maintains a newsletter and email discussion list.

DigitalA11Y

This is another company that hosts an informative blog and detailed articles on understanding WCAG, Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) and accessibility tools. It has an extensive list of free accessibility cheat sheets for WCAG, WAI-ARIA and mobile applications. There is a very useful digital accessibility training courses roundup that covers both free and paid courses.

The Bureau of Internet Accessibility

This private company has been helping clients from a broad range of industries, including travel and hospitality, to make their websites more accessible for two decades. In addition to commercial services, including accessibility audits and numerous remediation tools, there are several free resources, including a colour contrast accessibility validator, a website accessibility checklist, a mobile accessibility checklist, and a so-called 'Ultimate Guide to Website Accessibility'.

Accessibility widgets

A growing number of companies, particularly those serving the disability communities, are choosing to use off-the-shelf accessibility widgets, which are an easy and cost-effective way to improve the accessibility of a website. Among the best-known providers of website accessibility widgets are userway and accessiBe, but it's important to understand that using such widgets does not guarantee WCAG compliance. 'Accessibility widgets: How accessible are website using them?' is a good overview of what is currently on the market, together with an assessment of the leading offerings.

> *Accessibility is an easy word to say, but you need to break it down into its component parts. They are the built environment, transportation and in an increasingly digital world, information communication technologies.*
>
> *Simon Darcy*

Best-practice examples

The following are given primarily as examples of best practice with regard to the access information that is provided on their websites, but they can also be regarded as best practice in terms of the accommodations and facilities they offer, so it is well worth exploring the accessibility pages that are hyperlinked in each of the following entries. Examples have been drawn from different types of venue: an amusement park, an NGO, two regional park authorities, a small and a medium-sized accommodation provider, a mid-size hotel chain, a major art gallery, a major sporting event and even a mid-size city.

Lake Mac Holiday Parks

This mid-size holiday park operator has four sites in New South Wales, each with 14–19 cabins plus dozens of both powered and unpowered camping sites. There is an Accessibility link at the bottom of each of their webpages, but there's also an Accessibility menu at the top of the About Lake MacQuarie

page on the same level of importance as Overview and Things to Do. This dedicated Accessibility page emphasises the organisation's commitment to and understanding of inclusion: 'An inclusive destination is more than just being wheelchair accessible. It's about catering for the many and varied needs of everyone, whether it is visitors with mobility restriction, parents with a pram or people with vision impairment.' There follows very detailed access information about each of the parks, covering all facilities and even local accessible attractions and activities. There is not only a remarkable array of accommodations for people with access needs, the access information is also incredibly detailed, down to the measurements in the bathroom. There are also many photos of accessible features within the living quarters as well as facilities such as the pool hoist and other accessible features around the grounds.

Wilderness on Wheels

This accessible wilderness recreation facility was chosen by Candy Harrington as her 'rose':[29] a blooming example of success. Founded in 1986, it offers boardwalk access to the forest, accessible fishing, with adaptive fishing equipment, and accessible cabin accommodation. There's detailed access information on the website, as well as videos, so visitors know what to expect before visiting. This is complemented by Instagram and Facebook accounts hosting many more photos and user experiences of the facilities, as well as a collection of videos on their YouTube channel.

Parks Victoria

John Kenwright, who appears as a panellist on the Day 3 session on access to nature,[30] has been a driving force not only in improving facilities and accommodations for people with access needs to visit Victoria's parks, but also in ensuring that detailed access information is available on the Parks Victoria

BIRDABILITY
www.birdability.org

Why I love the website is that it bridges what I call the information barrier, which enables people to decide before they go if it's going to meet their access needs. This is critical. And I've spent much of my career trying to eliminate that information barrier because I see it as one of the first elemental steps towards inclusion, and it's just great to have this information in advance. It helps to eliminate the fear of not being able to participate. And it's very empowering and confidence building. And it's also something that can be done for very little resources, yet have a big impact.

Bonnie Lewkowicz

website for people to plan their visits before they go. The All Abilities Access menu leads to a thorough overview of accommodations for people with access needs, but there is also detailed, granular information on individual parks – including photos taken expressly to show accessibility features – gathered using a specially developed 'Park Accessibility Evaluation Manual' to ensure the consistency of information presented.

The site hosts numerous videos, many of which were made by disabled people. In his session, John describes the ideal process for accommodating people with access needs: coproduction, with people with disability being involved from the early stages of consultation through to final execution and promotion. It's also notable that the information is broad ranging – not limited to wheelchair users, but catering to the needs of people with low mobility, people who are blind or vision impaired and

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[29] *Day 3.2 Panel - Access to Nature, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/_SZ74B9j8nw?t=367>

[30] *Day 3.2 Panel - Access to Nature, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/_SZ74B9j8nw?t=574>

people living with autism. It's an important recognition that social scripts to help parents prepare children living with autism to visit parks can be as important as all-terrain wheelchairs are to wheelchair users.

BC Parks

Rilke Moon, another panellist on the access to nature session on Day 3,[31] tells how British Columbia Parks also engaged with the disability community by forming an accessibility committee, and by conducting accessibility audits and developing training courses with the Cancer Foundation and the Rick Hansen Foundation. Their accessibility guarantee commits this authority to making all of their park sites universal accessible using a specially developed universal design guidelines document for use by staff.

The BC Parks website reflects this commitment to accessibility by having a very prominent Access button on its homepage. A video explains BC Parks's commitment and activities in this area, while a search function leads to individual parks whose accessibility features are described in great detail with lots of photographs showing visitors exactly what to expect.

Virgin Hotels

This hotel chain has used an external company, Mobility Mojo, to assess and highlight the accessibility features of its hotels. Each of its five US hotels is given an overall accessibility rating, but, more importantly, there is a detailed breakdown of accessibility features under three categories – general, bedroom and bathroom – that is easily found through the main menu under 'Hotel Accessibility' or through a corresponding button at the bottom of each hotel's home page.

Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art

New York's iconic art gallery's commitment to accessibility is shown not only in the broad array of accommodations to ensure access for all, but also in the ease with which extremely detailed accessibility information can be found: under Plan Your Visit/Accessibility. Importantly, there are accommodations for many kinds of impairment, each listed separately for ease of reference. Notably, the website itself also achieves a high standard of accessibility.

Mesa, Arizona

Mesa – City Limitless® – has made concerted efforts to make itself disability-friendly for both residents and visitors: it is the USA's first autism-certified city, and the first to introduce the Sunflower Program, which allows people to self-identify if they have a disability, particularly a hidden disability. Visit Mesa's homepage menu leads directly to information on Autism Travel, which details information on autism-friendly hotels and dining options, sensory guides to the city's main attractions, a detailed autism travel guide, as well as a full list of companies that have completed or committed to autism-friendly certification. Its travel accessibility and inclusion page provides getting there/away/around information, and details the accessibility features of accommodations, eateries, attractions, parks and trails, and other businesses, allowing both residents and visitors with access needs to plan ahead.

Notice the website accessibility widget in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen.

The Australian Open (tennis)

This is a great example of an event whose organisers are deeply committed to accessibility for all guests. As part of this commitment, there is a dedicated accessibility page that provides detailed and broad-ranging accessibility information applicable to different impairments that allows patrons to plan their visit as well as navigate Melbourne Park during a visit.

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[31] *Day 3.2 Panel - Access to Nature, APEC Tourism Accessibility Workshop Series 2021*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/_SZ74B9j8nw?t=762>

Sandcastle Waterpark

This amusement park has made access and inclusion a priority, and has reaped economic rewards as a result. Highlighting this is an example of best practice in his opening keynote,[32] Chris Veitch tells us that 'Access for all is part of everything that they do and they have a program. So it's part of their business planning. It's part of their culture. It's part of their recruitment and selection.' Their website reflects this commitment, featuring a prominent 'Access for All' panel (as well as a drop-down menu) that gives comprehensive information for guests with different needs: mobility, vision, hearing or sensory. There is a full guide to the facilities and all accessible features so that guests can plan their visit before they arrive, as well as downloadable social scripts and tips for guests with autism.

Hoe Grange Holidays

This working farm located in the Peak District in England began offering holiday accommodation in 2005, and their accessible holiday offerings earned them VisitEngland 'Access for All' gold awards in 2011 and 2016. Again, their commitment to accessibility extends beyond installing accessible facilities and equipment to providing comprehensive access information on their website that is tailored to guests with different impairments. While they have a range of cabins that are wheelchair-accessible, careful accommodations have also been made for people with vision, hearing and sensory impairments. Notably, the website includes downloadable access guides in print and audio formats, as well as sensory stories and videos, including of the accessible web room. Recognising that guests will not spend their entire holiday on the farm – something that is often overlooked – there is also information on and links to accessible places and activities in the area.

Best-practice information portals

What Visit Mesa has done on a relatively small scale, several destination management organisations around the world have achieved on a much larger scale.

New York City

Under former mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner for People with Disabilities Victor Calise, New York City has made tremendous efforts to make itself more accessible for both residents and visitors. Accessible NYC hosts numerous accessibility guides to many of New York's major attractions and draw cards, as well as a video on how to explore New York by wheelchair. It's possible to search for detailed accessibility information for more than 1000 accessible venues. The city has also just released the 125-page 2021 edition of *AccessibleNYC*, which covers all aspects of accessibility in the city for both residents and tourists.

Québec for All

This is a database of more than 1700 tourism and cultural organisations and businesses assessed by Kéroul and certified as fully or partially accessible. The database is searchable and also categorised according to business type and location. There are also a number of suggested accessible itineraries that give detailed access information regarding things to do, accommodation and eateries. A 28-page Québec for All brochure was produced by Kéroul and released in 2020.

Kéroul

As the key accessibility consultant for Tourisme Québec, Kéroul also maintains an extensive database of accessible establishments that mirrors the Québec for All database, but the search filters on the Kéroul database are more sophisticated and granular. This page also has links to numerous useful resources for travellers, such as accessible travel agents, agencies to arrange personal assistants

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[32] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive,* YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=810>

(disability support workers), where to rent mobility equipment and details of accessible transportation in the province, among others.

Easy Access Chicago

The message from both [Isabelle Ducharme and myself] is that our organisations are here to help and we hope that there will be many other organisations like ours that can work in their own regions, their own economies, and bring together all those who can contribute to a more accessible tourism to everyone … Our NGOs are working as innovators and activators to get people to move forward on accessibility.

Ivor Ambrose

The Open Doors Organization, whose founder and Executive Director Eric Lipp spoke on Day 1,[33] maintains an accessible guide to Chicago that includes the following information:

- information for visitors and residents with a wide range of disabilities, as well as for older travellers

- detailed access reports for over 100 attractions

- access information on Midway and O'Hare airports

- listings of accessible tours of all types

- a guide to local accessible transportation, public and private

- Chicago insider tips to help you make the most of your stay

- a guide to adapted sports and recreation

- tips and resources for families

- a database of accessible hotels and restaurants searchable by specific access features, location and price

- listings of key disability-related services and resources

- general tips for hassle-free travel.

There is an advanced search feature for restaurants and lodgings to allow visitors to identify venues that meet their needs. Full access information for all the venues are available by clicking on the Access Details link.

There is a second accessible guide to Springfield, Illinois' capital city, that follows the same template, and is also available as a downloadable PDF.

Tur4All

TUR4all is a platform that seeks to provide accurate and up-to-date information on the accessibility of hotels, restaurants, museums and monuments, accessible transportation and other tourist-related businesses. Originally launched in the Madrid area by PREDIF – a leading Spanish disabled people's organisation that has been developing an inclusive tourism program since 2002 – in collaboration with Fundación Vodafone España, this platform soon expanded to cover Portugal and now includes

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[33] *Day 1 APEC Accessible Tourism: Making tourism more inclusive*, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/3ldQ7PYKN4E?t=3939>

Germany, India, Colombia and, most recently, APEC member Peru. There is an open invitation for other economies to join the scheme.

The searchable database, with useful filters (expand the Accessibility criteria menu), includes not only individual businesses, but also destinations and experiences. There are also Spanish-language inclusive tourism resources (news, blogs, webinars and publications) that tourism service providers will find useful, including tips and articles on providing accessible tourism experiences in the context of COVID-19.

Pantou

ENAT maintains Pantou, a large, worldwide accessible tourism directory of accessible tourism service providers – including accommodation, transport, tours, venues and attractions, equipment rental and sales, and personal assistance – open to any organisation that wishes to register its accessibility information. The project was conceived to make it easier for tourists with any kind of access need to find what they are looking for when planning a visit; promote accessible tourism suppliers; and to enable suppliers and destinations to find new partners and build networks of accessible services.

Tourism suppliers indicate the type of services they offer and the particular target groups they serve. Suppliers may be accredited under a national, regional or local Accessibility Information Scheme (AIS) that verifies the accessibility of the services offered. Alternatively, if a supplier is not a member of an AIS that has been verified by Pantou, then the supplier submits a Pantou Access Statement, a self-declaration form that may serve as an accessibility marketing guide, giving potential visitors an objective view of the facilities and services offered.

Users can search by economy, visitor requirements, service type or specific Accessibility Information Scheme. There are many such schemes administered by both destinations and organisations, including ENAT's own World Tourism for All Quality Programme.

VisitEngland

The tourism bodies in the UK have put significant effort into developing accessible tourism. VisitEngland is now a world leader in helping English destinations and tourism service providers deliver accessible experiences. Its Accessible England landing page contains a wealth of information to allow tourists with disabilities or access needs to plan their trip. Under its Access for All project, VisitEngland has produced destination guides and accessible breaks guides. There is also information about the National Accessible Scheme, which rates the accessibility of visitor accommodation, highlighting the top 50 wheelchair-friendly accommodations in addition to a full downloadable list of all accommodations.

Visit Flanders

Despite its small size, Flanders has become a world leader in providing inclusive tourism experiences. The well-designed Visit Flanders website allows users to search for holiday accommodation, day trips, eateries, accessible events, transportation, personal care and mobility equipment – everything someone might need to plan their trip before arrival. Information is arranged thematically, but can also be accessed via an interactive map or searchable, filterable database. There are also downloadable brochures that focus on particular destinations and themes, and stories from previous visitors.

German National Tourist Board

The German National Tourist Board has invested a great deal of resources into accessible travel for several years, and has developed an incredibly rich information portal to assist people with access needs to plan their trips. Resources are arranged according to functional impairment – with advice and suggestions tailored appropriately – but can also be accessed by searching on an interactive map or thematically, according to holiday interest (e.g. nature and outdoor activities, castles and palaces

etc), or by applying filters to the searchable database. There's also detailed information about getting there and travelling around, and plenty of destination-specific information.

Catalonia

Catalonia, and Barcelona in particular, has become known as the wheelchair Mecca of Europe due to its high degree of accessibility and long-term investment in accessible tourism infrastructure. The regional tourist board maintains a dedicated and detailed information portal for accessible tourism that can be used as an excellent planning tool for visitors with access needs. Information is organised under the following menus: destinations, where to stay, what to do, transport, services and travel agencies. There is a search function within each category that can be refined by filters according to functional need, type of service or location. Information can also be accessed according to the type of trip you are interested in: cultural, beach, active, gastronomic, nature or wellness.

Lonely Planet

Lonely Planet has curated the world's largest collection of online resources for travelling with access needs, *Accessible Travel Online Resources*, which was recognised by the UNWTO in 2016 as one of a handful of examples of best practice in accessible tourism and is now vastly expanded in the current third edition. It contains an extensive list of economy-by-economy resources; access information for many of the world's major airlines and airports; a section covering specialist sporting and adventure travel organisations; a list of dozens of accessible travel bloggers, including detailed profiles of the world's top accessible travel bloggers; and a economy-by-economy list of specialist accessible travel agents, tour operators and equipment suppliers. Although its primary audience is travellers themselves, it will be useful for any business seeking to enter the inclusive travel market as a source of information, case studies and potential partners in the provision of accessible tourism services.

Lonely Planet's Accessible Travel Phrasebook contains some 100 words and phrases to assist disabled travellers to make their needs known in 35 languages. Although the primary audience is travellers themselves, tourism service providers will find the phrases and vocabulary useful to communicate with travellers with disability

Acknowledgements