



# ACCESSIBILITY PLAYBOOK

DESTINATION MODULE



PRODUCED IN CONJUNCTION WITH

**TRAVELABILITY**



**DESTINATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL**  
**SOCIAL IMPACT**



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# The Accessibility Playbook Overview

The Accessibility Playbook, developed by TravelAbility and Destinations International, equips destination organizations in advancing accessibility efforts. It is an action-oriented guide used to transform visitor experiences, uplift community values, and drive stewardship.

Each section is modular, allowing destinations to explore insights, tools, and practical guidance to support any phase of their accessibility journey. Customize the “Welcome Message” and share templates with industry stakeholders to create alignment where it matters most. Leverage the Playbook’s AI Companion to collaborate across departments. Powered by UnchainedAI, this integrated tool offers unlimited and actionable recommendations to support every function from communication to sales and services.

The 2025-2026 addition of the Accessibility Playbook is released during an important milestone for disability rights: the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Signed into law on July 26, 1990, the ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.

The ADA was enacted after decades of advocacy for equal rights. From the Capitol Crawl, where disabled activists famously left their wheelchairs and crawled up the steps of the U.S. Capitol, to cross-country advocacy campaigns, the fight for the ADA laid the groundwork for important progress. Now, many once contested features like ramps, curb cuts, and Braille signage have become standard in public spaces. Its impact has since influenced disability rights worldwide.

Accessibility is deeply personal. What makes a space accessible for one person may not work for another. The Accessibility Playbook is meant to celebrate the legacy of the ADA, and of other worldwide efforts, by building on these foundations. By utilizing the Playbook, destinations can embed disability rights deeply into their offerings and strategies, making travel experiences welcoming and accessible to all.





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# **PART 1**

# **INTRODUCTION**





## WELCOME TO THE ACCESSIBILITY PLAYBOOK

Welcome to the Accessibility Playbook developed by TravelAbility and Destinations International in partnership with [your destination]. According to the World Health Organization, 1.3 billion individuals, or one out of six people, live with some type of disability. This translates to 66 million Americans, over 10.5 million Canadians, and more than 120 million residents across the European Union. We have an incredible opportunity to welcome new visitors to [our destination].

Ensuring destinations are welcoming to travelers with disabilities goes beyond numbers and economic impact. [Our destination] believes that all visitors should explore our city with confidence knowing they will be welcomed by a community that prioritizes compassion, kindness, awareness, and understanding. We are proud to welcome travelers with disabilities, through initiatives such as [insert here]. This work brings us one step closer towards a reality where everyone, regardless of ability, feels valued and can fully experience the joys of travel.

We now call on you to help further these endeavors and elevate the visitor experience through your own education. Please utilize the wealth of information and expertise in this playbook to better understand and support travelers with disabilities. These pages are a guide to help get you started, providing recommendations, resources, and use cases.

We look forward to your feedback, insights, and collaboration as we continue on this journey together.



**[Name]**

[Title]

[Destination Organization]

## FOUR COMMON DISABILITIES

The landscape of disability is complex, encompassing conditions present at birth, those that are progressive or develop over time, those caused by injuries, and structural and functional impairments. The World Health Organization's 2001 International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) classifies disabilities by considering the limitations of activity and participation in personal and societal life.

When it comes to traveler experiences, consider four types of disabilities: vision, auditory, mobility, and neurocognitive. While some disabilities are visible, many are unseen. No matter the type of disability that exists, it is essential to treat each individual with respect. This involves understanding and acknowledging unique perspectives, needs, and experiences.



**Vision disabilities** – Includes blindness and low vision, conditions affecting a person's ability to see.



**Auditory disabilities** – Includes deafness and hard of hearing, conditions affecting a person's ability to hear.



**Mobility disabilities** – Conditions affecting a person's ability to move around independently and perform everyday activities.



**Neurocognitive disabilities** – Variations in human neurological development that result in different ways of processing sensory information, experiencing the world, and interacting with others.

## Accessibility Icons



**Eye icon** – Represents visual impairments or services for people with low vision.



**Guide dog** – Indicates service animals are welcome and recognized.



**Braille dots** – Braille signage or information is available.



**Hand reading Braille** – Reinforces availability of Braille materials or tactile signage.



**Ear with sound waves** – Assistive listening devices or hearing support available.



**Brain with circuits** – Refers to supports for neurodivergent individuals or cognitive disabilities.



**Person with white cane** – Designates an area accessible or designed for people

who are blind or have low vision.



**Person with cane and dots** – Indicates tactile paths or guidance for people who are blind or have visual impairments.



**Accessible parking sign with downward arrow** – Accessible parking available in a garage or lower level.



**Person in wheelchair on incline** – Signifies wheelchair-accessible ramps are available.



**Wheelchair with "RAMP" label** – Indicates a ramp entrance that is wheelchair accessible.



**Elevator with wheelchair icon** – Signifies an accessible elevator or lift for wheelchair users.



## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- **Ask Before Offering Assistance:** Always ask if the person needs help before providing assistance. Respect their autonomy and allow them to accept or decline assistance.
- **Respect the person's personal space including equipment or aids:** Be mindful of personal space and avoid touching them or any equipment or aids without permission.
- **Be Patient and Understanding:** Allow extra time for individuals to complete tasks or navigate unfamiliar environments. Be patient and understanding of any challenges they may encounter.
- **Listen and Communicate:** Listen attentively to the person and communicate clearly. If they have difficulty speaking or understanding, be patient and use alternative methods of communication if necessary.
- **Use Welcoming Language:** Use language that respects the dignity and autonomy of neurodivergent individuals. Avoid using stigmatizing or derogatory language, and prioritize person-first language (e.g., "person with autism" rather than "autistic person").
- **Respect Their Independence:** Respect the individual's independence and avoid making assumptions about their abilities. Offer assistance when needed but allow them to take the lead in communication and decision-making. Interact with the disabled individual instead of the caregiver.

### ▶ Watch This Video (3:40)

"[We Don't Bite](#)" is a short video produced by the District of Columbia for disability sensitivity training.



## VISION DISABILITIES



Blindness and low vision are both conditions that affect a person's ability to see, but they differ in degree and extent.

**Blindness:** Blindness refers to a complete or severe loss of vision. A person who is blind typically cannot see at all or has very limited vision, often to the extent that they rely on alternative senses such as touch, hearing, or smell.

**Low Vision:** Low vision refers to significant visual impairment that cannot be fully corrected with glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery. Unlike blindness, individuals with low vision still have some remaining vision, but it is impaired to the point where everyday activities like reading or recognizing faces may be challenging.

### A WARM WELCOME

- **Identify Yourself:** When approaching a blind person, introduce yourself and let them know that you are there to assist if needed. This helps establish trust and facilitates communication.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Use clear and descriptive language when providing information or giving directions. Be specific and avoid vague or ambiguous terms.
- **Offer Assistance:** If a blind person requests assistance, offer your help willingly and respectfully. Be patient and help without taking over or assuming control.
- **Guide Properly:** If guiding a blind person, offer your arm for them to hold onto, and walk slightly ahead while describing the surroundings and any obstacles. Allow them to maintain their own pace and follow their lead.



- **Use Descriptive Language:** When describing visual information, use descriptive language to convey details about colors, shapes, sizes, and spatial relationships. Paint a vivid picture with your words.



## MOBILITY DISABILITIES



Mobility issues refer to conditions or disabilities that affect a person's ability to move around independently and perform everyday activities. Some common mobility issues include:

**Musculoskeletal Conditions:** Conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, or muscular dystrophy can make it difficult for individuals to walk, stand, or move around comfortably.

**Neurological Disorders:** Neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, or cerebral palsy can result in difficulties with balance and mobility.

**Spinal Cord Injuries:** Injuries to the spinal cord can cause paralysis or partial paralysis. Individuals may use wheelchairs, walkers, or other assistive devices for mobility.

**Stroke:** Stroke survivors may experience hemiparesis or hemiplegia. This can make it challenging to walk or maintain balance.

**Amputations:** Individuals who have undergone amputation due to injury, vascular disease, or congenital conditions may use prosthetic limbs or assistive devices.

**Chronic Pain:** Chronic pain conditions such as fibromyalgia, back pain, or neuropathy can significantly impact mobility and quality of life.

**Visual Impairments:** Individuals with visual impairments may use mobility aids such as white canes or guide dogs.

**Age-related Decline:** As people age, they may experience a decline in mobility due to factors such as muscle weakness, joint stiffness, balance problems, and chronic health conditions.

## A WARM WELCOME

- **Offer Assistance Appropriately:** Confirm if the person would like assistance, and follow instructions if help is wanted. Get consent before handling equipment and taking over tasks.
- **Ensure Accessibility:** Make sure that the environment is accessible to individuals with mobility issues. This includes providing ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and accessible restrooms.
- **Be Mindful of Physical Barriers:** Be aware of physical barriers that may hinder mobility, such as stairs, uneven surfaces, or narrow doorways. Offer alternative routes or assistance as needed.



# NEUROCOGNITIVE DISABILITIES



Neurodivergence describes individuals whose neurological development and functioning differ from what is

typically considered “normal” or “neurotypical.” This includes people with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette syndrome, PTSD, and more.

Being neurodivergent is not a deficit but rather reflects natural variations in human neurological development. They may face challenges in social communication, sensory processing, executive function, and emotional regulation. Individuals with PTSD often have heightened or altered sensory processing. Everyday stimuli like loud noises, bright lights, crowds or unexpected touch can be perceived as threats, triggering a fight, flight or freeze response. Environments that are

too stimulating or unpredictable can become overwhelming very quickly.

## A WARM WELCOME

- **Respect Individual Differences:** Recognize that neurodivergent individuals have diverse experiences, strengths, and challenges.
- **Listen and Validate:** Listen attentively to the person’s perspectives, experiences, and preferences.
- **Respect Interests:** Respect the individual’s personal space, boundaries, and ways of interacting. Ask for consent before initiating physical contact or offering assistance and respect their right to decline if they are not comfortable. Do not pressure the individual to conform to neurotypical norms such as eye contact and hand shaking.

## Eight Myths about Autism by Peter Wharmby

### 1. Autistic people don’t feel empathy.

The majority of us feel enormous amounts of empathy, even for non-living things, and especially for animals.

### 2. Autistic people can’t make eye contact.

Some of us don’t seem to mind it at all, whilst the many of us who hate it can force ourselves to when we feel its necessary.

**3. Autistic males are far more common than autistic females.** The ratio is rapidly shifting to being more balanced as diagnostic understanding improves.

**4. Autistic people don’t have a sense of humor.** I mean, some of us don’t, and some of us have what may be seen as a ‘different’ sense of humor, but there are a lot of funny autistic people out there, including those who do comedy

professionally.

### 5. Autistic people have learning disabilities.

In fact a surprisingly low percentage of autistic people have co-occurring learning disabilities. However, people with learning disabilities are much more likely to be autistic too.

**6. Autistic people are all antisocial.** Many of us may be asocial from trauma associated with social interaction, but it seems many of us are quite gregarious and even extroverted.

**7. Autistic people are all STEM subject specialists.** Though plenty are, there are many of us who have skills, jobs and qualifications in the humanities, arts and other fields.

**8. Autistic people are all super-gifted in some way.** Though some of us might be skilled in certain areas, and some of us might have excellent memories, plenty of us are perfectly average.



## AUDITORY DISABILITIES



Deafness and being hard of hearing are both conditions that affect a person's ability to hear.

**Deafness:** Deafness refers to a profound hearing loss that may render a person unable to hear sounds at all or only able to perceive very loud noises. Individuals who are deaf typically rely on alternative forms of communication, such as sign language, lip-reading, or written communication to interact with others and navigate the world around them.

**Hard of Hearing:** Being hard of hearing (HoH) refers to having a partial hearing loss, where a person may have difficulty hearing certain sounds or frequencies but can still perceive sound to some extent. Individuals who are hard of hearing may rely on hearing aids, assistive listening devices, or other accommodations to improve their ability to hear speech and other sounds. Hard of hearing individuals often use spoken language as their primary mode of communication.

## A WARM WELCOME

- **Get Their Attention:** Before speaking make sure you have their attention. Do this by waving your hand, tapping them gently on the shoulder, or making eye contact.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Speak clearly and at a moderate pace but avoid shouting and covering your mouth as it can distort lip movement. Use natural facial expressions and gestures to enhance communication and avoid exaggeration.
- **Respect Their Communication Preferences:** Respect the individual's preferred communication method, whether it's sign language, lip-reading, written communication, or a combination of methods. If you're unsure, ask them how they prefer to communicate. Do not assume the individual reads lips.
- **Provide Accommodations:** Provide accommodations such as written materials, visual aids, or assistive listening devices to facilitate communication and ensure inclusivity.
- **Address the Person Directly:** Don't speak to interpreters, companions, or caregivers instead of directly addressing the deaf or HoH individual.



## COMMUNICATION GUIDANCE

Part of what makes communicating challenging is that people with disabilities are not a homogenous group. A good practice is to ask how someone prefers to describe themselves and, if you inadvertently offend someone with your language, apologize and ask them to share with you their preferred language.

There are generally two ways to approach this: **person-first** or **identity-first**. Neither is right or wrong; we should simply honor an individual's preference.

**Person-first language:** Person-first language emphasizes the person first — their individuality, their complexity, their humanness and their equality.

**Example:** “A person with a disability”

**Identity-first language:** Identity-first language emphasizes that the disability plays a role in who the person is and reinforces disability as a positive cultural identifier.

**Example:** “Disabled person”

TIPS	USE	DO NOT USE
<b>Emphasize abilities, not limitations</b>	Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound
	Person who uses a device to speak	Can't talk, mute
<b>Do not use language that suggests the lack of something</b>	Person with a disability	Disabled, handicapped
	Person of short stature	Midget
	Person with cerebral palsy	Cerebral palsy victim
	Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder	Epileptic
	Person with multiple sclerosis	Afflicted by multiple sclerosis
<b>Emphasize the need for accessibility, not the disability</b>	Accessible parking or bathroom	Handicapped parking or bathroom
<b>Do not use offensive language</b>	Person with a physical disability	Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, spastic
	Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	Slow, simple, moronic, defective, afflicted, special person
	Person with an emotional or behavioral disability, a mental health impairment, or a psychiatric disability	Insane, crazy, psycho, maniac, nuts
<b>Avoid language that implies negative stereotypes</b>	Person without a disability	Normal person, healthy person

Source: Center for Disease Control (CDC)



## PART 2

# THE BUSINESS CASE





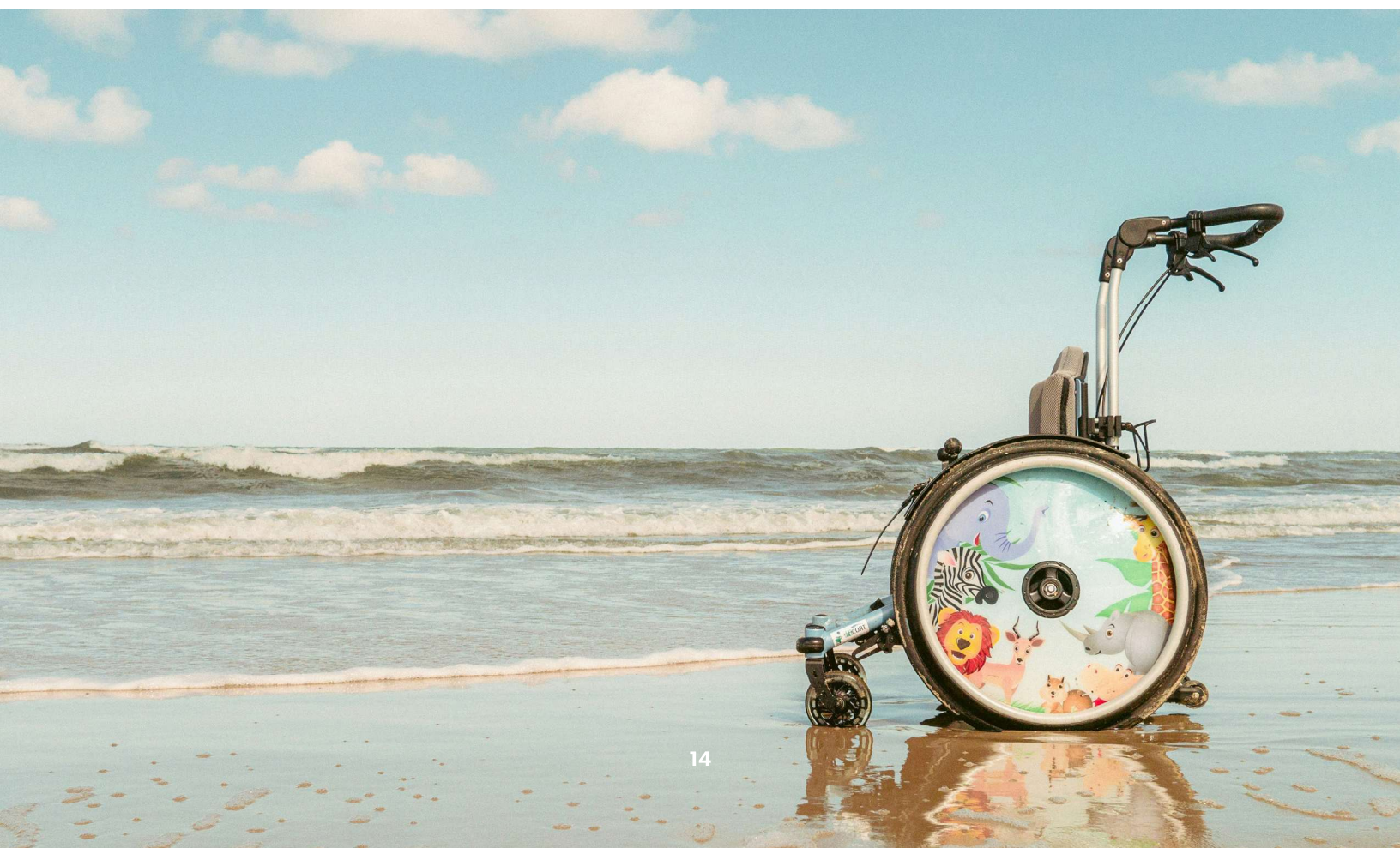
## WHY ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL MATTERS

Travel offers unparalleled opportunities for personal growth, cultural exchange, and shared meaningful experiences. However, those opportunities are not available to everyone. The World Health Organization reports that more than one billion people globally, about 16% of the population, live with a significant disability. This number is expected to grow as the global population ages and does not account for temporary disabilities that many people experience at some point in their lives.

Accessible travel gives all individuals the opportunity to contribute to a destination's cultural and economic vitality. It can deepen connections between destination organizations and their communities. It has the power to boost economies and equips destinations for long-term resilience and stewardship.

Accessibility matters because it creates social impact, the result of measurable outcomes through welcoming and responsible tourism. By adopting the principles and strategies outlined in this playbook, you can take a crucial step towards a more accessible future.

“Traveling, without sight, is an extraordinary journey of exploration. In the quiet footsteps and whispered winds, you discover a world painted in sensations—the warmth of sun-kissed stones, the rhythm of bustling streets, and the symphony of unfamiliar voices. Each tactile map, each shared laughter, becomes a constellation of memories etched upon your soul. In the vastness of the unknown, you find not darkness, but a canvas waiting for your touch—a masterpiece woven from courage, resilience, and the sheer wonder of exploration.” —TED TAHQUECHI



# THE ACCESSIBILITY TRIFECTA

SHARE WITH  
STAKEHOLDERS

Demands for accessible travel have increased in recent years due to awareness and advocacy. Disabled travelers and their caregivers will continue to turn to destinations that welcome them and best meet their needs. In the U.S. alone, 73.4 million adults were living with disabilities in 2022, a number expected to grow substantially by 2040. <sup>1</sup> Destinations who attract disabled visitors, meet the demands of tomorrow's travelers, and engage with residents to support accessibility will stand out from those who do not.

There are three critical reasons why accessibility matters now more than ever:

## 1. Planning for the travel needs of baby boomers

Every day, 10,000 baby boomers reach the age of 65, and more than 43% of them have a disability. <sup>2</sup> This generation remains the most financially powerful segment of the travel market. They control 70% of the nation's disposable income, have an average net worth of \$1.2 million, and make up 60% of luxury travelers. Many older adults experience physical limitations but do not always identify as having a disability. As a result, they may avoid destinations that seem difficult to navigate, even if they don't ask for accommodation.

**Destinations that prioritize guest comfort and satisfaction build trust and encourage return visits.**

## 2. Community Engagement

Residents with disabilities can benefit from accessibility improvements. Making a destination accessible strengthens community engagement by removing physical and social barriers that often prevent residents with disabilities from participating in public life. This builds a more representative and connected community, where diverse needs are recognized and valued.

**Accessible design helps destinations strengthen bonds with residents with disabilities and build engaged communities.**

## 3. Empowering Visitors

In 2023 and 2024, 25.6 million travelers with disabilities took a total of 76.9 million trips and spent almost \$50 billion <sup>3</sup>.

Among those who traveled two-thirds are accompanied by at least one other person. Travelers with disabilities, whether permanent or temporary, often face challenges when planning a trip. Clear accessibility information directly improves visitor engagement and satisfaction for both the disabled traveler and the caregiver.

**Clear accessibility information empowers millions of travelers with disabilities and their companions to travel with confidence, driving economic impact.**



(1) [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

(2) [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

(3) [Open Doors Organization](#)



## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRAVELERS WITH A DISABILITY

- Market size = +1 billion and growing
- Meeting needs = More spending by the whole travel party
- Unmet needs = Missed profits
- Curb-cut effect = Improved satisfaction for all market segments

## THE CURB CUT EFFECT

Accessibility matters because it benefits everyone. A clear example of this is the curb-cut effect. Most people don't associate the ramps on neighborhood sidewalks with accommodations for people with disabilities. Small design changes can be helpful for all populations, including

children riding bikes, parents pushing strollers, and delivery people. Meeting accessibility needs drives profits by creating a more welcoming environment.

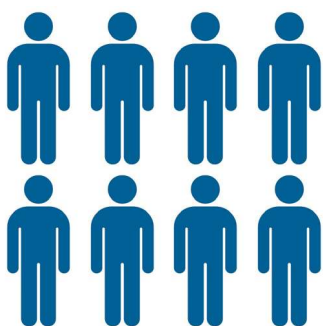
## LEARN MORE

### Recommended Research

- [Unlocking ROI – Choose Lansing and the Oregon Coast](#)
- [Journeys for All, Expedia Group](#)
- [Open Doors Organization - 2024 Market Study](#)

## OVERVIEW OF THE DISABILITY TRAVEL MARKET

The disability travel market is a significant force in tourism, driven by substantial spending power. Exceeding expectations for travelers with disabilities is a smart business strategy.



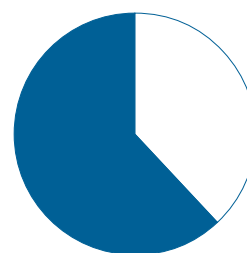
**1.6 billion people**

in the world currently have a disability

This population represents a disposable income of over

**\$2.6 trillion.**

In the US alone, annual disposable income is \$1.3 trillion



Factoring in their friends and family, disability touches

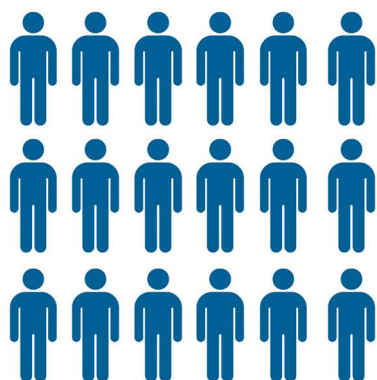
**63% of the global population**



The global disability market including friends and family is therefore

**\$18.3 trillion.**

## ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL IMPACT IN THE US, 2022-2024



**25.6 million adults**  
with disabilities in the U.S.  
traveled.



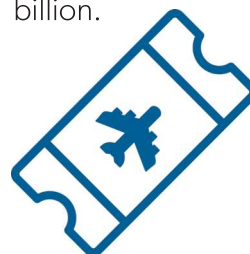
**20 million disabled travelers took trips with overnight stays.**

Amounting to 40.5 million hotel-based trips.

**Average spend:**  
**\$125 per night**



13 million adults with disabilities took flights. They made **25.4 million air trips**, spending \$10 billion.



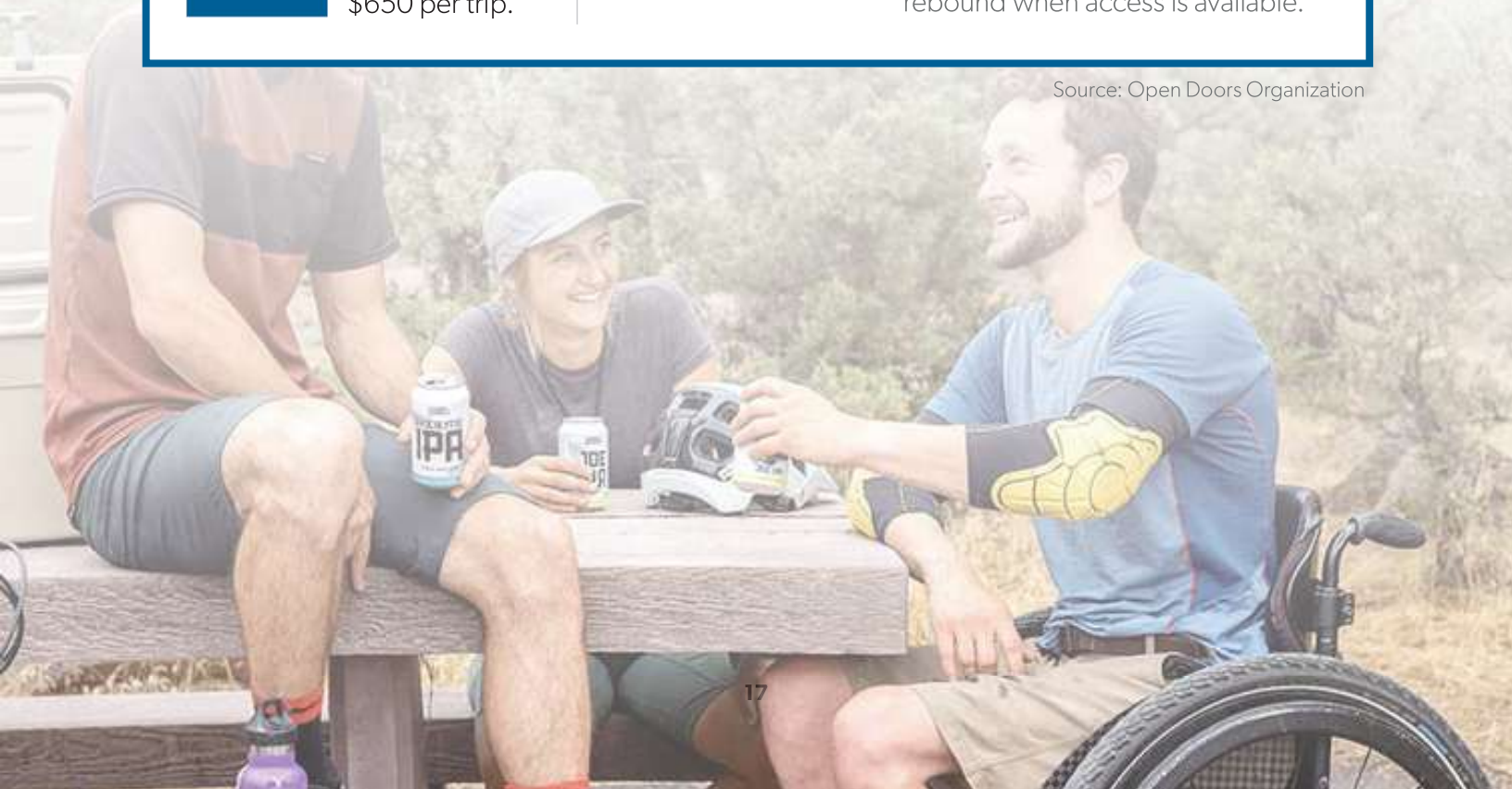
Travelers generated **\$50 billion in travel spending**, averaging \$650 per trip.



**5.1 million travelers with disabilities took cruises.**

They made 10.3 million trips, spending \$18.5 billion on fares, \$3.1 billion on excursions. Cruise spending is up 78% since 2020, showing strong interest and rebound when access is available.

Source: Open Doors Organization



## UNDERSTANDING STANDARDS AND LEGISLATION

Accessibility has become a strategic business priority beyond legal and ethical obligations. Persons with disabilities are accounted for in 11 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as a guidepost to “achieve sustainable development for all.”

### The Role of Standards: Building for Consistency and Quality

Globally, standards set expectations for what accessible design and experiences should look like. These are not always legally required, but provide valuable guidelines that can enhance usability, quality, and impact.

One of the most recognized global standards is ISO 21902:2021, Accessible Tourism for All. Developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in 2021, this standard offers guidance for organizations across the industry to make tourism experiences more inclusive. It emphasizes the full visitor journey, from planning and booking to transportation, accommodation, activities, and services.

Digitally, reference the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), as a global benchmark for digital accessibility. While not legislation in itself, WCAG is often cited within legal frameworks across various regions.

### Legislation: Requirements by Geography

Legislation has expanded over the past few decades to advance equity and remove barriers

for individuals with disabilities. As of 2025, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is one of the most widely supported human rights treaties in the world. 190 countries have signed the CRPD, and 186 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention, requiring them to review existing laws and pass new legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities and inclusion across all sectors.

As governments around the world continue to strengthen their legal frameworks and move toward more robust, enforceable standards, being aware of existing legislation and upcoming deadlines helps destinations plan proactively and position accessibility as a strategic investment for readiness, reputation, and impact. Aside from the CRPD, the following are examples of existing national legislation and time-based objectives in three major geographic areas: the United States, Canada, and the European Union.



### United States

#### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

A 1990 landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability and mandates accessibility in public spaces, transportation, employment, and communications. Recent actions suggest potential expansion of digital accessibility enforcement, especially for websites and mobile applications. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued notices of rulemaking on website accessibility under Title II (state and local governments), with discussions of extending similar rules to Title III



(public accommodations). Several states, including California and New York, are considering or have passed additional digital accessibility measures that go beyond federal requirements.

**Section 508 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**, a law that prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs conducted by federal agencies or those receiving federal funding. Updated in 2017, it focuses on information and communication technology to ensure that technology used or provided by federal agencies is accessible to people with disabilities.

**While private sector businesses are not directly required to comply with Section 508, many destination organizations working with federal agencies, or those who want to align with recognized best practices, can choose to adopt these standards voluntarily.**

**Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA)** is a U.S. federal law passed in 1986 that prohibits discrimination against passengers with disabilities by airlines. It requires air carriers to provide equal access and reasonable accommodations for travelers with disabilities when flying to, from, or within the United States. Emerging developments to the Act require airlines to report data on mishandling of mobility equipment and considerations of accessibility technology.

**Even though the ACAA focuses on airlines, destinations that engage with air travel through airport partnerships, visitor services, or transportation logistics can benefit from understanding these rights and reinforces barrier-free journeys from arrival to departure.**

## Canada

**Accessible Canada Act (ACA):** Passed in 2019, ACA focuses on identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in federally regulated sectors, including transportation, telecommunications, banking, and federal government services. Its vision is to create a nation without barriers by 2040, and entities are expected to have accessibility plans and mechanisms for feedback in place by 2025.

**Tourism and hospitality organizations operating within or alongside federally regulated sectors should stay informed, as awareness of the ACA helps destinations align with national expectations, partner meaningfully with federal entities, and demonstrate leadership.**

The **Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA)** plays a central role to ensure that Canada's national transportation system is accessible to people with disabilities. Initially enacted in 2020, it mandates compliance for airlines flying to, from, or within Canada, as well as among rail companies, ferry operators, bus companies, and terminals, stations, and associated transportation service providers. Key requirements include accessible communication, available assistance



services, proper handling of mobility aid devices, accommodation of service animals, and accessible security screenings.

**PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION:** While not all Canadian provinces and territories have their own accessibility legislation, four provinces have standalone acts in place:

**The Accessible British Columbia Act**, passed in 2021, has an initial focus on public sector and government-related services. It requires agencies to develop accessibility committees, plans, and feedback mechanisms.

**Manitoba's Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)** focuses on identifying, preventing and removing barriers in key areas similar to AODA. Implementation is taking place in phases.

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act aims to achieve an accessible province by 2030. It includes areas like the built environment, education, employment, goods and services, information and communication, and transportation.

Ontario's **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)** has a goal to achieve full accessibility by 2025. It extends to customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation, and the built environment.

New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, and the Territories have had legislative discussions and advocacy efforts underway. Newfoundland and Labrador has drafted legislation in place, and Quebec has requirements through a 1978 act that applies to public sector bodies.

## European Union

The European Accessibility Act (EAA) was adopted in 2019 with the goal of improving the accessibility of products and services across all member states. It focuses on both digital and physical products, targeting areas that are crucial for access,

understanding, and interaction in everyday life. While deadline for full compliance is June 28, 2025, each member state has autonomy to decide how to incorporate requirements into their national laws. Notably, the EAA influences global companies who sell products or services in the EU, including ecommerce platforms, booking engines, and airlines.

Various directives and regulations extend beyond the EAA to ensure standards for public sector website and mobile accessibility, passenger transportation rights and nondiscriminatory hiring for people with disabilities.

## Where to Find Guidance: Trusted Experts and Organizations

Navigating accessibility standards and legislation can feel complex, but destinations don't have to do so alone. A wide range of organizations, experts, and resources are available to help ensure that your strategies are informed, aligned, and impactful.

Key Sources of expertise and support can include:

- National disability organizations and advocacy groups
- Standards bodies and certification programs
- Accessibility consultants and specialists
- Specialized marketing and communication agencies
- Destination partners and industry collaboratives

**Engage with local disability advocacy groups and experts early and often. These partnerships not only ensure that your accessibility work reflects real needs but also help build trusted relationships within your community.**



# **PART 3**

# **THE AGING TRAVELER**





## AGING INTO DISABILITY

Quotes provided by Jack and Elaine from Seniors with Latitude.

More than half of U.S. spending on travel comes from the 50-plus community, yet many destinations are unsure on how to meet their evolving needs. In 2023, the annual leisure travel spend among adults over 50 was \$236 billion.



The average 50+ traveler anticipates spending about \$6,847 in 2025.

Source: [AARP Research](#)

As of 2020, 55.8 million individuals in the United States were ages 65 and older; close to 17 percent of the U.S. population. This age group is projected to grow to over 20 percent by 2030. (U.S. Census).



## BEHAVIORAL SHIFTS AMONG AGING TRAVELERS

**55%** say their conditions have resulted in making changes to the way they travel, such as:



Travel more by car (48%)



Take shorter trips (49%)

Book activities before arrival (26%)



Travel to a single location/destination (39%)



Limited mobility accommodations (10%)

45% say their conditions have resulted in less travel



2 in 3 (66%) have made changes to the destinations they choose to go to



Less walking (19%)



Closer destinations (13%)

Choosing more often to stay with friends or family (38%) or in hotels (43%).



Source: [AARP Research](#)

Many older Americans have a disability and many more will acquire disabilities in the future as they age. Among adults 50-plus, 25 percent indicate having a disability. For adults aged 65 and older, this percentage increases to 35 percent.

While many adults over the age of 50 need accommodations for a disability or health condition, aging travelers often don't identify as disabled. Half of adults 50-plus say their difficulty began within the last 5 years, so these challenges are not something they have gotten used to. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many may be traveling for the first time since their health challenges began.

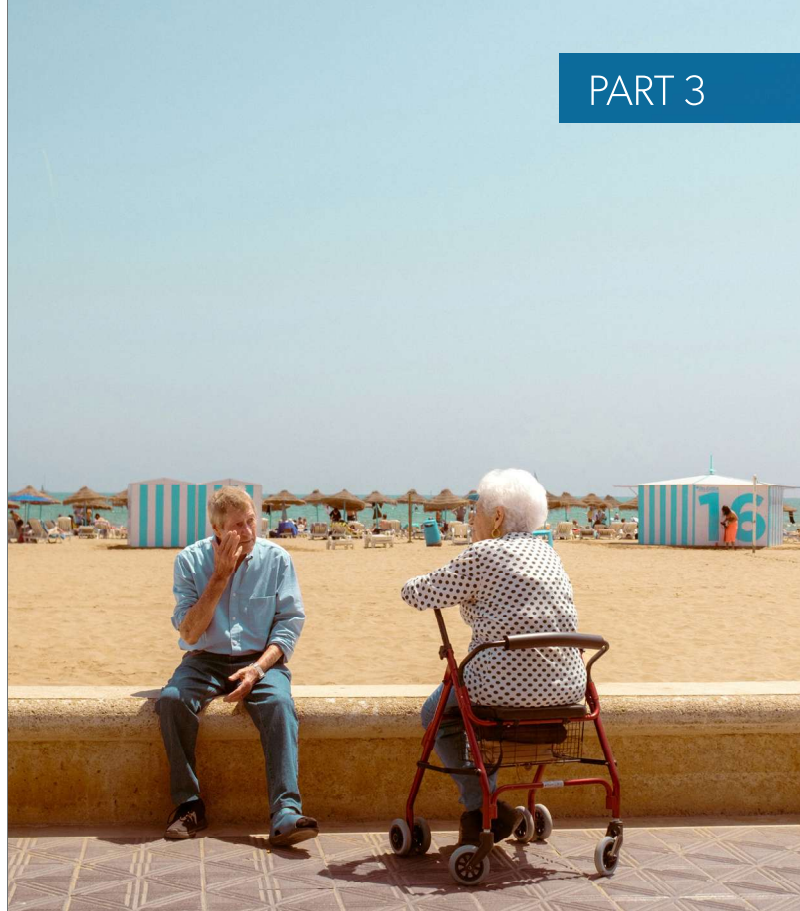
## AGING TRAVELERS WANT TO TRAVEL MORE

Older adults are increasingly motivated to travel to reconnect with loved ones, relax, and recharge. If accessibility accommodations were put into place, half of non-travelers say they would be interested in future travel. Among non-travelers, the most difficult aspects of travel are activities at the destination (46%) and transportation to and from the destination (39%).

**95%** believe travel is good for mental health

**85%** believe travel is a benefit for physical health

“Yes, our knees hurt from hiking, we get pains here and there, but we have also enjoyed massages in many different countries, along with red light therapy, reiki and more. We don't believe that old age equates with poor health.”



## LEARN MORE

### Travel Trends

- **Top Domestic Destinations:** The South (38%) and West (31%) remain the most visited regions, with hotspots including Florida, California, and Las Vegas.
- **Top International Destinations:** Europe (42%) and Latin America/Caribbean (33%) lead in popularity, especially Italy, Great Britain, and Mexico.
- **Health as a Travel Driver:** Many aging travelers are motivated by the mental and physical health benefits of travel. Destinations can position travel as a form of wellness, not just a luxury.
- **Biggest Barrier:** Cost is the leading obstacle to travel—more so than personal health concerns or the health of a loved one.

Source: [AARP Research](#)

# WELCOMING THE AGING TRAVELER

The needs of the aging traveler are often similar to those of disabled travelers, but older adults may be less likely to ask for assistance. Many do not see themselves as having a disability. To better support the needs of aging travelers, keep the following in mind:

**Design for dignity:** Move away from one-size-fits-all experiences that prepare travelers for success. Encourage planning ahead, suggest shorter, well-planned itineraries that reduce stress, and promote services such as airport “meet-and-assist” programs.

**Recognize diverse needs:** Consider mobility, hearing, cognitive, and visual changes that may arise with age, even among those not identifying as disabled.



**Prioritize respectful communication:** Train staff to offer assistance without making assumptions and to recognize signs of anxiety or confusion.

**Be transparent about accessibility:** Clearly communicate which features are available and use visible signage and intuitive wayfinding.

**Offer simple, supportive tools:** Ensure digital tools are user-friendly and secure. Provide low-tech options and human assistance to ease tech-related hesitation.

**Focus on empowerment, not special treatment:** Accommodations that are simple and thoughtful improve satisfaction and reputation.

## THE AGING TRAVELER



PLANNING <span>Source: <a href="#">AARP Research</a></span>	
OBSTACLE 	SOLUTIONS 
Unclear accessibility information makes older adults less likely to travel.	Provide clear, detailed information about accessibility (steps, elevators, seats, bathrooms)
Uncertainty about airport help deters some from flying altogether.	Provide information on the time it takes to travel from check-in to the gate at the airport, as well as the services available.
Uncertainty about refunds makes booking in advance a risk.	Provide cost comparisons across platforms and clear, easily accessible cancellation/refund policies
App-centric booking can be a barrier for older adults who prefer websites.	Provide user-friendly interfaces with simple navigation and clear instructions on where to click and book.
Aversion to technology due to concerns about scams and data breaches.	Provide education about online safety, clear fraud safeguards, and phone support
Challenges using online platforms to book transportation and activities.	Develop and promote curated travel experiences tailored to their preferences and needs
Difficulty finding hotels that match specific needs and preferences.	Provide enhanced search and filter options (pet-friendly, ground-floor room, grab bars in bathrooms)

55% of older travelers are interested in curated travel experiences once they learn about them.

94% of older travelers who have used AI for travel planning have found it useful.





Port of Portland's digital map, powered by GoodMaps, shows walking distances and walk times. Users can select accessible routes that will account for vertical conveyances and TSA precheck distances for more accurate timing. [Click here to learn more.](#)



FLYING	
Source: <a href="#">AARP Research</a>	
OBSTACLE 	SOLUTIONS 
Difficulty getting through security (33%)	Improved workforce: Provide special TSA lines and allow more time (60%)
Difficulty getting from parking to the airport (33%) or to the gate (32%)	Greater access to wheelchairs/motorized carts (52%)
Difficulty understanding announcements (21% among the 65% with hearing loss)	Provide designated assistance desks where travelers can check for updated information and receive personalized help
Difficulty waiting to board at the gate (15%)	Offer check in assistance (43%)

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AIRPORT & CITY  
STAKEHOLDERS

"It's hard for us to fly without precheck - it's tiring to take off shoes and unpack bags. We've forgotten our suitcases after the hassle of putting our shoes back on."

HOTELS	
Source: <a href="#">AARP Research</a>	
OBSTACLE 	SOLUTIONS 
Difficulty handling luggage (36%)	Offer assistance (44%)
Difficulty entering the establishment (18%)	Ensure step-free entry and automatic doors; offer porter assistance
Difficulty getting in and out of the bathroom (17%)	Install grab bars, walk-in showers, and non-slip flooring in accessible rooms
Difficulty bathing (20%)	Provide special rooms with accessible bathrooms and safety features (47%)
General discomfort during due to age-related sensitivities	Offer early check-in and room features that prioritize comfort (e.g., ergonomic bedding, adjustable climate control)
Gaps in staff preparedness to accommodate older travelers	Train staff on how to identify and support guests who require accommodations (36%)

"The biggest challenge is comfort. As we've aged, our bodies are less tolerant of discomfort and the resulting aches and pains. It can really ruin your travel."

NAVIGATING DESTINATIONS	
OBSTACLE 	SOLUTIONS 
Long walking distances during tours	Offer more seating and transportation alternatives (e.g., shuttles, hop-on-hop-off buses)
Difficulty understanding routes	Use clear, visible signage for walking paths, amenities, and re-routes
Limited access to appropriately designed restrooms	Ensure restrooms are available, accessible, and clearly marked
Trails or routes not matched to mobility levels	Provide route difficulty markers and modified itineraries with fewer stops (e.g., "Slow Walking Itineraries")

“Clear signs are important so that we know where we’re going and how to get there. If we’re being re-routed, make it easy. Mark how hard a trail is or isn’t. It helps to know ahead of time if a trail is going to be steep or rocky. Bathrooms are important and they need to be accessible to adults. Some toilets are too low for adults. We’re not disabled, but we need an accessible toilet seat height.”

## LEARN MORE

### AARP Travel Resources

- 1** [Aging Adults and Mobility](#)
- 2** [Aging Adults and Hearing Loss](#)
- 3** [Aging Adults and Dementia](#)
- 4** [Aging Adults and Low Vision](#)



# **PART 4**

# **THE ACCESSIBLE**

# **TRAVELER JOURNEY**





## BEFORE THE JOURNEY

Every journey begins long before reaching a destination. For disabled travelers and caregivers, the experience starts with detailed research, careful planning, and often a series of questions that go far beyond typical logistics: Will I be able to navigate the airport independently? Will I actually feel safe and welcome when I arrive? Is this experience accessible for my child or loved one with sensory sensitivities?

The Expedia Group's [Journeys for All](#) study found that while many people with disabilities are eager to travel and more than half do so with family, spouses, or partners, they continue to encounter significant and widespread barriers.



➤ Four out of five report significant challenges with airlines and airports.



➤ Three out of four experience difficulties with accommodations such as hotels, motels, or short-term rentals.

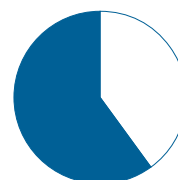
Addressing these barriers not only enhances the travel experience for people with disabilities but also improves overall accessibility for a wide range of travelers, including families with young children, older adults, non-native speakers, and those with temporary injuries. Accommodating features like step-free access, visual communication, accessible digital platforms, and well-trained staff help create more seamless, welcoming, and user-friendly travel experiences for everyone.



### 13 hours

Spent researching for a trip, with four of those hours specifically dedicated to understanding the destination's accessibility offerings.

Over 60% of travelers surveyed look for accessibility features and advanced filters when booking online.



Two-thirds prefer to book with travel providers that visibly support diversity and inclusion, a preference echoed across sectors such as transit, lodging, experiences, and booking platforms.

68% are more likely to rebook with accessible-friendly companies, and 58% are more inclined to join their loyalty programs.

Source: Expedia Group, Journeys for All

## THE POWER OF ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

"I do all my research online like most of us do, and if a website is inaccessible... I'm put off."

—SASSY WYATT

Travel planning for people with disabilities requires additional time, energy, and scrutiny to ensure they feel welcome and properly accommodated. 80% of families surveyed in MMGY Global's 2024 Portrait of Family Travel: Autism, ADHD and Neurodiversity indicated they look for destinations that have a reputation of being friendly and welcoming.

Planning a trip requires accessible digital experiences. For many, a broken link, an unlabeled image, or the absence of access details becomes a barrier that ends the travel experience before it starts.

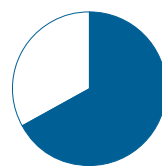
According to Wheel the World, the most significant barriers to accessible travel include:

- Lack of clear accessibility information
- Absence of accessible booking solutions
- Poor communication or outreach to disabled audiences
- Inadequate training of staff
- Minimal monitoring of progress

These gaps reinforce a troubling disconnect between travel aspirations and practical access.

“Most autistic travelers—and disabled travelers in general—do a lot of online research before they travel, and will likely choose destinations that include clear, relevant accessibility information on their websites. When this kind of information is easy to find online, it builds trust and helps travelers feel confident that their access needs will be respected.”

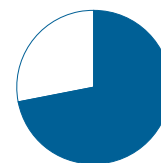
- ALEX STRATIKIS



67% of disabled travelers say it should be easier to access information, and

72%

highlight the need for accessible transit and lodging options during the research phase.



Source: Expedia Group, Journeys for All

## What's the difference between an accessible website and an accessible landing page?

An accessible website is a full, multi-page digital environment designed with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) principles in mind to ensure that people with disabilities can navigate, perceive, and interact with all content and features.

An accessible landing page is a focused web page or pages created for accessible travel experiences.



## Accessible Website Guidance

[SHARE WITH MARKETING](#)

### 1. Screen-reader Compatible Web Pages.

Web pages must be readable by electronic “screen readers”, which are devices commonly used by the visually impaired to surf the internet.

**2. Alt-tagged Images.** Images must have “alt tags” (a type of metadata) which will help visually impaired users to identify the image via text or via a screen reader. Search engine optimizers will know of alt-tags as a way to optimize images for ranking high in ‘Google Images’.

**3. Alt-tagged Tables.** If you’re using tables on any web pages, they must also have alt-tags to help explain each column via text. The user’s screen reader will then read that text aloud, describing the contents of the table.

**4. Automatic Scripting.** Any scripted display usage of image mapping should be accompanied by textual alternatives.

**5. Style Sheet Independence.** Your web pages should be readable to screen readers, most of which cannot load style sheets.

**6. Accessible Forms.** Web forms should be usable without a mouse, and each field should be labeled.

**7. Text Links to Plugins.** If your website requires a specific plugin to work correctly, you should present the link to that plugin in text form.

**8. Color Schemes.** Your website should not contain any colors or color combinations that are either integral to the correct usage of your website, or which may confuse those with color blindness in any way pertaining to your website, products or services.

**9. Keyboard-friendly Browsing.** Your website shouldn’t be reliant on the usage of a mouse or touchpad. Users who wish to navigate using only keyboard keys should be able to do so.

**10. Harmless Website Design.** Your website should not serve images or videos that can cause seizures.

## Conduct a Website Audit

Website audits are a necessary process to assess how well your website meets the needs of people with disabilities, conforms to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and complies with relevant regulations. While a website audit can be conducted by a member of your organization, it is always helpful to engage a third-party expert, like [UserWay Scanner](#).

## LEARN MORE

### Website Audit Resources

**1**

[Washington Post Design Guide](#)

**2**

[Bureau of Internet Accessibility WCAG Checklist](#)



## Accessible Landing Page Guidance

KEY ELEMENTS	DETAILS
<b>Statement</b>	"We are pleased to welcome visitors of all abilities. This page features a variety of accessible attractions, museums, recreational activities, and hotels to help visitors and local residents with disabilities discover what they can do in [Destination]."
<b>Placement</b>	Feature landing page on homepage or at top navigation bar for easy access.
<b>Things to Do</b>	Identify accessible attractions and experiences, and provide direct links to their accessibility pages.
<b>Highlight Accessibility Advocates and Programs</b>	Showcase relationships with organizations like Wheel the World, KultureCity, or Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program. If you a certified partner in sensory accessibility and inclusion, link your website directly to the KultureCity App.
<b>Hotels &amp; Lodging</b>	List accessible hotels, highlight hotels with pool lifts exceeding ADA requirements, and survey hotels for detailed accessibility info. If partnering with Wheel the World, link directly to their booking page.
<b>Suggested Itinerary</b>	Build an accessible itinerary with state/provincial/national stakeholders, and include links to relevant articles and media coverage.
<b>Transportation</b>	Link to accessibility pages for airports, public transportation, taxis & van services, and car rentals.
<b>Medical Supplies &amp; Services</b>	Provide links for wheelchair/scooter rentals and medical equipment rentals
<b>Outdoor Spaces and Trails</b>	Provide accessibility links for nearby parks, hiking trails, points of interest, botanical gardens, and zoos.
<b>Sports and Performance Venues</b>	Link to accessibility pages for college/professional stadiums, arenas, racetracks, symphonies, ballets, operas, theatres, and prominent nightclubs.
<b>Dining &amp; Food</b>	List accessible-compliant and sensory-friendly restaurants.
<b>Enhanced Engagement</b>	Incorporate video testimonials from visitors with different disabilities.
<b>Industry Collaboration &amp; Drop-Down Menus</b>	Survey industry partners to uncover accessibility features, and build a user-friendly drop-down menu for mobility, blindness/low vision, deafness/hard of hearing, and autism/neurodiversity.
<b>Tagging &amp; Search Optimization</b>	Tag accessibility links by disability type, allowing users to filter and search. Locations with multiple features should appear under each relevant category.
<b>Involve Disabled Voices</b>	Invite individuals with disabilities to write articles, review experiences, and contribute to the landing page experience.

## LEARN MORE

### Best practice landing pages

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to accessible landing pages. To get inspired, take a look at these destinations who have made great strides:

1

#### [Discover Lancaster](#)

Discover Lancaster's accessibility page helps travelers plan with confidence by providing specific and reliable information on features like ramps, braille signage, and service animal accommodations.

2

#### [Explore Minnesota](#)

Explore Minnesota's accessibility page stands out for its filterable, extensive accessibility features. This empowers users to customize searches by their unique needs, making trip planning more efficient and tailored.

3

#### [Visit Ann Arbor](#)

Visit Ann Arbor's page builds trust through recognized certifications and showcases inclusive experiences in the community.

4

#### [Visit Charlottesville](#)

Visit Charlottesville's accessibility page instills confidence in travelers with vetted information. It helps travelers plan for practical needs, such as bed and restroom dimensions, by providing verified credentials.

5

#### [Visit Denver](#)

The Visit Denver accessibility page demonstrates a commitment to accessibility with leadership in ADA compliance and top disability access rankings.

6

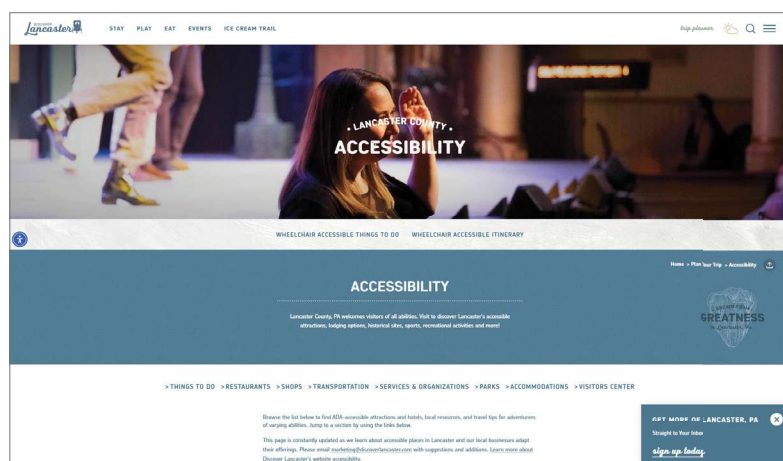
#### [Visit Fort Wayne](#)

Visit Fort Wayne's accessibility page engages local stakeholders and promotes inclusive recreation with community-driven resources and adaptive sports highlights.

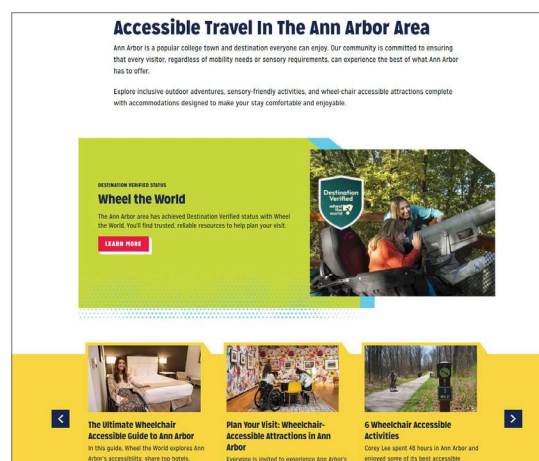
7

#### [Visit Scotland](#)

The VisitScotland accessibility page offers comprehensive, trustworthy, and easy-to-understand resources that cater to a wide range of accessibility needs.



Discover Lancaster



Visit Ann Arbor

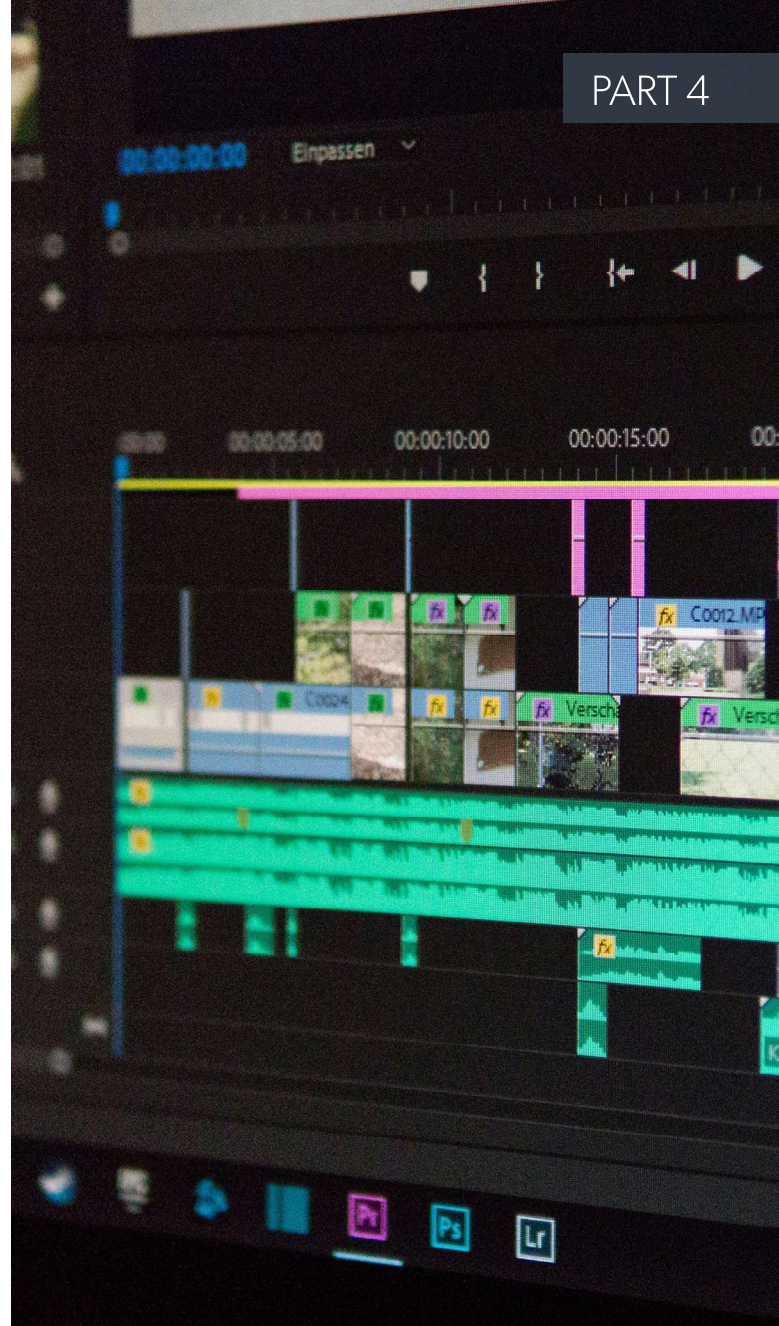
## ACCESSIBLE VIDEOS

### Caption Your Videos

*By Meryl Evans, CPACC, Writer Speaker and Accessibility Marketing Consultant*

Captioning videos are a useful way to engage audiences, regardless of ability. They are particularly useful for individuals with auditory disabilities or who process information visually.

- ❑ **Captions are readable.** Off-black background, off-white text, plain sans-serif font, and Goldilocks font size (neither too big nor too small).
- ❑ **Captions are accurate including spelling and punctuation.** Avoid bleeping bad words heard unless the sound is actually [bleep].
- ❑ **Captions are in sync** with the audio.
- ❑ **Captions are the right length.** One to two lines at no more than 32 characters each. Breaking points matter too. Described and Captioned Media Program Captioning Key has an excellent [guide](#) on this.
- ❑ **Position captions on the bottom**
- ❑ **Caption \*relevant\* sounds including music and song lyrics.** Doorbell chimes, phone rings, dogs barking.
- ❑ **Captions don't hide credits or on-screen text.** Viewers want to see both.
- ❑ **Caption voice changes.** If a voice changes, it changes for a reason. This could be accents, making a voice higher or lower, becoming hoarse, or imitating something or someone else.
- ❑ **Identify the speaker.** If it's not obvious who is speaking, put the name in brackets or use dashes.
- ❑ **Use pop-in motion** rather than moving captions that roll up like in live events.



"Alt text has the power to open doors for visually impaired users. Where a page full of pictures would be meaningless, alt text allows users to view the full detail of images. It doesn't need to be massive, or overly descriptive, so if you're worried about saying the wrong thing, don't be!"

- SASSY WYATT

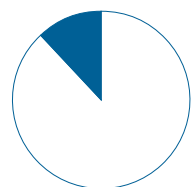


## AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

*Special Thanks to the [Digital Accessibility Office, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)*

Users who have some vision impairments need audio descriptions to fully understand the content of the video if it lacks descriptive narration.

- ❑ Plan your video so that the narration fully describes the video content.
- ❑ Allow space and timing for audio descriptions in the video. This helps prevent the need for pausing during the description.
- ❑ Describe all meaningful visual elements between the audio description and narration.
- ❑ Keep the descriptions clear and concise.
- ❑ Use accurate and descriptive language.
- ❑ Refrain from offensive words.
- ❑ Avoid jargon and technical terms.
- ❑ Avoid opinions and interpretations.
- ❑ Ensure users know the difference between what is real versus illusions, dreams, or other visually obvious scenarios.

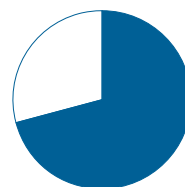


12%

of disabled travelers feel that travel marketing represents them well, yet

71%

say it's important to see people like themselves when considering destinations.



Source: Expedia Group, Journeys for All

## REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Marketing authentically to disabled travelers begins by building relationships with individuals and influencers in the disability community, laying the foundation for websites and digital content that genuinely reflect their experiences and go beyond simply meeting accessibility standards.

**"If a destination doesn't show disabled people, I'm less likely to invest my energy there."**

**- SASSY WYATT**

### Creating Content

SHARE WITH MARKETING

When developing content, look to see what materials may already exist that can be leveraged. Reach out to influencers and writers who are a part of the accessibility community for collaboration. Any blogs focused on disabilities within your destination should be written or reviewed by an individual with that particular disability.

### Promoting Content

Once your destination has accessible offerings, it's time to spread the word.

A press release is an important tool to announce new accessible offerings, events, or initiatives related to your destination. Submit these releases to accessible travel communities, media, your own community, and to the TravelAbility Insider.

Coordinate your release with any significant events or milestones.

Share engaging posts about accessibility and use relevant hashtags (#AccessibleTravel). Collaborate with influencers who champion accessible travel and encourage user-generated content from travelers with disabilities. Join Facebook groups focused on accessible travel, and promote features on major browsing sites.

## LEARN MORE

### Our Content Creator Community



Travelers with disabilities rely on disabled creators, bloggers and influencers for information in planning their journeys.

They are the most trusted voice for information and advice as it is based upon lived experience. Explore our list of influencers and content creators. [Click here](#) to view the list of our most followed creators.

NAME	DISABILITY CODE	ORG./ INDIVIDUAL	TOTAL FOLLOWERS
Molly Burke	Blind/Low Vision	Molly Burke	4,377,418
Asa Maass	Neurodiverse	Fathering Autism	2,797,400
Jessica Kellgren-Fozard	Chronic Disease	Jessica Out Of The Closet	2,666,327
Jordan 'Jo' Beckwith	Mobility	Jo Beckwith	2,026,803
Chelsea Bear	Mobility	Chelsea Bear	826,715
Luke Tarrant	Mobility	Luke Tarrant	677,400
Rob Gorski	Neurodiverse	The Autism Dad	509,218
Jaimen Hudson	Mobility	Jaimen Hudson	494,637
Rico Abreu	Dwarfism	Rico Abreu	424,009
Houston Vendergriff	Neurodiverse	Downs and Towns	420,693
Tara Shetterly	Mobility	Wheels by Tara	392,151
Rebecca Koltun	Mobility	Rebecca Koltun	346,792
Adele Roberts	Chronic Disease	Adele Roberts	329,100
Joel Barish	Deaf/HOH	Deaf Nation	275,300
Albert Yu-Min Lin	Mobility	Albert Yu-Min Lin	268,208
Gracia	Autism	Autism Mom + Travel	213,228
Eleanor May Simmonds	Dwarfism	Eleanor May Simmonds	208,877



“When we hosted Candis Welch last year, we were able to put our Wheel the World research into practice to see what was correct, what we needed to adjust, and we learned a ton! For instance, we took her to a winery and her condition limits her ability to hold a glass so she needed a straw. They didn’t have straws on hand in an effort to be environmentally friendly. However, they ran out to get them and now have a small supply for these instances. Without inviting her to our destination, I would have much less confidence in our ability to deliver on accommodations our partners indicated they could make.”

—COURTNEY CACATIAN,  
CHARLOTTESVILLE ALBEMARLE  
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

## Accessible Travel Clubs and Groups on Facebook

GROUP
<a href="#">Accessible Travel Club</a>
<a href="#">AccessibleTravel USA &amp; Canada</a>
<a href="#">Wheel the World Accessible Travel Community</a>
<a href="#">Disability Travel Group</a>
<a href="#">The World is Accessible</a>
<a href="#">Accessible Travel</a>
<a href="#">Accessible Family Travel</a>
<a href="#">Accessibility Group</a>
<a href="#">Disabled Cruisers Group</a>
<a href="#">Wheelchair Travel</a>

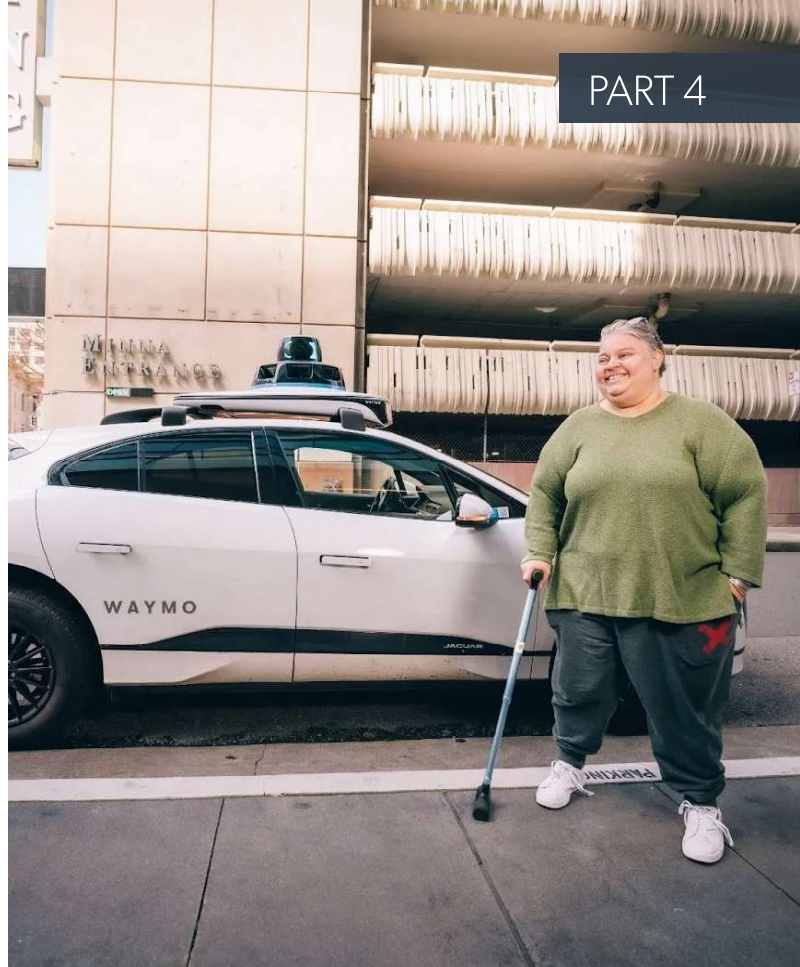
\*as of Summer 2024

### FAM Trips

Accessibility-focused FAM trips are ways for destinations to create awareness around accessibility efforts receive valuable feedback. Prior to inviting an influencer, consider infrastructure and physical barriers, local support services, attractions, and nearby healthcare facilities.

### FAM Pre-Trip Research

- ❑ **Site Inspections:** Conduct thorough site inspections to verify accessibility claims.
- ❑ **Local Regulations:** Understand local regulations and standards for accessibility.
- ❑ **Accessibility Guides:** Use accessibility guides and resources that your destination has developed and/or provide information from venues and attractions. For those with sensory sensitivities, refer to the KultureCity App to determine shops, restaurants, attractions, and venues that are accessible.



### Itinerary Design

- ❑ **Create an itinerary** that highlights the essence of your destination through an accessibility lens.
- ❑ **Flexible Schedule:** Create a flexible itinerary to accommodate different needs and potential delays. Reach out to KultureCity where they can help support visitors with auditory sensitivities.
- ❑ **Accessible Transportation:** Arrange for accessible transportation options, including vans with lifts, buses with ramps, and trained drivers.
- ❑ **Accommodations:** Choose hotels that are fully accessible, including rooms with roll-in showers, grab bars and lower beds.

### Communication

- ❑ **Clear Information:** Provide detailed information about the accessibility of each location and activity.
- ❑ **Participant Needs:** Collect information



about the specific needs of participants well in advance.

- ❑ **Emergency Contacts:** Have emergency contact information and procedures readily available.

### On-Site Support

- ❑ **Trained Staff:** Ensure staff and guides are trained in disability awareness and assistance.
- ❑ **Personal Assistants:** Consider having personal assistants or volunteers to help participants as needed.
- ❑ **Medical Support:** Have medical support or first aid readily available.

### Accessibility Tools

- ❑ **Technology:** Use apps and devices that assist with navigation, communication, and mobility.
- ❑ **Adaptive Equipment:** Provide or arrange for adaptive equipment like wheelchairs, hearing aids, or visual aids.

**Be honest about limitations, clear about what travelers can expect, and open to feedback.**



#### Tip from an expert!

Visit Mesa, recognized as the first Autism Certified City in the world, incorporates accessibility into all their FAM trips. Alison Brooks, Visit Mesa's Vice President of Destination Experience and Advocacy, suggests having the individuals fill out a questionnaire before their visit.

#### Questions Visit Mesa asks include:

- Do you have any accessibility requirements that we should be aware of? If so, please list:
- Do you have any food allergies? If so, please list:
- Is there anything else we should be aware of to make your experience in our destination more comfortable?



# DESTINATION EXPERIENCES

Accessibility doesn’t end at the welcome sign. It comes to life in the everyday experiences that shape a trip: navigating an airport, checking into a hotel, stopping by a visitor center, attending an event, or exploring the outdoors. For disabled travelers, the most memorable experiences can often be the ones that don’t stand out at all.

“The best experiences are the ones I don’t remember... because I was simply independent. That’s my favorite experience.”

–JESSICA JORDAN PING

## Airports and Transportation

Airports are often a traveler’s first and last physical encounter with a destination. For disabled travelers and caregivers, these moments shape not only the logistics of a trip, but solidify their

sense of autonomy, welcome, and safety. Airports are fast-paced, high-pressure environments where information is often visual and where assumptions about ability are common.

WHAT TRAVELERS NEED IN AIRPORTS	WHAT DESTINATIONS CAN DO
Empathetic, well-trained staff (especially at security, assistance desks, and customs)	Partner with organizations like TSA Cares and Hidden Sunflower Program
Clear signage with visual, auditory, and tactile cues	Engage airport to calculate distances to last gate on each concourse. Add this information on accessibility landing page
Location of accessible amenities	Provide list of amenities and the terminal locations (i.e. adult changing rooms: Terminal B, Sensory rooms Terminal A & D; Quiet Rooms, etc). Add information to your accessibility landing page
Sensory-friendly features	Invest in KultureCity quiet rooms and sensory bags

“As a Deaf Travel Content Creator, clear, visual communication is essential in airports. Real-time flight updates on screens, visual boarding signals, captioned announcements, and text and pop-up notifications on phones greatly improve accessibility. Communication is further enhanced by staff trained in basic sign language, the use of speech-to-text tools, or access to video relay services with interpreters. These accommodations reduce stress so travelers like me can navigate airports with confidence and dignity.”

- LILLY YU





Accessible travel isn't just about getting on and off a plane. It is about moving smoothly from place to place once you are at a destination. Accessible transportation is often an overlooked

part of destination planning yet is essential for disabled travelers to feel included. This is where many face unpredictability, inaccessibility, or limited options when traveling.

WHAT TRAVELERS NEED IN GROUND TRANSPORTATION	WHAT DESTINATIONS CAN DO
Accessible fleet options (e.g., vehicles with ramps or lifts)	Partner with local transportation providers to map accessible options and fill service gaps
Visual and audio updates at stations and on vehicles	Promote mobility-as-a-service apps that highlight accessible routes or vehicles
Staff trained in safe, respectful interaction	Encourage training for drivers on how to assist respectfully
Booking systems that clearly indicate accessible options	Work with ride-share companies and taxi commissions to increase accessible vehicles
Consistent, real-time communication	Create multi-modal accessible transportation guides that bridge airport, hotel, and attraction travel



Accommodations

For any traveler, a hotel or accommodation is more than just a place to sleep, it is a temporary home, a place to feel safe, comfortable, and cared for. However, disabled travelers often encounter

many challenges during their hotel stays, such as lacking information about accessibility features during check in, or a misunderstanding about the traveler’s accommodation requirements.

WHAT TRAVELERS NEED IN HOTELS	WHAT DESTINATIONS CAN DO
Room options that reflect a spectrum of disabilities	Survey hotel partners to inventory offerings. For individuals
Accurate, detailed room descriptions with photos and reviews	Encourage hotel partners provide information online, offer virtual hotel tours using Threshold360, and capture guest feedback
Respectful, trained staff how understand how to ask about needs	Encourage staff training in disability etiquette, emergency procedures, empathy and inclusive service
Quiet, low-stimulus check-in options and accommodations for travelers with sensory sensitivities	Encourage providing alternative spaces including those with minimal noise, fragrances, and away from elevators
Accessible amenities including pool lifts, adult-sized changing tables, doorbells with visual signals, and shower chairs	Provide hotel partners with a link to accessible accommodation essentials

“Little things often go a long way. A shower head in the lower position, vs. hanging at the top, can be the difference between independence and having to ask for help. A cheap, portable shower chair can make a shower or tub accessible for us. Kind staff who have been trained and who seek to understand have helped us out of more pickles than any expensive upgrades or remodels.”  
- JENNIFER ALLEN



## Low Cost/No Cost Solutions for Guests with Wheelchairs

- ☐ Lower any item that is out of reach for a wheelchair user, such as hairdryers, towels, and dispensers.
- ☐ Reduce door pressure to 5lbs using an Allen wrench.
- ☐ Remove any obstacle blocking an elevator button.
- ☐ Reposition the restaurant layout to create access lanes wide enough for wheelchairs. This will also help servers.
- ☐ Use an adjustable Roll-A-Ramp instead of steeper portable ramps.
- ☐ Remove obstacles, such as armchairs that block the thermometers.

## For Visually Disabled Guests

- ☐ Create spacious and clutter-free bedroom layouts that allow guests easy ingress and egress.
- ☐ Train housekeeping staff not to move personal effects.
- ☐ Provide access to a tablet that connects to services like Aira and BeMyEyes, where volunteers can assist digitally.
- ☐ Provide amenities for service animal relief.

## For Guests with a Auditory Disabilities

- ☐ Use visual cues i.e. blinking light at the door or purchase a vibrating pillow. Consider the visual communication card or feelings thermometers offered by KultureCity.
- ☐ Consider use of Koji, a free AI generative communication tool.
- ☐ Install hearing loop at check-in.
- ☐ Offer communication via text, email, or messaging apps
- ☐ Provide written guides for check-in, emergency procedures, room amenities,

and hotel services.

- ☐ Keep notepads, whiteboards, or digital tablets at the front desk for communication.
- ☐ Provide portable visual alert kits (about \$50–\$150) upon request. These include flashing doorbell alarms, visual fire alarms, and vibrating pillows.
- ☐ Enable closed captioning on all in-room TVs by default.
- ☐ Train staff on basic etiquette, such as maintaining eye contact with guests when speaking, avoiding shouting, and using visual cues effectively.








## For Guests with Cognitive Disabilities

- ☐ Place visitors with sensory sensitivities farther from elevators.
- ☐ Reach out to KultureCity for research-based Sensory Bags.
- ☐ Use large, simple text and symbols on directional and room signs.
- ☐ Keep lobbies and hallways organized and calm—too much visual input can be overwhelming.
- ☐ Designate a quiet area in the lobby or other shared space for guests who may become overstimulated.
- ☐ Provide a simple checklist for the check-in process, what's in the room, or checkout instructions.
- ☐ Train staff to speak slowly, clearly, and with patience.
- ☐ Assign a staff member as the point of contact for guests during their stay who need assistance with routines or have questions.

## Accessible Accommodation Essentials

[SHARE WITH HOTELS & RENTALS](#)







Purchase accessible accommodation products [here](#). Having these essential products on hand can make any disabled traveler feel empowered. Get ahead of the curve like Tapooz Travel, who carries these items for guests and is prepared for any situation.

PRODUCT	APPROX PRICE (USD)	IMAGE
<a href="#">Bathtub Transfer Chair</a>	\$204	
<a href="#">Shower Chair</a>	\$41	
<a href="#">Raised Toilet Seat</a>	\$40	
FOLDABLE LIGHTWEIGHT RAMPS		
<a href="#">4' &amp; 6' Suitcase style</a>	\$109	
<a href="#">Adjustable Step-Up (4/6/8")</a>	\$34	
<a href="#">Door Threshold Ramp (2) and/or step over</a>	\$99	
<a href="#">Curtain Pull Rods</a> (with round grab)	\$30	






All links were active as of release date and checked regularly. Report any broken links to [lillian@travelability.net](mailto:lillian@travelability.net).



## Accessible Accommodation Essentials (continued)

PRODUCT	APPROX PRICE (USD)	IMAGE
<a href="#">Stand alone Mirror</a> (with and without light)	\$18	
<a href="#">Hand-held shower head</a> (to replace regular shower head)	\$27	
<a href="#">Quick adapt shower head</a> (goes straight on the spout)	\$10	
<a href="#">Bed transfer slide board</a>	\$38	
<a href="#">Movable grab bars with lockable suction cups</a> . (short, medium and long)	\$28	
<a href="#">Heavy duty plastic mats</a> (36"x 48" / set of 6) for high-pile carpeting to create a solid path-of-travel for manual chair users	\$60	

## Accessible Accommodation Essentials (continued)

PRODUCT	APPROX PRICE (USD)	IMAGE
AUTISM		
<a href="#">GE Window/Door Personal Alert Security System</a>	\$12.86 (for two)	
<a href="#">Fly for ALL</a> . Flight simulations App produced by Alaska Airlines.	Free	
<a href="#">Mini Sensory Travel Kit</a>	\$65-\$109	
<a href="#">IBCCES Autism Card</a> . Helps identify special accommodations for user.	Free	
AUTISM KITS		
<a href="#">WsdCAM Door Alarm</a>	\$39.95	

## Sample Survey for Destination Stakeholders

### General Questions:

- ☐ Do you have a dedicated and detailed accessibility page on your website?
- ☐ Are people with disabilities included in your marketing materials?
- ☐ Does your website meet web accessibility standards?

### For attractions and tour experiences:

- ☐ Do you have quieter times that people with disabilities may visit?
- ☐ Do you have multiple ways to purchase tickets?
- ☐ Do you fast-track visitors who are unable to stand in a queue for long periods of time?
- ☐ Do you have relief areas for service animals?

### For Hotels:

- ☐ Do your accessible bathrooms have roll in showers?
- ☐ Does your accessible room offer handheld shower heads lever taps?
- ☐ Does your accessible bathroom have toilet and shower grab bars?
- ☐ Do you offer multiple options for booking (i.e. web, text, phone)?
- ☐ Are staff on hand to help with luggage if needed?
- ☐ Are your staff aware of transportation companies that are disability friendly?
- ☐ Are your light switches, electrical outlets accessible for people in wheelchairs using one hand?
- ☐ Do you have a list of local accessible restaurants?
- ☐ Are your staff trained on guest evacuation requirements in case of emergency?
- ☐ Do you offer vibrating alarm clocks w/ flashing lights on loan?

### Dining:

- ☐ Are your food menus available in large print versions?
- ☐ Does your restaurant offer “quiet spaces” for guests who have auditory or neurocognitive disabilities?
- ☐ Do you offer reading glasses, flashlight or magnifying glass if needed?

## A Sample Survey for Accessible Rooms

### Hotel Name:

Please provide a link to the description of your accessible room on your website

### About Your Beds in Accessible Rooms

- ☐ What is the bed height from floor to top of the mattress?
- ☐ Is the bed height adjustable?
- ☐ Are there bed raisers available upon request to adjust bed heights?
- ☐ What is the height of the space from the floor to the bottom of the bed frame?

### About Your Bathroom in Accessible Rooms

- ☐ What is the height from the floor to the toilet seat?
- ☐ How many grab bars are there around the toilet?
- ☐ What is the height of the grab bars from the floor?
- ☐ Is there a raised toilet seat available upon request?
- ☐ Is there a roll-in shower?
- ☐ How wide is the doorway entrance to the bathroom?

### Bonus Questions: About Your Pool

- ☐ Does your hotel have a pool?
- ☐ Does your hotel have a pool lift?



Visitor Centers

Visitor centers set the tone for a destination by offering orientation, inspiration, and support. For disabled travelers and caregivers, this first impression can either build confidence or create uncertainty.

An accessible visitor center doesn’t require complex design, but it does require thoughtful staffing, accessible materials, and an environment where every traveler feels seen and welcome.

WHAT TRAVELERS NEED AT VISITORS CENTERS	WHAT DESTINATIONS CAN DO
Physically accessible entrances, clear sight lines, and seating areas	Offer accessible parking, service counters, and water for service animals
Clear visual signage including high-contrast fonts, accessibility symbols, large print, and plain language	Offer materials in multiple formats, including screen-reader friendly versions. Offer tactile maps and audio guides for blind and low vision visitors. Label accessibility features clearly on-site (e.g., “You’re in a sensory-friendly space” or “ASL interpretation available upon request”)
Provide various communication tools	Invest in hearing loops, magnifying glasses, video captioned kiosks, and virtual concierge tablets. Encourage the use of Koji, KultureCity’s free AI communication app
Staff trained in disability etiquette, inclusive communication, and service flexibility	Train frontline staff to ask, “How can I best assist you today?” instead of assuming needs; Make accessibility part of the greeting
Quiet or low-sensory spaces for travelers with autism, PTSD, or sensory sensitivities	Partner with disability organizations to co-design sensory-sensitive experiences



Meetings and Events

Many people travel to conferences, festivals, sporting events, and meetings. For disabled attendees, these large-scale gatherings can be sources of both opportunity and exclusion. From

inaccessible stages and seating to overstimulating environments and uncaptioned content, these barriers are often avoidable if accessibility is planned from the start.

WHAT TRAVELERS NEED FOR MEETINGS AND EVENTS	WHAT DESTINATIONS CAN DO
Reassurance that event and spaces will be accessible	Support venue and meeting clients in developing an accommodation statement and conducting site visits
Accessible online registration with clear instructions	Encourage the use of alt-text, form fields, and properly labeled links
Accessible transportation and parking	Provide event clients with recommendations of local transportation providers
Access to assistive technologies	Encourage venues form partnerships with solution providers
Reassurance of dietary restrictions or allergies	Encourage catering staff track and label meals to account for any needs

“For deaf attendees, optimal accommodations include providing qualified sign language interpreters, real-time captioning (CART), and ensuring that all videos are captioned. Visual aids should be clear and supplemented with written materials. Meeting platforms should support multiple communication modes, and seating arrangements should allow for clear sightlines to interpreters and speakers. ”

- CRAIG RADFORD



## **An accessibility video series: Assessing your convention center**

*Courtesy of Rosemarie Rossetti, PhD.*

The PCMA Annual Convening Leaders event was hosted at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in 2023. They joined forces with Rosemarie Rossetti, PhD, a wheelchair user, accessibility ambassador for Visit Columbus, consultant, and keynote speaker. Together, they evaluated every section of the convention center. The footage from this assessment was then segmented into the following concise clips.

Assess Your Convention Center Accessibility  
<https://youtu.be/7aRkz8ERtkU>

Food Labeling at Meetings and Events  
<https://youtu.be/vuhDiIRPKYk>

Tables Can Be Obstacles  
[https://youtu.be/T\\_c1SzqpPMg](https://youtu.be/T_c1SzqpPMg)

Table and Chair Setup at Networking Events  
<https://youtu.be/P-KMNx6cpZO>

Avoid Sensory Overload  
<https://youtu.be/wg19h1Sar1o>

Guest Services Desk Height  
<https://youtu.be/BSE0jDNDjLk>

Make Wheelchairs and Scooters Available  
<https://youtu.be/TZb4ZUrzZow>

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion PLUS Accessibility  
<https://youtu.be/Oek-coB3Yyg>

Hire an Accessibility Consultant  
<https://youtu.be/pPv8aufWIPc>

Registration Questions and Follow Up  
<https://youtu.be/9vo05r03ihg>

Accessible Restrooms  
<https://youtu.be/DUw4iY5TA3A>

Universal Changing Tables and  
Nursing Mother's Room  
<https://youtu.be/T0MBpZS1j40>

Accessible Restroom Signage  
[https://youtu.be/Crn\\_S3pZ-DE](https://youtu.be/Crn_S3pZ-DE)

Accommodating Service Animals  
<https://youtu.be/oV3qy7CGWIO>

Sign Language Interpreters  
<https://youtu.be/3cqZMegLx80>

Captioning on Projection Screens  
<https://youtu.be/jbfl6NtPgDQ>

Accessible Transportation and Parking  
<https://youtu.be/R4qhF1sd19Q>

Wayfinding Signage  
<https://youtu.be/BwkF06veFo8>

Accommodating Low Vision and Blind Attendees  
<https://youtu.be/0tZ7qGhps1M>

Space Planning for Wheelchairs and Scooters  
<https://youtu.be/EdbysZwYjA4>

Food Placement and Assistance  
<https://youtu.be/EIXYCA7Fvq4>

Accessible Shuttles  
<https://youtu.be/opPZa3hxVAQ>



## Attractions, Restaurants, and Outdoor Experiences

For many travelers, the heart of visiting a destination lives in its experiences: the museums that spark curiosity, the trails that invite adventure, the meals shared around a lively table, and the neighborhoods waiting to be discovered. But for travelers with disabilities, whether those memories are joyful or frustrating often hinges on the small yet crucial details: Is there an entrance I can use with dignity? Will the server speak directly to me? Can I enjoy this exhibit without sensory overload?

Attractions and restaurants can embrace universal design, train their teams, and communicate access proactively. When travelers are confident, they can join the fun, they stay longer, return more often, and bring others with them.

Consider these inspirational examples:

- ❑ **Tactile Museum Tours:** Some museums are offering touchable, 3D-printed replicas of major artworks or exhibits, allowing blind and low-vision visitors to experience history, science, and culture through touch. Staff are trained to give descriptive tours using sensory-rich language.
- ❑ **Sensory Guides:** 45% of families surveyed by MMGY Global expressed interest in Sensory Guides. VisitLEX's [Sensory Signals program](#) offers maps of local attractions and sensory "hot spots" that guests can experience.
- ❑ **Sensory Dining:** Restaurants can become certified Sensory Inclusive™ spaces with KultureCity. This includes staff training, sensory bags with tools like noise-reducing headphones, and quiet dining accommodations. For blind or low vision guests, restaurants can offer menus in multiple formats: large print, braille, plain language, and digital screen reader-friendly versions. Staff can also be trained to explain dishes verbally and respectfully.
- ❑ **Flexible Queueing:** Popular attractions can offer virtual queues or timed-entry passes so guests with mobility, sensory, or fatigue-related conditions can avoid physically waiting in long lines.
- ❑ **Caption-First Entertainment:** Live performances, film screenings and tours can offer captioning or open-caption options rather than requiring special requests. QR codes at theaters can link to live-captioned scripts for mobile viewing. These accommodations not only support deaf and hard of hearing travelers, but can support travelers who speak different languages, neurodivergent visitors, and those in noisy environments.
- ❑ **Promote Your Attraction:** Reach out directly to TravelAbility partners like KultureCity for specific PR opportunities they are connected to.



## Outdoors for Everyone: What Makes a Better Park



The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families impacted by paralysis; we believe everyone on this planet deserves to experience the beauty of nature.

Unfortunately, nature and accessibility are in conflict, making it difficult for the **nearly 5.4M people living with paralysis** in the U.S. to enjoy the great outdoors. From unpaved paths to eroding trails, people living with disabilities are deterred from outdoor experiences. We want to change that.

For Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month in September, we are launching the Reeve Foundation's 'Outdoors for Everyone' initiative, encouraging people to raise awareness of outdoor equity for people living with all forms of paralysis. Reeve is partnering with parks, trails and organizations around the U.S. to identify and implement accessible and inclusive areas and activities for all people, including those living with disabilities, their families, and caregivers.

As part of this initiative, the Reeve Foundation created an 'Accessible Outdoor Checklist' for parks, recreation centers, and others to ensure people living with paralysis and other disabilities can enjoy the outdoors because the outdoors is for everyone.

### BEFORE ARRIVALS

For people living with disabilities such as paralysis or who require mobility devices, it is essential to plan ahead for the great outdoors. National parks, community centers, and other recreational spaces have an obligation to offer easily accessible and up-to-date information online and with staff to ensure safety. Here are items to consider as you plan or work with partners in this space:



#### WEBSITE AND MAP INFORMATION:

- Ensuring trail-accessible information is readily available to users can make or break the trail experience. Websites and resources should include:
  - Maps of accessible features (e.g. parking, ramps, restrooms, benches, charging stations, information on drinking water access, etc.)
  - Detailed trail information such as the length of trail, trail surface type(s) throughout the duration of the journey, typical and minimum trail width, typical and maximum running slope, typical and maximum cross slope and areas where there are obstacles over two inches high.
  - Photos and user reviews to inform visitors of what to expect.
    - Warnings about wild animals they may encounter.
    - Any safety information park users need to be aware of.



#### PARKING AND ARRIVAL/DROP-OFF AREAS:

- Accessible parking spaces and drop-off areas should be located on the shortest accessible route to an accessible entrance, relative to other spaces in the same parking lot.
- If there is more than one accessible entrance, accessible parking spaces should be dispersed to enable people to park near as many accessible entrances as possible.
- By the numbers:
  - Standard accessible parking spaces must be at least eight feet wide.
  - Accessible van parking spaces must be at least eleven feet wide.
    - The access aisle for both accessible car and van spaces is required to be a minimum of five feet.

## Outdoors for Everyone: Water Accessibility Checklist



The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals and families impacted by paralysis. Part of that mission is ensuring everyone of all abilities can experience what nature has to offer. This summer, as local and state beaches, pools, and lakes become a go-to for residents and visitors alike, the Reeve Foundation will be launching the 2024 'Outdoors for Everyone' initiative on water accessibility, educating the community and public on various water accessibility tips and ways to ensure everyone is in on the fun this summer and beyond.

Navigating the great outdoors and water environments presents unique challenges for the **nearly 5.4 million people living with paralysis** in the U.S. The picturesque beauty of beaches and lakes can be overshadowed by the difficulties posed by rocky or sandy terrains, which can be challenging to maneuver on manual and motorized wheelchairs. Additionally, sun exposure can be hazardous for those living with paralysis, as they often face challenges in regulating their body temperature.

The Reeve Foundation's new 'Water Accessibility Outdoor Checklist' is tailored to beaches, public pools, and other bodies of water to ensure people living with disabilities can enjoy these spaces. For additional support, individuals can also reach out to our Information Specialist team or use the Foundation's Resource Map to help plan their next outdoor trip near the water.

### BEFORE ARRIVAL

For people living with disabilities such as paralysis or those who require mobility devices, planning ahead is key when it comes to spending time in the sun and water. This is why it is important for beaches, pools, lakes, rivers, water parks, and other water areas to provide the most up-to-date information to the public. Here are items to consider as you plan to visit or work with partners in this space.



#### WEBSITE AND MAP INFORMATION:

- Ensuring water spaces — such as beaches or pools — have accessible information readily available to users can make or break their experience. Websites and other resources should include:
  - Maps of accessible features (e.g. boardwalks/ramps, beach mats, restrooms, changing stations, information on drinking water access, etc.)
  - Detailed information about accessible equipment that is available to reserve or use onsite (e.g. beach wheelchairs, pool lifts, accessible canoes, etc.) and the process to obtain and use that equipment.
  - Photos and user reviews to inform visitors of what to expect.
- Maps should also indicate any cooling spaces if available onsite. People with paralysis do not always have the ability to self-regulate their temperature. Dehydration and heat stroke can come on quickly and suddenly, so having spaces in the shade or even in a cooled area indoors is helpful for those with paralysis to take breaks.



#### TRAINED PROFESSIONALS:

- Lifeguards and other staff onsite should be trained on inclusivity and accessibility measures. Some lifeguard training requires inclusivity and cultural sensitivity, but there is no nationwide mandate.
- Take a look at your location's requirements and make sure there is required training for people living with a disability. This will ensure the safety of those with paralysis in case of an emergency.
- All pools are mandated to have pool lifts by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, many people (sometimes even staff at the pool) don't know how to use them. Including staff training on how to use these pool lifts is needed to create a safe and accessible environment.



“As we waited for the concert doors to open, a staff member asked us where we were sitting. When she realized the number of steps there were between our seats in row 70 and the restroom, and that we were planning on taking a rideshare at the end of the night, she made a call down to the main stage. To our delight we were offered seats in row 2, closer to the stage and handicapped restrooms. ”

– TAYLOR AGUILAR ON HER EXPERIENCE  
AT RED ROCKS AMPHITHEATRE

Outdoor experiences are powerful because they connect us to something larger than ourselves. Being in nature supports physical health and mental well-being, and these experiences are often budget friendly.

Accessible outdoor adventure isn’t limited to paved paths. A recent study from KOA Campgrounds found that 60% of their campers have a disability or travel with someone who does. 70% of those individuals experience barriers when camping. Today, destinations are expanding what inclusion means by offering adaptive equipment, staff training, and modified infrastructure that opens up a wide range of outdoor activities.

WHAT TRAVELERS NEED OUTDOORS	WHAT DESTINATIONS CAN DO
Clearly marked accessible routes with gradients, surfaces and distances listed	Work with parks departments to identify pilot sites for inclusive design. Feature outdoor itineraries on website
Rest stops, shade and hydration stations	Catalog photos and offer maps
Multi-sensory experiences, including audio or tactile maps	Encourage spaces create “scent paths” or touchable exhibits
Track chairs or mobility aids available for rent	Partner with an outdoor outfitter to invest in all-terrain track chairs



## LEARN MORE

SHARE WITH  
MARKETING & CITY  
STAKEHOLDERS

1

Check out [this blog from Wheel the World](#) to learn how destinations like Grand Rapids, Michigan and Estes Park, Colorado are offering accessible gear and solutions for wheelchair users to enjoy the outdoors.

2

Global destinations across Europe, Asia, and Central America are moving the needle on accessible outdoor experiences. From Barcelona to South Korea, learn more at: [UNWTO](#)

3

The Christopher Reeve Foundation "[Outdoors for Everyone](#)" initiative was created to ensure that the great outdoors is accessible to everyone including those living with paralysis, their caregivers and their families.





# **PART 5**

## **CREATE YOUR STRATEGY**





## DEFINE YOUR WHY

Create your strategy by first **defining your why**. Why is accessibility important for your destination and the community you serve? Conduct initial conversations internally, with external stakeholders, and with community groups to shape your vision.

Defining your why means...

- Considering the gaps that currently exist in your destination.
- Embedding accessibility into your Tourism Master Plan or Stewardship Plan
- Aligning accessibility with your broader strategic objectives and future impact.
- Outlining potential objectives, milestones, and measurable goals.
- Establishing a task force or working group to champion efforts.

Like any strategic initiative, recognize that your path to accessibility is long-term. Consider how accessibility can be embedded into your existing efforts.

Based on the members of your task force, consider specific roles or responsibilities that may be needed to action your strategy. This could include a researcher and someone to conduct partner outreach. Identify any training needs for your team to be successful. Provide your task force with strategy documents and access to resources.

Set a cadence of frequent touchpoints to review progress, discuss challenges, and reflect on goals. Utilize collaborative tools to share research documents, notes, and data gathered. Provide your broader organization with ongoing updates to foster awareness and demonstrate the importance of your work.

“If you do right by the disability community, we’ll be your biggest supporters. We’ve been in the pit. We know how dark it is, and we don’t want to leave anybody else there.”

- CRAIG RADFORD





## PARTNER WITH EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Turning to local organizations, non-profits, and accessibility experts is critical to understanding the experiences and accessibility needs of visitors and residents. In the joint Destinations International and City DNA study, 82% of destinations with accessibility strategies underway were shown to involve locals in their initiatives. 71% of those destinations partner with subject matter experts, and 54% have affiliations with educational institutions or associations.

Accessibility organizations can help destination organizations ensure they offer welcoming environments for individuals with disabilities, allowing them to fully experience and enjoy the destination. Examples of these organizations include disability advocacy groups, local independent living centers, transportation and mobility advocacy groups, accessibility consultants, health and rehabilitation centers, community health organizations, hospitality

industry partners, local government agencies, nonprofit organizations for seniors, educational institutions, specialized disability equipment providers, and consumer advocacy groups.

Destination organizations can engage with services providers and in turn serve as a centralized resource to align all tourism partners in the community.

Visit Denver aimed to provide a central place for travelers of all abilities to plan their Denver experiences. They partnered with Dr. Rosemarie Rossetti, local organizations, and the City of Denver to create a comprehensive [Accessibility Guide](#).

If you are looking to engage experts and community members for trainings, assessments, or other strategic guidance, issuing an RFP can be useful.



### Sample RFP

[Click here to  
access an RFP template](#)

SHARE WITH  
PURCHASING AND  
MEETING PLANNERS



## Accessibility Improvement Providers

A group of innovative technologies, products and solutions providers that have been vetted by the TravelAbility Community through participation in InnovateAble Showcases and through feedback from destinations. [Click here](#) for more information.



THE PROBLEM	THE PROVIDER	THE WHY
HEARING		
ASL Translators are in short supply for meetings and events. Needing an ASL translator on site at Visitor Centers, hotels and attractions is an episodic need.	<a href="#">360 Direct Access</a> USE CASE: Meetings, Conferences, Attractions, Hotels, Visitor Centers PRICING: \$125 per hr/As quoted	360 Direct Access offers a range of solutions to provide on demand ASL translators from remote locations as well as offering a staffing service for in-person translation needs.
20% of the global population lives with hearing loss.	<a href="#">Audio Directions</a> USE CASE: Hotels, attractions, convention centers, airports PRICING: Portable Hearing loop kit, \$1,695	Hearing loops boost audio clarity in noisy public spaces for people who travel, in spite of their hearing loss.
Over 10 million adults who are deaf or hard of hearing can benefit from hearing loops, but reliable one-stop source installers are difficult to find.	<a href="#">Contacta</a> USE CASE: Airports, convention centers, attractions PRICING: As quoted	Over the past 14 years, their dealer network and relationships with the deaf community, Contacta has become the leading provider of hearing loop installers nationally.
ASL Translators are in short supply and expensive to hire for meetings and events.	<a href="#">Imanyco</a> USE CASE: Conferences, meetings, events PRICING FOR 8-HOUR CONFERENCE: \$550 with remote support	Imanyco's app Koda provides real time live captioning for meetings and events
The deaf are often left out of conversations because people they interact with cannot sign.	<a href="#">Sign Speak</a> USE CASE: Hotels, restaurants, attractions, visitor centers, conferences and meetings PRICING: \$450 per mo	Direct translation of sign to voice and voice to sign allows non-signing people to communicate directly with deaf guests and travelers.
The major barrier for deaf travelers is the lack of communication of major announcements in public places such as airports, events and conventions.	<a href="#">Spoke</a> USE CASE: Airports, train stations, hotels, cruise lines PRICING: Airport: \$1950 per mo Hotels: \$250 per mo	Spoke is an app that captures and delivers audio announcements as text to users' smartphones in 150 languages including ASL. Text can be translated and converted to English.
Live ASL interpreters as well as foreign language interpreters for over 50 languages are in short supply and quite expensive.	<a href="#">Translate Live</a> USE CASE: Check in counters at hotels, attractions airports PRICING: \$995 per yr	Translate Live is a two-sided device where users can speak, spell out or type in an entire conversation that is instantly communicated to the other party in ASL or their native language.
VISION		
Blind and Low Vision travelers need real time information when traveling.	<a href="#">Aira</a> USE CASE: Hotels, attractions, airports, meetings STARTING PRICING: \$5,000	Aira is an app that connects people who are blind or low vision to professional visual interpreters for secure communication.
Blind or low vision people traveling alone may need assistance navigating busy airports, train stations or other gathering points.	<a href="#">Be My Eyes</a> USE CASE: AI-powered visual assistance STARTING PRICING: \$299	Be My Eyes connects blind people needing sighted support with volunteers or AI agents who provide live, on-demand access to visual information and navigation via live video around the world.



## Accessibility Improvement Providers (continued)

THE PROBLEM	THE PROVIDER	THE WHY
There are over 300 million people in the world with colorblindness who cannot enjoy the vibrant colors of fall foliage, museum exhibits, or daily life.	<a href="#">Enchroma</a> USE CASE: Museums, attractions, restaurants, airports PRICING: \$229 per pair	Enchroma glasses use patented lens technology that enables visitors with color vision deficiency to see colors. Both indoor and outdoor versions are available.
Blind people navigating in new places require guidance and assistance, reducing their independence.	<a href="#">Glidance</a> USE CASE: Hotels, destination attractions, airports, convention centers PRICING: Contact for more information	Glidance combines cutting-edge navigational robotics and AI to provide blind travelers with an intuitive and comfortable guided experience using cutting edge technology, sensors and cameras.
A blind person familiar with everyday home surroundings can struggle when visiting a hotel, attending a conference, and visiting museums or attractions	<a href="#">Good Maps</a> USE CASE: Hotels, attractions, airports, convention centers PRICING: Based upon size and complexity of space	The Good Maps app provides precise indoor navigation for blind people away from home.
Finding one's way in busy airports, hotels, museums and attractions is a problem for blind and low vision travelers.	<a href="#">Right Hear</a> USE CASE: Airports, hotels, attractions, visitor centers PRICING: \$1,000-\$30,000 yr	An audible wayfinding system that allows blind and low vision visitors to move independently within a space.
Attending a sporting event can be confusing for people with low vision or who are blind.	<a href="#">Touch to See</a> USE CASE: Live sporting events PRICING: \$4,000-\$50,000	A tablet for people with visual impairments that allows them to follow a sporting event in real time.
Many destinations, attractions, hotels and events are not accessible to blind visitors due to the lack of access to accurate information and audio descriptions.	<a href="#">Vacayit</a> USE CASE: Create audio-described itineraries for blind visitors STARTING PRICING: \$950	Vacayit provides audio guides and accurate accessibility information that provide blind or low-vision visitors, or anyone who likes audio content with a sensory experience.
MOBILITY		
Experiences in nature are often inaccessible to people with mobility issues.	<a href="#">AdvenChair</a> USE CASE: Parks, tour companies PRICING: \$11,950	AdvenChair is an all-terrain human powered wheelchair that allows people with mobility challenges to experience off the beaten track adventures.
Waterfront activities are generally off limits to people with mobility disabilities.	<a href="#">Board Safe Docks</a> USE CASE: Lakes, marinas, recreation areas, parks PRICING: \$15,000-\$200,000	Flagship products include adaptive kayak launches, accessible fishing piers, and custom dock systems.
Maritime activities are generally difficult for people with mobility disabilities.	<a href="#">Effortless Lifts</a> USE CASE: Lakefronts, marinas, parks PRICING: \$1,500-\$4,500	An innovative boat mobility system specifically designed to facilitate access to maritime activities for individuals with mobility impairments. This advanced system offers multiple mounting options, thereby empowering users to engage in fishing with confidence and autonomy.
Wheelchair users have limited mobility in off-road conditions. Traditional wheelchairs often struggle with uneven terrain, grass, and gravel.	<a href="#">Grit Freedom Chair</a> USE CASE: Outdoor nature trails in all weather conditions PRICING: \$32,000	Designed by MIT engineers, Grit is a mix between a manual wheelchair and a mountain bike that enables wheelchair users to access mountain trails, sandy beaches and even snow.
Lack of hand and arm strength can make it difficult to push buttons.	<a href="#">Lotus</a> USE CASE: Hotel rooms, vacation rentals PRICING: \$399 per kit	For people with limited mobility, Lotus' wearable ring controls objects by pointing. Unlike Alexa Lotus requires no app, no rewiring, and no Wi-Fi. It's portable (and perfect for travel!)

## Accessibility Improvement Providers (continued)

THE PROBLEM	THE PROVIDER	THE WHY
Conventional wheelchairs are not usable in sand and uneven surfaces.	<a href="#">Mobi-Mat</a> USE CASE: Beach destinations and nature outdoor areas STARTING PRICING: \$899	Mobi-Mat provides slip-free rollout mats for beaches and uneven surfaces as well as floating wheelchairs for in-water experiences.
Wheelchairs get damaged in the baggage hold on airlines causing expensive repairs, lost travel time and extreme frustration for wheelchair users.	<a href="#">Revolve Wheelchair</a> USE CASE: Airports PRICING: \$4,999-\$7,500	Award winning foldable wheelchair with carrying case that fits in the overhead bin on airplanes.
Some buildings/locations built prior to legislation are grandfathered into an exclusion. They may need an affordable ramp to service guests and meetings.	<a href="#">Roll a Ramp</a> USE CASE: Hotels, attractions that may need a portable ramp PRICING: \$2,995	Roll-A-Ramp offers portable, customizable ramps for wheelchair and scooter users. The ramps can be rolled up for easy storage and their length can be adjusted as needed.
Built environments often do not meet the needs of people with a disability	<a href="#">Rose Marie Rosetti-Universal Design Lab</a> USE CASE: Destinations, Hotels, PRICING: Based upon services	Consulting and training services combining lived experience with a deep knowledge of universal design
Conventional wheelchairs are not usable in sand and uneven surfaces	<a href="#">SeaTrac</a> USE CASE: Hotels, destinations PRICING: Based upon solution	SeaTrac is an engineered technology that enables independent unassisted access to beaches and water recreation areas that would not previously accommodate individuals with limited mobility.
People with disabilities need to know if the accessibility features of hotels, attractions and meeting venues fit their needs before they go.	<a href="#">Threshold360</a> USE CASE: Hotels, attractions, museums, airports, restaurants PRICING: \$95 per mo	Threshold 360 provides virtual tours for destinations, hotels and attractions, which be used by visitors, meeting planners and local residents for weddings and events.
The cost of automatic door openers is prohibitively expensive for most businesses as it requires re-wiring.	<a href="#">We Hear You/Hero Door Opener</a> USE CASE: Hotels, vacation rentals, conference centers PRICING: \$1,795	The Hero Door Opener provides a cost-effective solution that is installed in under a half hour, requires no re-wiring and can easily be accessed by users through an app or button near the door.
Hotels as well as current online booking platforms do not provide precise information or images about the accessibility of hotel properties.	<a href="#">Wheel the World</a> USE CASE: Site assessments for hotels, attractions, restaurants. STARTING PRICING: \$1,950 per hotel	WTW is an accessible booking engine that measures 200 data points for hotels that match disabled travelers with the hotels and tour programs that meet their specific needs.
NEURODIVERSITY		
Finding accessible destinations and businesses when travel planning takes significant effort.	<a href="#">AbleVu</a> USE CASE: Destinations, hotels, attractions STARTING PRICING: \$29 per mo	AbleVu's online database helps aging travelers and travelers with disabilities plan with confidence.
Individuals and families with autism often seek additional services to feel welcomed and at ease when they travels.	<a href="#">Autism Double Checked</a> USE CASE: Airlines, hotels, airports STARTING PRICING: \$1,950 per hotel	Certification, training programs, and designated concierges to designate industry businesses as welcoming to individuals with autism.
Travelling as a family with an autistic child presents many challenges for families. 87% of parents with a child on the spectrum say they do not travel because they fear not being accepted.	<a href="#">Autism Travel Club</a> USE CASE: Hotels, restaurants, attractions PRICING: Based upon services	The Autism Travel Club provides a bridge between venues, destinations, hotels and attractions through staff training and an app to connect families. with businesses welcoming to all travelers.

## Accessibility Improvement Providers (continued)

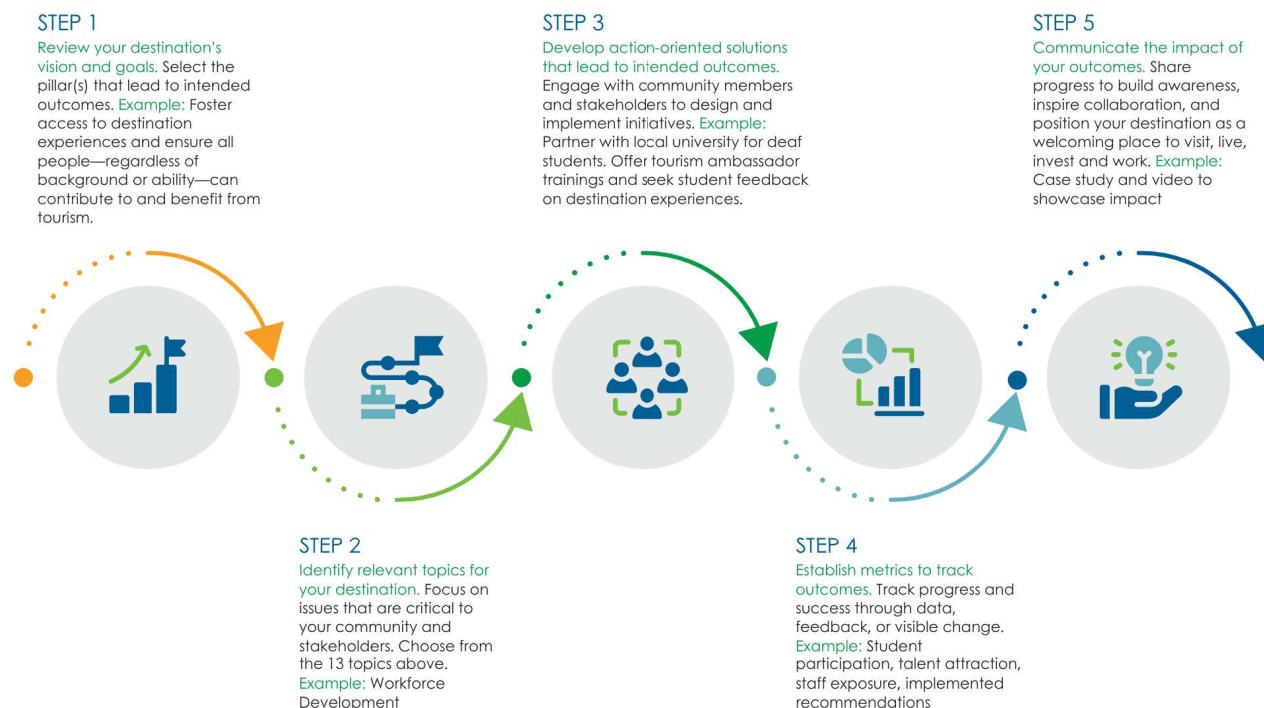
THE PROBLEM	THE PROVIDER	THE WHY
Guest with autism are fearful of not being understood or accepted and customer service staff feel underprepared to serve neurodivergent customers and guests, as they know little about autism.	<a href="#">Canucks Autism Network</a> USE CASE: Hotels, visitor centers, attractions PRICING: Based upon services.	CAN online courses or live workshops to promote acceptance and understanding, while gaining practical strategies and tools to implement immediately. Training material developed and delivered in collaboration with Autistic Advocates.
There's no discreet way to know whether someone with deafness, autism, dementia or any other non-visible disability may need additional support.	<a href="#">The Hidden Disability Sunflower Lanyard</a> USE CASE: Airports, museums, attractions, restaurants. PRICING: \$395 per year	The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a symbol for non-visible disabilities and serves as a discreet sign that the wearer may need additional support, help, or a little more time.
Over 87% of families with children on the spectrum do not travel because of fear of acceptance.	<a href="#">Kulture City</a> USE CASE: Hotels, airlines, attractions, conference center, airports, event venues PRICING: \$850	KultureCity is the global leading nonprofit in sensory accessibility and inclusion. They provide customized trainings, research-based sensory bags with tools inside, signage, and curated social stories.
Many people on the autism wander away and get lost causing needless anxiety for the traveler and their companions.	<a href="#">Scan Me Home</a> USE CASE: Attractions, hotels PRICING: Membership \$9.95 per yr. Products \$10-\$100	A simple iron on QR code system that allows travelers to be reunited with their party quickly.
PAN-DISABILITY		
Caregivers rarely get a chance to take a break when vacationing with an aging parent.	<a href="#">GOMO Travel</a> USE CASE: Destinations, cruise lines PRICING: Based upon solution	GOMO provides medical travel companions and complete itinerary planning so that caregivers can enjoy their vacations.
Over 87% of families with children on the spectrum do not travel because of fear of acceptance.	<a href="#">IBCESS</a> USE CASE: Destination, hotels, airlines PRICING: Based upon services	Training and certification for employees and stakeholders elevates their expertise specifically related to neurodiversity. For traveling families certification provides reassurance that they will be accepted.
One size fits all training solutions for employees can be wasteful in terms of time and money.	<a href="#">Open Doors</a> USE CASE: Airlines, transportation PRICING: Based upon services	Provides training solutions and research across multiple industry sectors including cruising, transportation, airlines and hospitality
One size fits all training solutions for employees can be wasteful in terms of time and money.	<a href="#">Peter Slatin Group</a> USE CASE: Hotels, destinations PRICING: Based upon services	A comprehensive, effective education and training solution that sets the stage for excellent, equivalent service for guests with disabilities.
One size fits all training solutions for employees can be wasteful in terms of time and money.	<a href="#">Sage Inclusion</a> USE CASE: Hotels, destinations, attractions PRICING: Based upon services	Sage Inclusion provides role specific training for staff across all disabilities.
Kiosks are generally not accessible for people with disabilities.	<a href="#">True Omni</a> USE CASE: Visitor centers, convention centers, airports PRICING: Dependent upon product	True Omni adds accessibility to Welcome Center Kiosks with cutting edge hardware and software solutions.
Staff training can be an expensive proposition.	<a href="#">VisitAble</a> USE CASE: Hotels, destinations, attractions PRICING: \$250 per training module for 5 people	An affordable training package broken into different modules The training is a self-guided e-Learning module combined from real world experiences and interviews that hone in on topical, relevant issues for the industry.



## EXECUTE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### Adopt the Social Impact Framework

Destinations International's [Social Impact Framework](#) serves as a guide for destinations to foster community vitality and influence sustainable economic growth. Follow the five steps of the Framework to develop a measurable and impactful accessibility strategy.



### Measure Your Maturity

[Destinations International's Social Impact Assessment](#) can be used to measure the current state of your accessibility efforts. As an industry benchmark, use your results to shape goals and strategies that follow.

- ☐ My destination has defined the meaning of accessibility
- ☐ My destination adheres to accessibility standards for the built environment, and for information and communications technology, where possible.
- ☐ My destination has a documented accessible travel vision and strategy with defined long and short-term goals.
- ☐ My destination has an individual who is responsible for the implementation of the accessible travel strategy.
- ☐ My destination organization's accessible travel strategy has a yearly budget.
- ☐ My destination organization provides staff with training on disability awareness and how to support travelers with disabilities.
- ☐ My destination organization has conducted a foundational accessibility assessment of our members and partners' facilities.
- ☐ My destination organization's visitor website meets or is working to apply Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG)
- ☐ My destination provides accurate, consistent, and reliable information about barriers and/or partial accessibility for travelers on our destination website

- ☐ My destination organization actively markets to travelers with disabilities using dedicated accessible travel content
- ☐ My destination organization has dedicated disability marketing channels

A simple online search for accessible things to do in your destination is a great way to understand initial barriers for travelers with disabilities. This research can indicate how prevalent or lacking resources are, and can even be repurposed for use on your own website. Conversations with local groups to understand lived experiences in your destination can shed light on opportunities for change.

### Secure Ownership and Funding

A 2024 study conducted by Destinations International and CityDNA found that 80% of destinations with accessibility ownership are twice as likely to have a strategy in place compared to those without ownership. 71% of destinations with accessibility funding have a strategy in development or undergoing implementation.

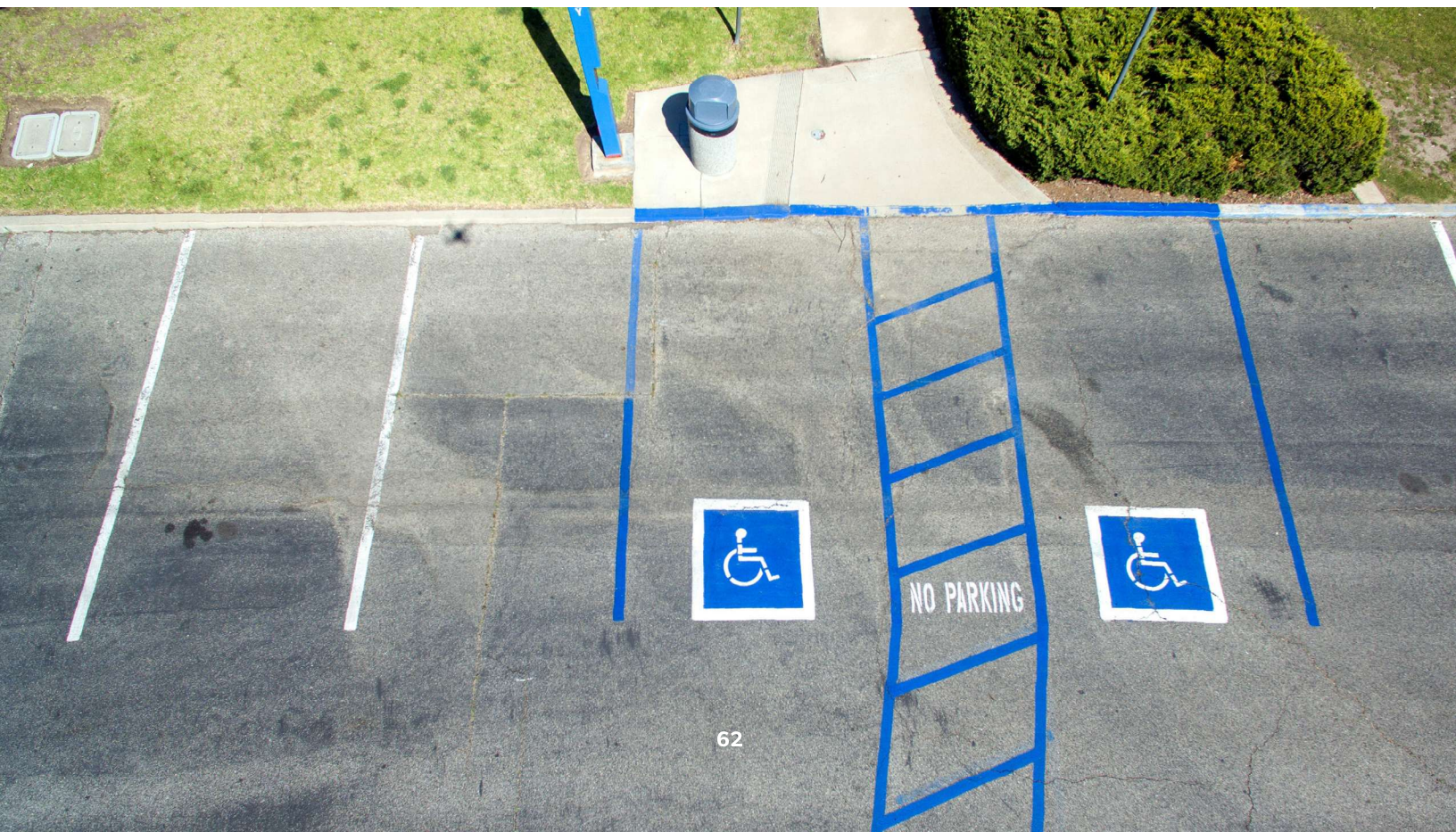
Securing grant funding can be a game-changer for developing accessibility infrastructure and products.

- ☐ Leverage local expertise
- ☐ Craft a clear need statement
- ☐ Maintain detailed project planning
- ☐ Align budget needs with narrative
- ☐ Show community support
- ☐ Seek external review
- ☐ Proof read thoroughly
- ☐ Reach out for clarification

## LEARN MORE

**1** [Tips from grant specialist, Louisa Mariki](#)

**2** [INNOVATEAble](#) is TravelAbility's showcase of participating companies, representing the cutting edge in accessible technology and innovation that can be introduced through the destination marketing channel.





## TRAIN YOUR STAFF

Customer-facing employees in visitor centers and other visitor-centric establishments, including hotels, attractions, restaurants, and meeting spaces, should receive ongoing training to effectively engage with people with disabilities. As front-line representatives of a destination, staff who understand disability-related needs will develop professionally, provide superior service to visitors, and ensure a more welcoming experience.

Local or national organizations specializing in accessibility needs are primed to offer personnel training.

- ❑ **Disability Awareness Training:** Conduct regular training sessions to educate staff about different types of disabilities and the appropriate ways to assist and communicate with people who have disabilities.
- ❑ **Sensory Sensitivity Awareness and Support:** Reach out to KultureCity to learn more about their research-based Sensory Bags are suitable and effective for kids and adults of all ages. Pair this with an annual training for employees to understand optimal sensory integration.
- ❑ **American Sign Language (ASL) or Sign Language Training:** Provide basic and ongoing sign language training to enable staff to communicate effectively with deaf or hard of hearing visitors.

- ❑ **Customer Service Excellence:** Offer training focused on empathy, patience, and respect to ensure all visitors feel welcomed and valued.
- ❑ **Handling Assistance Devices:** Train staff on awareness and proper handling of assistance devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and service animals.
- ❑ **Emergency Procedures:** Ensure all staff are trained on specific emergency procedures and evacuation plans that consider the needs of people with various disabilities.
- ❑ **Use of Accessibility Features:** Educate staff on how to use and explain the accessibility features available on your website and at your physical locations.
- ❑ **Cultural Competence:** Incorporate training that fosters sensitivity to cultural diversity, including understanding how culture impacts the experiences of travelers with disabilities.
- ❑ **Technology Aids:** Train staff on the latest technology aids and software that can assist visitors with disabilities, such as text-to-speech tools like Koji, accessibility settings on computers, and mobile devices.

Training for visitor-facing employees can make a significant difference for travelers with disabilities and their caregivers. At the 2024 Emerging Markets Summit, caregiver Talia Salem recalled her family's recent trip to Disneyland.

“Every princess at Disneyland connected with my daughter instead of making her feel weird. They were trained, and that training changed everything.”

—TALIA SALEM



## STRATEGIES IN ACTION

**Looking for inspiration?** Turn to [Community Impact stories](#) from destinations like Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau, Visit Colorado Springs, VisitLEX, and Visit Myrtle Beach who have championed measurable accessibility strategies and created community impact.

### THIS IS ATHENS

This is Athens established a partnership with [Me Alla Matia](#), a Greek-based NGO whose vision is to eliminate underrepresentation of people with disabilities. Translating to “with a different point of view,” Me Alla Matia orchestrated focus groups to guide This is Athens in creating [accessible-friendly city guides](#) for mobility and visually impaired individuals. Input from locals with disabilities shaped the creation of four itineraries, each with a step-by-step text guide and assistive interactive maps.

### OTTAWA TOURISM

Ottawa Tourism’s Destination Development Fund extends to cover accessibility. It has provided more than 40 community partners with small investments to improve accessibility-specific needs. Each awarded partner is required to complete their respective projects over a period of several months.

### EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS

Experience Columbus’ accessibility journey began with visitor requests. After compiling an extensive list of resources for travelers they turned to Rosemarie Rossetti, a local consultant who became paralyzed as an adult. Rosemarie’s expertise led to the development of an [Accessibility Guide](#), which was published within a matter of months.

### VISIT MYRTLE BEACH

When Visit Myrtle Beach (VMB) began their accessibility journey in 2016, they realized a local nonprofit, [Champion Autism Network](#), operated close by and had already undergone several trainings with frontline workers. The destination recognized the expertise the nonprofit could offer, and quickly established a collaborative partnership. By approaching the needs of neurodiverse travelers holistically, VMB became the first certified “sensory-friendly” destination.

### FÁILTE IRELAND

Showcasing the results of research and aligning to a proposed strategy has worked well for [Fáilte Ireland](#), whose dedicated inclusion team serves as both an internal consultant and an external partner to the hospitality industry. By developing their own in-house expertise around digital accessibility design, customer service, and more, Fáilte Ireland now engages closely with the country’s Minister of Travel to shape the national agenda for accessibility.

## PART 6

# EXPLORE FURTHER



## The TravelAbility Ecosystem

[TRAVELABILITY SUMMIT](#) The TravelAbility Summit is a three day conference that brings together disabled travel influencers, disability advocates, industry professionals, and innovators to advance accessibility within the travel and hospitality space. Through expert panels, innovation showcases, and collaborative workshops, attendees explore practical strategies to improve experiences for travelers with disabilities.

### [CULTIVATING ACCESSIBILITY LEADERS](#)

[MASTERCLASS SERIES](#) The Cultivating Accessibility Leaders Masterclass Series features one-day regional workshops held throughout the US. Designed for professionals in travel, tourism, and hospitality, this full-day, in-person training equips participants to lead accessibility initiatives within their organizations. Developed with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, the workshop includes the opportunity to earn an Accessibility Leader Certificate, a credential recognizing inclusive leadership in hospitality.

[INNOVATEABLE](#) is an annual showcase of adaptive innovations, technologies, services and amenities that can be introduced through the destination marketing channel.

[TRAVELABILITY FILM FESTIVAL](#) is a curated showcase of impactful short videos that highlight the evolving story of accessible travel. Featuring submissions from Destination Marketing Organizations, Attractions/Hotels/Restaurants, and Content Creators, the festival presents diverse perspectives that are reshaping how accessibility is experienced and represented across the travel industry.

## Initiatives

[TRAVELABILITY INSIDER](#) is a monthly newsletter with over 6,000 subscribers within the travel industry. The newsletter aggregates content to raise awareness within the travel industry about the difficulties travelers with disabilities face, best practices for their destinations, solutions for disabled travelers, and motivates them to make accessibility a priority.

[DESTINATIONS WITH ACCESSIBILITY](#) is a micro-site that aggregates accessibility content for over 175 destinations in the US, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.

[DESTINATION ATTY CLUB](#) is a group of destination organizations committed to advancing accessibility together by sharing information and resources. Club members participate in group promotions designed by the Foundation to create awareness about accessibility and inspire change in their stakeholders.

[THE ACCESSIBILITY LAB](#) in partnership with Samaritan Partners and The Schoolhouse Hotel, this real-world pilot program offers startups in assistive and accessible hospitality the opportunity to develop, test, and refine their innovations on site in a fully operational boutique hotel environment.

TRAVELABILITY TRUSTED is a collection of [service providers](#), consultants, [content creators](#), [technologies](#), [apps and innovations](#) that help make travel easier for people with disabilities. These companies and organizations have been vetted by TravelAbility.

[TRAVELABILITY YOUTUBE](#) archives contain videos and presentations that provide practical advice and information on how to be more inclusive and welcoming to travelers with disabilities. The videos have been generously donated to the TravelAbility Foundation by the Emerging Markets Summit.

[TRAVELABILITY FELLOWS](#), in partnership with the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, offers hospitality students a hands-on learning experience focused on accessibility and inclusivity within the travel and hospitality industries.

[THE TRAVELABILITY NETWORK](#) is a channel on Zeam, a free streaming service focused on local television content. The TravelAbility Network curates powerful sessions from the TravelAbility Summit alongside real-world accessibility content from destinations and content creators, inspiring a more inclusive travel experience for everyone.





## THE ACCESSIBILITY PLAYBOOK™ IS A COLLABORATION OF



### Acknowledgements:

Thank you for purchasing the Accessibility Playbook. This new edition, curated for destination organizations, emphasizes the lived experiences of travelers with disabilities and caregivers. It provides updated research studies and information on the rapidly growing senior travel market.

The Playbook would not be possible without the support and input from TravelAbility's Destination A11y Club members, who have been using the Playbook to advance accessibility in their destinations. The TravelAbility Advisory Board, generous sponsors, content creators, and organizations have shared valuable stories, insights and support. Special thanks to AARP for their help with aging traveler content, and to KultureCity for their expertise and review of sensory-specific materials. Thank you to UnchainedAI and Todd Brook for their development of the AI Companion.



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### Thank you to our Destination A11y partners:



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