



## Accessible Travel – World Tourism Day 2016

**Client:** MyTravelResearch.com Members, Friends and Readers

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**Date:** 27 September 2016

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## Introduction

As a tourism operator or destination marketing manager, it is hard to imagine what it would be like travelling with an impairment or disability.

For example, medieval cobblestones at a castle ruin is a charm to many, but for a wheelchair user, Rick Steves in his [John Sage accessible travel blog](#) tells us, it can become nearly impossible to cross (and not all cobblestones are created equal).

Accessible travel is perhaps the travel industry's greatest untapped opportunity. Today, there are literally millions of people world-wide looking for accessible travel options thanks in part to the aging population (worldwide).

Depending on where you are from, accessible travel is also referred to as inclusive travel, barrier-free travel and access travel. Essentially, accessible tourism means everyone can enjoy travelling, regardless of their abilities.

*“More often than not those expressions also have a narrow interpretation as people think of them applying only to travellers with a mobility related disability.*

*More correctly what we are describing in talking about Inclusive Tourism is an environment where people of all abilities are felt welcome and wanted as customers and guests”. Bill Forrester, CEO, Travelability*

## The Market

In the USA, The [Open Doors Organisation](#) tells us that alone, \$17.3 billion is spent by adults with disabilities on travel. Since they usually travel with at least one other adult, the actual dollar amount is double that. The average travel party is 2.7 and generally includes more adults, rather than children.

Americans with disabilities aren't the only ones travelling. One in five people has a disability and 8 billion dollars per year is spent on [Australian tourism by travellers with a disability](#) and a whopping 12% of the European tourism market is dedicated to people with disabilities.

And around 88 per cent of people with a disability take a holiday each year. This accounts for some 8.2 million overnight trips.



## A Huge Business Opportunity

As baby boomers continue to age, the numbers are predicted to grow rapidly. At MyTravelResearch.com, we have conducted many focus groups with travelling seniors. And there is one thing common to all - they don't want to stop travelling. But they recognise that perhaps the way that they do travel, needs to change incrementally as they age. Some adjustments need to be made along the way.

People travelling with disability are more likely to take longer trips and if you provide a great product or service, your customers will be extremely loyal and be likely to sing your praises through word of mouth and new review sites dedicated to accessible travel.

In this report, our aim is to alert you to the opportunity. There are experts who can teach you further on the specifics of the sector. But here we hope to give you a few practical tips on how you can at least start to think about and accommodate this sector.

[As Bill Forrester from Travelability](#) writes in his blog:

*"Accessible Tourism is no longer about building ramps and accessible bathrooms. It is about building products and services for a large and rapidly growing market. This is no longer a niche, but rather, a segment that is approaching 25% of the total tourism spend."*



## Who Requires Accessibility?

[Around 1 in 5 Australians have a disability.](#) Tourism Victoria in their accessibility toolkit advises us that people with a disability make up a large part of your market and come from all walks of life.

- People with a disability may be guests, business owners and employees.
- The majority of disabilities are not visible.
- Some people may not identify as having a disability. For example an older person may find it harder to see or hear but would not feel the need to tell you.
- Some people have more than one disability. For example someone may have an intellectual disability and a vision impairment.
- A disability can be temporary. For example a person may need to use crutches for a short time as a result of an injury or accident.
- People with a disability represent the diversity of the population. For example people with a disability may come from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

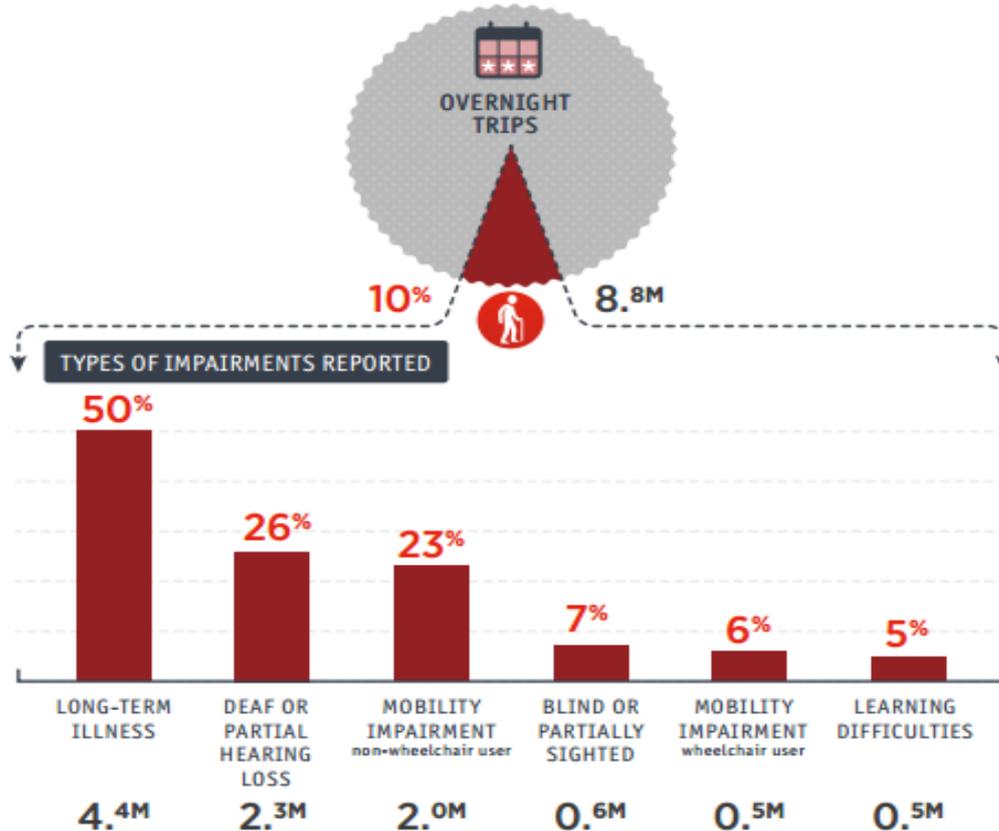
### **And The Open Doors Organisation defines disability as:**

“having blindness, deafness or a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying. Individuals who also have cognitive disabilities are also included...”



## Traveller impairment breakdown

Trips where the respondent has an impairment



Source: GBTS 2014

Figure 1

[Visit Britain](#) gives us a breakdown of the most common types of impairment. This breakdown gives you a good idea where accessible tourism services should be focused. Let's now take a closer look at some of the biggest markets.

### Seniors

[According to the AARP](#) Practically all Baby Boomers (99%) anticipated travelling for leisure in 2016, with approximately 4 or 5 trips in the works. They also enjoy taking multi-generational trips within the country, which requires another level of planning.

What we do know is that health concerns generally associated with aging may prevent seniors travelling in the way they used to, but it does not stop them travelling.

We have seen in our own research at [MyTravelResearch.com](#) that many seniors view themselves as independent and active and as such, willing to keep travelling and planning to well into the future.

They have realistic expectations about age and ability, but more often than not, seniors feel that their attitudes were much younger than their physical age. This is reflected in their sense of travelling adventure.



*“Its about hazard reduction. You Realise you can’t do the things as confidently as you used to but you don’t want to stop travelling. There are trade-offs, but a coach tour trade off is not so bad”* **MyTravelResearch.com focus group respondent (over 65 years)**

## Physically Impaired

As you saw from the Visit Brittan graphic (figure 1), physically impaired doesn’t mean wheelchair use only. In fact, the vast majority of those suffering from physical difficulties can get around without the use of a wheelchair, but may have difficulty doing so. They tend to use walkers, canes or they may simply need to be careful of where they go. Stairs and hikes can present difficulties.

Ensuring that all destinations and transport is easy to get into and move around in is part of providing accessible travel. Any restaurant, bar or café you go to will need to have a level entrance or provide a ramp. They will also need to have tables that are high enough for anyone with a wheelchair. If menus are available in braille, it will be easier for anyone with visual impairments to read, but you can also provide someone to read the menu aloud.

We have recently seen a great initiative by [The Gold Coast City Council in Queensland](#), Australia where they have partnered with local life saving club – [Burleigh Heads](#) to trial beach matting and beach wheelchairs. In this trial the equipment is available during certain times over the Summer of 2016/2017



Photos Source: City of Gold Coast

Gondalas 4All is a great public / private partnership initiated by a local Gondolier who wanted to provide accessible Gondolas after 20 years of seeing those in wheelchairs not being able to experience a gondola ride. [Check out this awesome video on Youtube](#) of the accessible gondola in action.



**Venezia Unica**

@veneziaunica

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#Gondolas4ALL una speciale pedana integrata sul pontile di P.le Roma per salire in gondola #VeneziaAccessibile

1:11 AM - 12 Mar 2016 - Venice, Veneto, Italy

🔄 5 ❤️ 8

[The New Forest in the UK](#) has a number of accessible walking tracks.

## Intellectual disabilities

[The Intellectual Disabilities Rights Service](#) tells us that an intellectual disability affects the way you learn. You can be born with an intellectual disability or acquire one under the age of 18. It can affect a person in the following ways:

- it may take longer to learn things
- the person may have difficulty reading and writing
- it can affect how the person's communication
- it will affect the person's understanding
- the person may find it difficult to maintain eye contact
- the person may have difficulty understanding abstract concepts
- it may affect the person's ability to plan and to problem solve
- it may affect the person's ability to adapt to new or unfamiliar situations
- it can involve the person presenting well "cloak of competence"

Travellers with intellectual disabilities almost always travel with a companion.





## Marketing to the Accessible Travel Market

When it comes to promoting your tourism destination, products and services, there will be some tweaking and enhancements for you to consider when targeting the accessible travel market.

### Planning, Booking and Travelling

In its [2015 marketing forecast, the Open Doors Organisation](#) identifies the following as the most popular choices for planning and booking travel.

The Internet is, by far, the most common way individuals with disabilities **book** their trips. Six out of ten travelers with disabilities have booked online in the past two years (62%). By comparison, only half as many placed calls to airlines and hotels (31%). Only 10% of respondents used a travel agent to book a trip

The Internet was the main source of information about accessible travel (58%), followed by previous experience (48%) which indicates a high brand loyalty and return visitation for this sector and then word of mouth from friends and family (38%).

People with disabilities are extremely tech savvy with 58% using mobile devices to support their needs. This includes the use of:

- hotel apps
- airport websites
- airline apps
- text alerts
- mobile apps
- video chat

### Transport

Like everyone else, travellers with disabilities primarily use their own private cars when taking trips. Eight out of ten drove on a trip in the past two years (79%), making an average of two such trips. Four out of ten travelers with disabilities in the US took at least one flight in the past two years (43%). These 11 million air travelers took 23 million trips and spent a total of \$9 billion just on their own flights.

One in four have rented a car (26%), and slightly more than one in ten have taken a train or bus (12%).

### Cruising

[Cruising is becoming more popular for people with disabilities.](#) In the past five years, 10% of adults with disabilities in the US have taken a cruise, amounting to almost 4 million travelers taking 7 million trips and generating \$11 billion in spending on fares and \$1.5 billion in spending on excursions.

Holland America have the award winning '[Access to Excellence](#)' as part of their cruising program and most cruise lines now have good accessible programs in place including accessible staterooms.



## Insights to Action – Practical tips to get you started.

According to Visit Britain, there are three aspects all businesses need to address to provide access for all:

**Information and marketing** – providing detailed information on the accessibility of your facilities and services and making this information easy to find

**Customer service and training** – being disability aware with the right attitude and confidence to serve all customers

**Physical facilities** – making reasonable adjustments to buildings and facilities so they are easy for everyone to enter and move around

### Information and marketing

Information is everything when catering to the accessible travel market – information diminishes the risk associated with the decision on where to go, where to stay and what tours to book.

If you are considering perhaps dedicating a web page to the accessible travel market, the types of things that [Visit Britain](#) tells us we may want to start with include:

- Use large print should be at least 14, but 16 is best.
- Use clear typefaces such as sans serif typefaces e.g. Arial, Univers or Verdana
- Ensure contrast between text and background. Avoid using red text.
- Avoid justifying text as large gaps can be confusing
- Don't use italics or capitals for large blocks of text
- Use pictograms and symbols to help users navigate text
- Use images with a diverse range of visitors
- Structure content in a logical order
- Use plain English and avoid long sentences
- When you commission a new website or upgrade, make sure your designers are familiar with WAI's web accessibility guideline

It is important to provide transparent pricing, ensuring prices are easy to locate. Be clear about inclusions. Do not charge for extra facilities or services that could be considered discrimination – for example charging a premium rate in accessible rooms.

You may want to review cancellation policies to be more flexible for people that need to change arrangements due to last minute illness (don't forget to be flexible for carers too)



## Critical information

In his [accessibility marketing guide](#), [Bill Forester](#) tells us that the following information is critical on your website:

### Entrance:

- Ramped or level access
- Door Width
- Type of door: Automatic, Manual, Manual with doorman

### Lift:

- Door width
- Depth
- Width
- Control height, braille
- Audio floor announcements

### Guest Rooms

- Door width
- Type of beds available
- Largest free space at side of bed
- Height of bed
- Clear space under bed
- Height of desk
- Clear space under desk
- Clothes rail height in wardrobe
- Light switch next to the bed

### Paths of Access

- There is level or ramped access in the hotel to the swimming pool, parking and restaurant
- Pool lift availability
- Garden or connecting paths: width and surface

### En-Suite Bathroom

- Door width
- Roll in shower
- Wall mounted shower seat provided: or, a free standing chair is available upon request
- Shower handrail
- Remote shower head

### Toilet

- Toilet seat height
- Widest clear space next to Toilet
- Clear space in front of Toilet
- Handrail: Fixed, position

- Sink height
- Clear space under sink
- Height from the floor to the base of the mirror

#### Dining and Bars

- Accessible entry
- Clear path to tables
- Tables, including outdoor settings accommodate roll under wheelchair
- WC facilities
- Choice of table locations and sizes
- Servery is accessible from wheelchair height
- Braille or large print menus
- Food is available pre-cut
- Dietary restrictions catered for
- Access to dance floor

#### Visuals

It is important to be authentic when marketing to this sector so the usage of legitimate images that are relatable. [Photoability](#) is a fabulous resource where you can buy positive stock imagery of persons with disabilities.

### Customer Service and Training

Staff training is vitally important if you are serious about targeting the accessible tourism sector. Like everyone else, persons with disabilities expect good customer service. Staff needs to have the right attitude and confidence to serve everyone effectively.

[Melissa James from Can Go Everywhere](#) tells us that as the accessible tourism market grows, it becomes more and more important for staff to understand the needs of these travelers. Possessing the relevant skills to accommodate them is essential if your business is to take full advantage of all this market has to offer.

Disability awareness training can minimise the barriers encountered by persons with disabilities and will enable staff to deliver the highest level of service in a comfortable and confident manner.

The benefits of training your staff includes:

- Allows the staff member to feel confident and comfortable when dealing with people with disabilities
- Enables staff to provide a high level of service to people with disabilities
- Enables staff to recognise barriers and to act to remedy them
- Creates a higher level of customer satisfaction
- Reduces risk to the business of action being taken against them under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Helps to promote the business as a good corporate citizen



## Adjusting Your Tourism Products and Services – Physical Facilities

In their accessible tourism toolkit, Tourism Victoria advises to start with a few small changes and to work your way up from there.

In terms of physical assets and facilities, here are a few areas you can start with:

### Entrance and reception area

- Make sure your entrance and reception areas are clearly marked and well lit. Is someone always on hand to meet, greet and show people around?
- Provide clear instructions for people using the intercom. Provide a mobile number for people who are Deaf, hearing impaired or have a communication disability.
- Provide seating close to reception or fast track people who can't stand for long.
- Provide a clipboard and large diameter pen for people checking in.
- Be prepared to write down information or complete forms on people's behalf. Provide a magnifying glass for people with a vision impairment.
- If you can't lower the reception desk/table, offer to check in guests in common areas, bedrooms or from their car.
- Welcome visitors who use assistance dogs (this is required by law).

### Restaurant and bar

- Use pictogram signs, for example a knife and fork and a clock face showing meal times to assist people with low literacy levels or who speak English as a second language.
- Read out menus or download them onto an audio player e.g. MP3, CD or iPhone.
- Be willing to move tables around and provide seats with and without arms.
- Use contrasting colours. For example avoid using white crockery, white linen and clear glasses all together on a table setting.
- Provide quieter areas with no background noise.
- Provide an area that is well lit so that people can choose this if required.
- Offer flexible menu options for people who have food allergies or intolerances.

### Bedrooms

- Purchase freestanding furniture when replacing old furniture. This can be more easily removed or moved around to provide more circulation space in rooms
- Make additional equipment available such as phones with large buttons, vibrating alarm clocks, talking alarm clocks and portable hearing loops.
- Enable captions on TVs (including digital TVs) and consider this when replacing old TVs.
- Provide water bowls for assistance dogs.

### Bathrooms and toilets

Place coloured towels within a white bathroom to provide a visual contrast.

## General

- Use contrasting colours for door frames, skirting boards and edges of steps.
- Provide clear signage with large text and high contrast.

## Extra Resources

### Staff Training

Inclusive Tourism Training has just launched a course about disability awareness training. They have given us a \$30 discount on her online course exclusive to MyTravelResearch.com members, friends and readers. The course is normally \$129, so you only pay \$99.

<http://www.inclusivetourism.com.au/disability-awareness-training/> . Please use **the coupon code 'accessible'**

### General resources

[Accessibility toolkit](#) – Tourism Victoria

[Accessible marketing guide](#) – Travelability.travel. There is also a range of fantastic resources and guides on the Travelability.travel website

[Open Doors Organisation](#)

[Visit Britain](#) – providing access to all. Fantastic free resource, very comprehensive with free training

[Photoability.com](#) – providing fantastic authentic stock images

## Conclusion

This report is designed to alert you to the opportunity rather than be a thorough 'how to' guide. There are experts and consultants in the sector who can provide you with more information and training if required. We have included some of these in our resources section as well as reference to the growing amount of research that has been conducted in this sector.

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