

ELEVATOR



Accessible Tourism Guide

Part 1 – Visitors

Be Actors more than Recipients

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ACCESSIBLE TOURISM GUIDE | VISITORS

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INTRODUCTION

Accessibility is an important topic in tourism, yet often overlooked. It seems that the main reason for that is lack of knowledge and cooperation between key stakeholders.

This document is therefore created as a brief guideline introducing this topic and giving answers to 3 main questions:

- What is accessible tourism?
- How can accessibility in tourism be improved?
- What are the benefits of accessible tourism?

It has 3 parts where each part is dedicated to one VIP group, that each play an important role in the development of accessible tourism: **Visitors, Tourism Industry, and Policy Makers**.

This chapter: “Be Actors more than Recipients” is dedicated to **Visitors**, i.e. all users of tourism infrastructures and services including residents, who could have more courage and be more pro-active in demanding accessible environments, products and services.

The second chapter: “Be a level above rather than just step ahead“, focuses on **Businesses in the Tourism Industry**, i.e. tourism service providers, who should meet the accessible market demand and make their business more competitive and sustainable.

The last chapter: “Lift upward, not only push ahead“ is aimed at **Policy Makers**, i.e. politicians, public authorities, tourist boards and other decision makers responsible for tourism and access policies at national, regional or local levels. These are the people who are expected to take into account the needs of citizens and create a suitable environment for cooperation and motivation of all stakeholders in order to enhance the tourism offer and improve living conditions.

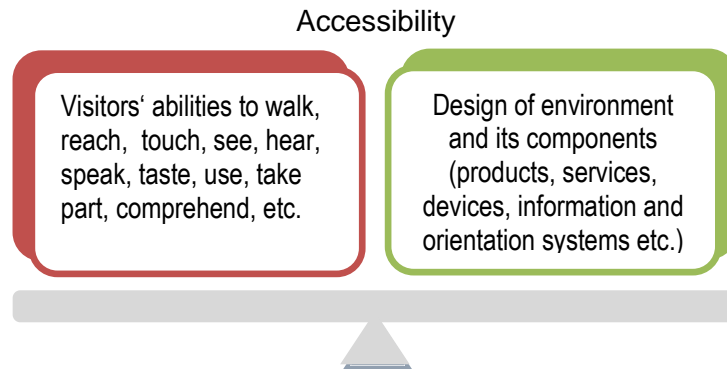
Every group has its own particular role in the creation of accessible tourism products and destinations. The most important role, however, is to harmonize individual efforts in a common strategy and communication. Success can be guaranteed only if these three main stakeholders work together as one team.

So, why wouldn't your team be the guiding light?

*„The source of our success is the cooperation of all stakeholders.“
(Józef Solecki, Manager of the Integration of People with
Disabilities Section in Poznań City Hall;
Access City Award 2014 – Third prize)*

WHAT IS ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Accessible Tourism (also called Tourism for All or Inclusive Tourism) is complex of products, processes and services that are designed, promoted, distributed and provided to meet specific access needs and requirements of visitors regardless of their age or abilities.



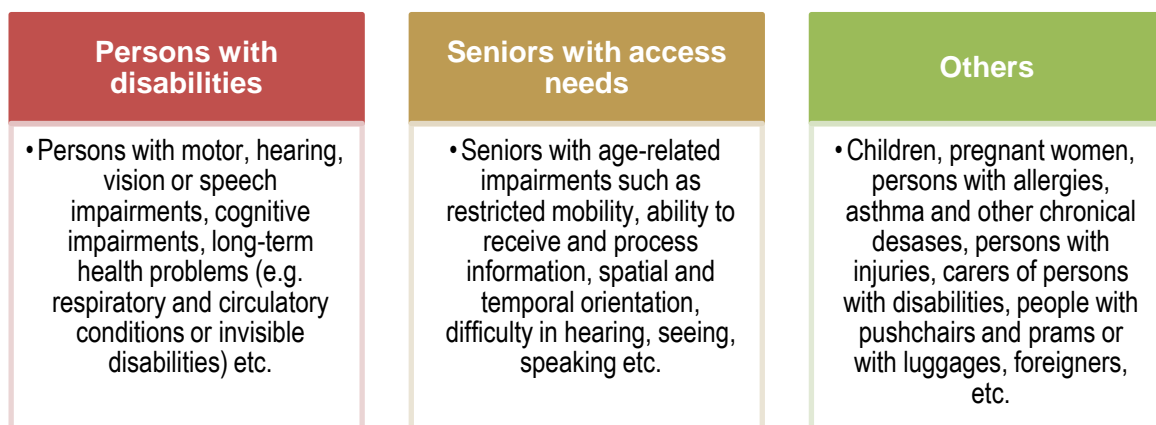
There are a lot of myths connected with accessible tourism or accessibility in general. The most common are:



”Accessible tourism is only for people with disabilities ...

Not at all! Although persons with disabilities have the greatest need of accessibility, accessible tourism covers the needs of a **variety of customers** with different access needs (not always visible) which can be caused by impairment, illness, injury, age, stature, foreign language proficiency or culture. **Any person**, who faces some difficulties in accessing, using or enjoying tourism services and facilities fully, comfortably, safely and independently, will prioritise accessible places.¹

Main Beneficiaries of Accessible Tourism



¹ Source: World Tourism Organization (2016), Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices – Module I: Accessible Tourism – Definition and Context, UNWTO, Madrid, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284418077>

In fact, accessible tourism can benefit everyone and all of us at least once in our lives will have a need for accessible environments, products and services.

... and it is a niche market.”



On the contrary! Taking into account who is behind the term “person with access needs”, we cannot talk about a small market segment. Moreover, it is a loyal, growing market which brings competitive advantage and new opportunities to businesses². Accessible services have the potential to attract more potential customers, increase service quality and strengthen the image.

Basic facts about the accessible tourism market in EU



Source: European Commission (2014), Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Travel in Europe – Final Report, <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/5566/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>



”Accessibility means absence of architectural barriers.”

Well, not only. Accessibility is often narrowed down to the construction or adaptation of facilities but types of barriers and difficulties involved in tourism have a much wider scope and are present in all tourism and travel-related services.

Accessible destinations have to ensure the accessibility of the **complete value chain** including hotels, transport, attractions, free-time facilities, tourism information offices, information and booking systems, marketing and an inclusive attitude among all relevant actors. Accessibility measures in tourism have to be accompanied by adequate **accessibility of public spaces** and involvement of public bodies. Only coordinated efforts combining each phase of the visitor’s experience may lead to visitor satisfaction.

² Source: British Tourist Authority (VisitEngland), At your service, https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/at_your_service_17.12.10.pdf



”Accessibility is expensive.”

Not always! Accessibility is not connected only with big financial investments. Even small adjustments and smart solutions can positively affect visitor’s decision and experience.

Examples of low-cost actions with positive impact on tourists with access needs:

- inclusive marketing
- accessible websites and information in alternative formats (raised text, audio/video format, plain language easy to understand, good contrast between the colour of text and background, appropriate font type easy to read, etc.)
- reliable information about accessibility of facilities and services
- trained staff
- technical aids and equipment to rent or loan (wheelchairs, bath chairs, toilet raisers etc.)
- free entry with guide dogs
- resting places where visitors can sit
- good lighting
- universally designed tourism products and activities

Efficiency of investment in accessibility is often measured as costs in relation to the number of visitors with disabilities. In fact, accessible measures improve safety and comfort and ensure that environment, products and services can be enjoyed by any person. That is why investment in accessibility should be perceived as an investment in dignity and quality for all.

“Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. It is both a human rights imperative and an exceptional business opportunity. Above all we must come to appreciate that Accessible Tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities or special needs; it benefits us all.”

Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

HOW CAN YOU MAKE TOURISM MORE ACCESSIBLE



Ask for accessibility and let your needs be known

Travelling can open up new horizons, literally! But it also opens up people's minds to what is possible. Many people don't ask about special services, they rather believe in prejudices about inaccessibility in tourism and adapt to the barriers/problems. **Accessibility is not a favour to the customer, it is his right!**

Asking about accessibility will encourage tourism providers to start thinking about this important issue and stimulate them to reconsider their offer in terms of accessibility. Making tourism operators aware of your access needs is one of the first steps towards better accessibility. **There is no supply without demand!**

Be precise when explaining your needs. Describe your level of autonomy, if you travel alone or with a companion, what kind of accessories do you use when travelling, what are your mobility, communication or any other limits and what special accessories or specific assistance do you need? It is important that specific needs are expressed to the operators in tourism, so they can find the most appropriate solutions. **The more you give, the more you get!**



Don't be afraid to travel

You can travel more easily as long as you make your plans carefully. Planning ahead is what helps you to feel more confident and secure and it is also very useful when things go wrong. Search for detailed information. The more detailed information you get, the easier it will be for you to travel. Ask providers about details. Don't ask if there is an "accessible room" but ask for a detailed description of the room. **Better safe than sorry!**

When making plans, it is always good to ask for advice. There are already some tools and agencies specialised in accessible tourism that provide information and special services. If you can't find a travel agency which is specified in organising trips for your type of needs, you can still get information from regular tour operators or agencies, from destination information materials, special web portals, from friends or people with similar needs to yours. A good tip is also to search on the website for some locals from the destination who can share some good advice. **Two heads are better than one!**



Examples of Travel agencies in accessible tourism in Europe

Bezbatour, Czech republic, <http://www.bezbatour.cz/>

Accessible Prague, Czech republic, <http://www.touchableprague.com/en/>

Premiki, Slovenia, <http://premiki.com/>

No Limits, Tour, Slovenia, <https://nolimits-tours.com/>

Accessible Madrid, Spain, <https://www.accessiblemadrid.com/en/about-us#>

Accessible Spain, Spain, <https://www.accessiblespaintravel.com/contact-us/>

Chris Travel, Denmark, <http://christravel.dk/kontakt-os/?lang=en>

Go Gal - Access Portugal, LDA, Portugal, <http://www.gogal.pt>

Planet Viaggi Responsabili, Italy, <http://www.planetviaggiaccessibili.it/>

Grenzenlos, Barrierefrei Reisen, Austria, <http://www.barrierefrei-reisen.at/>



Share your experience

Many people are looking for places to go and things to do. You may inspire them with your photos, your videos or blog/vlog. There is no better resource than information from experience provided by somebody with the same needs!

You can share your experiences through the mainstream and most popular portals such as Trip Advisor and similar websites. Through these channels information is more accessible. But do not hesitate to inform others also via the websites of places and services you have visited / used.

A good picture says more than a lot of words. When describing your experience, be precise. It is better to avoid any judgement, just share your experience, e.g.:

- Which barriers did you face in accessing outside and inside the facility or destination?
- Which extra charges did you have to pay?
- Which of your needs was or wasn't understood by the tourism provider?
- Which specific services or accessories could you book or rent?

Your experience, once published, may also be a good feedback for the businesses or for policy makers, when you point out barriers in the public spaces. **Experience is the best teacher.**



Examples of blogs focused on accessible travelling

Tony Giles – Blind Independent Traveller, <http://www.tonythetraveller.com/>

Tony is an Englishman who is blind and has only 80% hearing in both ears without his hearing aids. He travels alone to different countries of the world and writes about his experiences of places and the people he meets. He has travelled to 125 countries, islands and principalities. He is also a motivational speaker and his collected writings have been published as eBooks. He describes himself as a “blind author and travel writer”.

Martyn Sibley – “a regular guy who happens to have a disability”,

<http://martynsibley.com/>

Martyn has Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). This means he cannot walk, lift anything heavier than a book or shower himself. He loves adventure travels, drives his own adapted car, runs his own business, has flown a plane, enjoyed skiing & SCUBA diving, and lives independently on earth. His blog includes a list of 10 tips for travellers with disabilities “Top Ten Travel Tips by Martyn Sibley”.

Jill von Büren, <https://www.hearinglikeme.com/deaf-persons-travel-survival-guide/>

Jill is the social media community manager at Sonova company (Switzerland) and managing editor of Hearing Like Me. She has a background in journalism, and passion for storytelling and connecting with people. When she's not immersing herself in the hearing loss community, she enjoys travelling. She writes: I've had my fair share of travelling experiences being 'disabled'. At times it can be complicated, but of course, it's all worth it when you arrive at your destination! Blog page: “6 Tips for Travelling with Hearing Loss”.

WHAT CAN ACCESSIBILITY BRING YOU

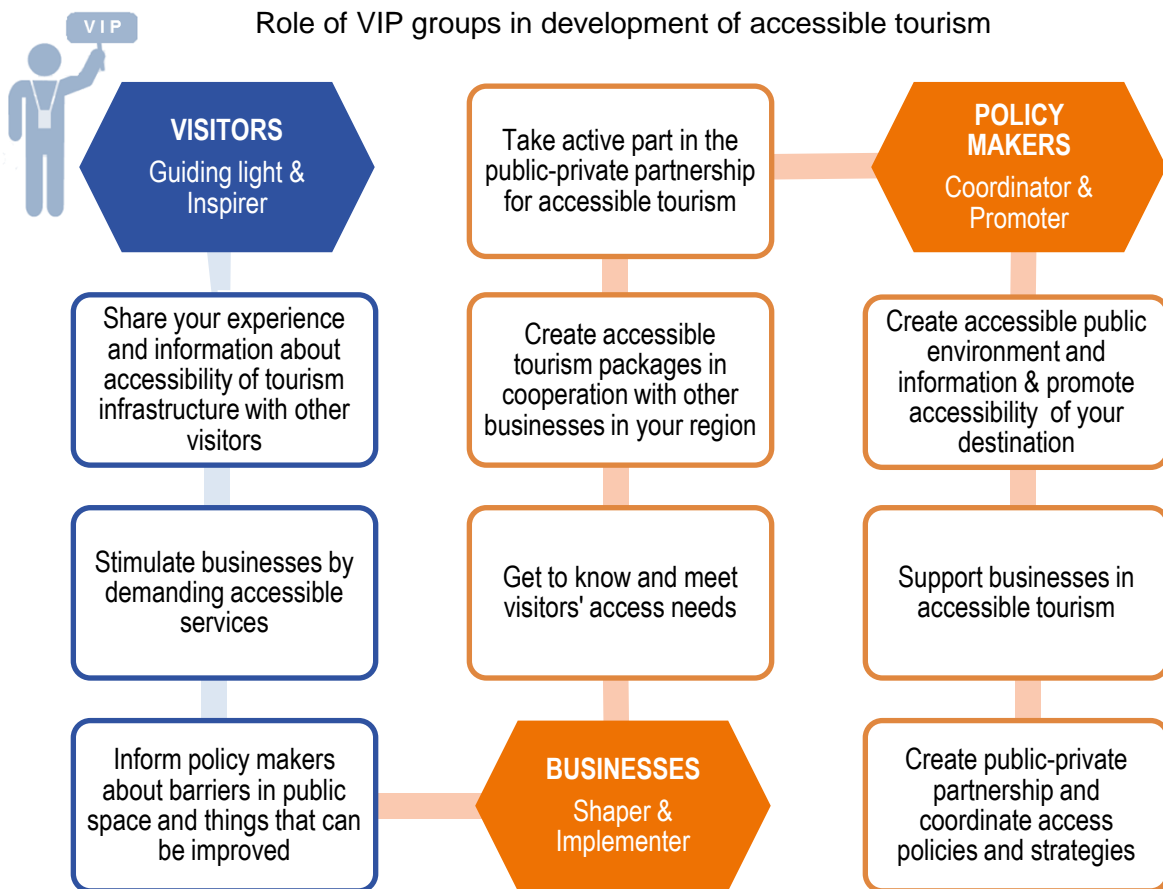
Accessibility is a matter of equal rights to tourism services, a business opportunity and a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy.

For you, Visitors and Residents, the main benefits of accessibility are **improved travel opportunities and environment for your everyday life.**

Benefits for Visitors and Local Residents

- Better Quality of tourism offer
- Friendly, comfortable and safe environment without barriers
- Hospitality - better attitude of staff
- Respect to your dignity and rights
- Better choice and enjoyment of tourism products

Development of accessible tourism is not only up to individual owners of tourist facilities and service providers. Individual and isolated solutions cannot bring all these benefits. It is a collective task, where everyone (every VIP group) has its role, which is equally important. The closer the cooperation between the partners is the better results are achieved. **Where there's a will there's a way.**





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THIS DOCUMENT WAS CREATED BY ELEVATOR PROJECT PARTNERS:

EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR ACCESSIBLE TOURISM - ENAT ASBL, BRUXELLES, BELGIUM, ENAT@ACCESSIBLETOURISM.ORG

KAZUIST, SPOL. S R.O., TŘINEC, CZECH REPUBLIC, INFO@KAZUIST.CZ

TANDEM, SOCIETÀ COOPERATIVA SOCIALE INTEGRATA, ROME, ITALY, TANDEM.COOP@GMAIL.COM

PREMIKI ZAVOD ZA SVETOVANJE, PROMOCIJO IN RAZVOJ DOSTOPNEGA TURIZMA, LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA, INFO@PREMIKI.COM

PROJECT WEBSITE: [HTTP://WWW.ACCESSIBLETOURISM.ORG/ELEVATOR](http://WWW.ACCESSIBLETOURISM.ORG/ELEVATOR)

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