

Organización Mundial del Turismo



UNWTO

Accessible Tourism for All: An Opportunity within Our Reach



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Accessible Tourism for All: An Opportunity within Our Reach



Introduction

All tourists want unique experiences tailored to their needs. The UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the global framework for the responsible and sustainable development of the sector, underlines in its Article 7 that all persons should be able to exercise their right to enjoy tourism without hindrance.

Among the more than one billion international tourists that travel each year, a high percentage consists of families with young children and/or seniors, and persons with disabilities or other special needs.

For these millions of people to be able to participate in tourism on equal terms, **it is crucial that destinations develop universal accessibility measures.**

Those destinations that create environments, products and services suitable for all will

enhance their supply, enable a better tourist experience and improve the quality of life of the local population and visitors.

The Handbook on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Good Practices is a reference document for the tourism sector, as it proposes guidelines for achieving accessibility in destinations in the most efficient and well-planned manner possible.

For the UNWTO, this Handbook forms part of its strategy for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism at the global level, encouraging key stakeholders to implement measures that result in greater participation of different population groups in tourism.

The Handbook was enriched by the knowledge the ONCE Foundation has acquired from more than 25 years of professional experience in



the implementation of Universal Accessibility and Design for All projects, as well as from the support of the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT).

It consists of five Modules that cover the main issues to be considered in the implementation of accessibility in tourism:

- **Module I:** Definition and context
- **Module II:** Chain of accessibility and recommendations
- **Module III:** Main areas of action
- **Module IV:** Indicators for studying accessibility in tourism
- **Module V:** Good practices

This publication underlines the major highlights of each module of the Handbook. Its aim is to inspire policy makers and destination managers, as well as tourism entrepreneurs, to carry out concrete accessibility measures.



Module I

Module I: Definition and context

Accessibility, sustainability and equitable participation by all make up what is known as “Tourism for All”. Furthermore, these principles promote quality in tourism destinations and increase their competitiveness.

Within this framework, Module I analyses the different concepts and user profiles of Accessible Tourism and its wider social and economic benefits.

What is “Accessible Tourism”?

The concept of “Accessible Tourism” refers to the adaptation of environments and of tourism products and services so as to enable access, use and enjoyment by all users, under the principles of Universal Design.

Who needs accessibility in tourism?

All of us demand accessible environments, products and services at some point of our lives, whether due to a disability, illness, accident, pregnancy, advanced age or simply because we are bringing luggage of large dimensions or because we are not familiar with the environment. These conditions can affect both tourists and local residents of a destination.

Did you know...?

People with disabilities represent 15% of the world population.¹

In some countries, the social and economic situation of this group favours their participation in tourism if destinations are well prepared to receive and care for people with disabilities or other special needs.

¹. World Health Organization. World Report on Disability 2011 URL: http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf



https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284417919 - Wednesday, April 12, 2023 4:36:36 AM - IP Address: 91.98.40.24

Did you know...?

The percentage of people over age 60, which in 2000 was 11%, will double to 22% of world population in 2050. This will represent two billion people and two billion opportunities for the tourism sector.²

Many senior tourists can have a stable income, more leisure time and greater availability, and therefore demand accessible services in order to travel without difficulty.

Why is it in my interest to make my product or my destination accessible?

Accessibility:

- **It is a right:** The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³ recognizes it as an enforceable right to the extent that the

Member States of the United Nations ratify and implement the Convention.

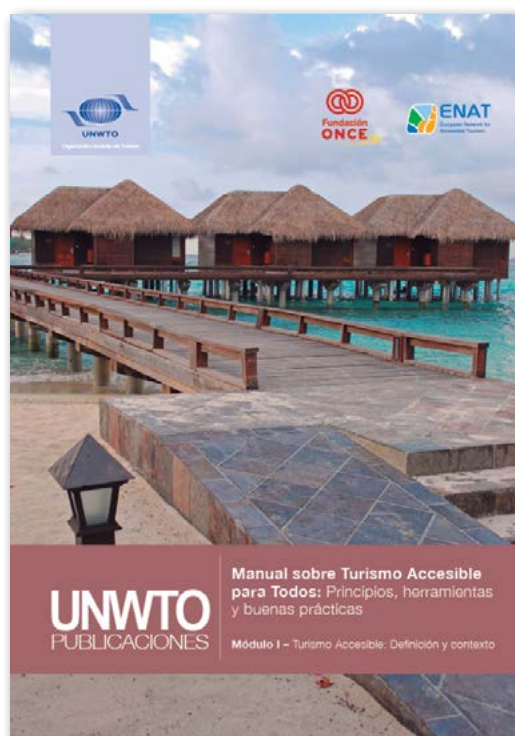
- **It is at the service of users:** Recommendations and legal obligations are easier to carry out when a destination understands the real needs of different customers and the reason for their demands.
- **It is an investment:** If it is considered from the very beginning of the design or implemented through making small changes, significant improvements that can lead to increased market share are achieved.
- **It brings great results:** It enhances competitiveness and promotes customer loyalty. Destinations that fail to meet accessibility conditions run the risk of finding themselves out of today's market.

2. World Health Organization URL.: <http://www.who.int/ageing/en/>

3. United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. URL: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>



- **It generates customer satisfaction:**
Following these recommendations leads to improved quality of service and ensures a good experience on the part of the tourist with regard to the area of accessibility.





Module II

Module II: Accessibility chain and recommendations

What good is having a fully accessible hotel if the transport to reach it is not accessible?

Accessibility throughout the tourism value chain avoids the creation of “accessibility islands” that compromise the security and integrity of the tourism experience. A person needs to make the trip with maximum independence and satisfaction, starting from the planning stage up until the return back home.

Module II proposes some recommendations for the creation of accessible tourism destinations:

Information is key: It is essential to provide reliable and timely data on the accessibility conditions at the destination. The information should reach all users through accessible documents and formats⁴.

An unbroken chain: Destinations should create a comprehensive supply of Tourism for All products and services in which all the elements of the supply chain (reservation systems, accommodation, transport, etc.) are easily accessed.

The challenge of transport: There needs to be suitable means of transport to reach the destination and to move around within it. If a destination does not offer this, the tourist will decide not to undertake the trip.

4. See UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism (A/RES/669(XXI)), adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly, on 17 September 2015, in Medellín, Colombia.



Safety and security: When making facilities accessible, safety and security considerations for all visitors should be taken into account, as well as protective measures to prevent possible harm.

Inclusiveness: It is necessary to provide suitable services in an integrated manner within the products offered at the destination. Segregated products do not work if they are not justified with higher quality.

Attitude is everything: It is critical to provide specific training to staff to attend to persons with access needs, as this favours individualized service.





Module III

Module III: Main areas of action

The **planning** of accessible destinations depends on strategic collaboration between the public and private sectors, along with the actors of civil society.

Module III sets out specific guidelines that the different actors should follow in a transversal manner in order to achieve universal accessibility in the tourism sector:

Legal framework

Legislation covering equality and non-discrimination provides information on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The parameters established in accessibility policies provide information of how to apply the requirements in different environments, products and services.

Supply and demand

Research carried out in a destination shows the impact of Accessible Tourism, visitor flows, expenses incurred and the volume of visitation to certain destinations. This research is essential in order to understand future trends and to plan short- and long-term actions.

Raising awareness

Cultural differences in how persons with access needs are considered affect awareness regarding accessibility. Putting in place the appropriate training allows standardization and consideration of special needs on the part of tourism professionals.

Comprehensive implementation of accessibility

In addition to the implementation of the recommendations, it is advisable to have a strategic plan for accessibility in destinations so that actions are structured in accordance with the needs identified in terms of accessibility.

The management of this strategic plan enables the long-term continuity of accessibility measures and prevents any improvement initiatives in a destination from being isolated and being carried out arbitrarily.

Promotion

Having an accessible destination is all for nought if the products and services offered are not communicated to potential tourists. Including accessibility in the usual promotional channels should form part of the implementation of marketing strategies.





Module IV

Module IV: Indicators

Destination managers need to measure the levels of accessibility through certain concrete indicators.

Module IV proposes a number of indicators developed in order for tourism destinations to be able to assess, monitor and manage the accessibility of their Accessible Tourism supply. These indicators can give us the answers to the following questions:

What percentage of official tourism websites of the country contains information about the accessibility of the destination? And how many provide this information in accessible formats? What percentage of hotels or travel agencies has suitable access? And how many of them have a certificate of accessibility?

How many hotels at the destination can be reached directly via adapted public transport?

And what percentage of parking spaces is accessible for customers who decide to use their own vehicles?

What proportion of train stations in the region have personnel who are trained to attend to customers with special needs?

Indicators:

- help assess the level of development and management of the Accessible Tourism infrastructure, products and services of a destination,
- contribute to the preparation of objective comparative analyses between tourism infrastructure elements, products and services,
- represent a useful tool for prioritizing actions in the field of accessibility,



- contribute to the standardization of accessibility in the sector,
- enable the adoption of appropriate policies and improved planning for the future based on the results obtained, and
- justify the adoption of decisions on the planning and management of tourism in the territory.





Module V

Module V: Good practices

Certain conditions such as public policy and appropriate business decisions can stimulate the development of initiatives aimed at creating an accessible tourism environment.

Module V highlights good practices in the implementation of concrete measures to make Accessible Tourism a reality. The good practices set out in the Handbook cover the following areas:

Promotion

VisitEngland encourages awareness among tourism stakeholders in England (UK) through a tourism excellence award in the category of accessibility.

Research

Open Doors Organization (ODO) conducted several studies on the demand for Accessible Tourism in the United States, which showed the profitability of accessibility.

Training

The European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) is coordinating the first European project with the participation of several countries whose final result is a European certificate of training in Accessible Tourism.



Travel agencies

Viajes 2000, the first Spanish travel agency specializing in products for persons with disabilities, illustrates measures to assure its customers of the accessibility of the resources and itineraries it offers, validated by its experts.

Accommodation

The Scandic hotel chain, with 102 accessibility standards and an accessibility ambassador, is an advocate of the principles of universal design as a business strategy.

Transport

The Eurotaxi initiative, an example of public-private partnership, has successfully managed

to deploy a fleet of accessible taxis nationwide in Spain and to include a review of accessibility aspects in the transport legislation in force in the country.

Destination

Japan, at the country level, shows that hospitality can go beyond welcoming visitors with disabilities, since accessibility is synonymous with hospitality in all areas (understanding signage, a foreign language, a different culture, etc.)

Tourism information

“The Accessible Road” is a bilingual guide that facilitates and promotes the accessibility of travel in the region of Quebec (Canada) and includes information on accessible tourism



resources audited by experts, including training in attending to persons with disabilities.

Tourism activities

The “Open sea for all” project was implemented to redesign the beaches of the Department of Hérault in France by applying the parameters of Design for All, thus showing how to respond to the multiple needs of both tourists and locals.



All the Modules of the Handbook on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Good Practices are available at:

<http://ethics.unwto.org/content/accessible-tourism>

Other useful links:

UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All

<http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/docpdf/accesibilityenok.pdf>

UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism

http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/a21_10_report_of_the_world_committee_on_tourism_ethics_add3_en.pdf

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

<http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/docpdf/gcetbrochureglobalcodeen.pdf>

For more information, please contact
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The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 157 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 450 Affiliate Members.

The ONCE Foundation has as its main objectives the training and employment of persons with disabilities and universal accessibility, as well as promoting the creation of fully accessible environments, products and services. We work towards the elimination of barriers in the fields of culture, leisure and tourism and raising the awareness of society through publications and the organization of the International Conference on Tourism for All.

ENAT, the European Network for Accessible Tourism, is a non-profit association that gathers together organizations and individuals from the private, public and non-governmental sectors. Our mission is to make tourism destinations, products and services at the European level accessible for all visitors, while supporting the promotion of inclusive and accessible tourism on a global scale.



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