



## Creating Inclusive Tourism Experiences Tips for Tourism Operators

Inclusive Tourism is about encouraging visitor diversity and welcoming visitors with a wide range of ages and physical abilities - from families with a pram and older travellers, to visitors with a temporary injury, chronic illness or disability.

The following information aims to help make your tourism offering as inclusive as possible by providing the best possible experience and the information people need to plan their visit.

Providing an inclusive tourism experience is not just socially responsible, it also makes good economic sense. One in five people have a disability and 8 billion dollars per year is spent on Australian tourism by travellers with a disability. Don't forget that if one person in a traveling party has an access need, the whole group (no matter how large) will go to an accessible destination.

But it's wider than just catering for people with access needs – a wide range of travellers including families and older people will benefit from detailed **visitor information**, flexible and helpful **customer service**, and thoughtful design of the **physical environment**.

### INFORMATION

People are the best judge of their own abilities, so describe and provide photos of the facilities and the physical environment, rather than stating who can and can't use them.

Develop a Visitor Access Guide for your website, which is a simple and clear explanation of the services and facilities you provide, written with access needs in mind. This might be placed on a 'Visitor Information' page or a 'Plan Your Visit' page which typically includes frequently asked questions, transport options, opening times, map/directions, how long to allow for the experience, best weather conditions, peak/busy times, and travel times from key locations.

A Visitor Access Guide might include information about:

- car parking and drop off points
- accessible toilets
- ramps, stairs/steps and lifts
- incline and surface of paths
- mobility equipment available on-site
- family friendly features - change tables, high chairs, children's menu etc.
- assistance animals
- acceptance of companion/carer cards
- floorplans

Some examples include [Adelaide Oval](#) and [Adelaide Zoo](#) (see Accessibility Information).

Be sure to describe any elements of your experience that are not accessible and how visitors could still participate and have a meaningful experience.

Consider providing a contact for further information in case people have specific questions – e.g. *We are committed to creating a great experience for everyone – if we can make your visit more enjoyable or you have any feedback please contact name/email/phone.*

Endeavour to make your commitment to inclusive experiences visible on your website and social media.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- Appoint a responsible ‘access champion’ and include your commitment to inclusion in your strategic plan as well as a regular meeting agenda item.
- Remember that around 90% of disabilities are invisible – hearing loss for example.
- For the hearing impaired, consider portable hearing loop systems or adding subtitles to your video material that can aid understanding and participation.
- Provide multiple ways to book (e.g. online, phone, email) and ensure the process allows for people to communicate any specific needs.
- Employ staff who like people! And, employ people with a disability or from diverse backgrounds. Keeping your employee base varied will help you do the same for your customer base.
- Consider training staff in awareness and understanding of disability and accessibility so they can serve all guests and visitors with confidence.
- Get feedback and stay in touch. If you are welcoming of people with a disability, they will become loyal visitors as well as great ambassadors for your business.
- Speak directly to the person with the disability (not just their carer) and ask ‘how’ they want to participate.
- Don’t make assumptions – everyone is unique in their abilities.
- Note that guide dogs and service dogs are legally able to go anywhere except a quarantine zone.

## **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

- Being inclusive isn’t just about providing accessible car parking and toilets, although they are very important! Consider a drop-off point near the entrance, ramps or a lift if there are steps, mobility equipment, lowered reception desks, incline and surface of paths, acceptance of companion/carers cards, noise levels, font size on printed materials and the impact of heavy doors.
- There might be some simple adaptations you can make, such as buying a vibrating clock with flashing lights or lever adaptors to make taps easier to turn.
- Remember to keep accessible bathrooms clean and clear of other furniture, while still providing the essentials such as soap dispenser and a rubbish bin.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further research and resources available from Tourism Australia (see [Accessible Tourism page](#)) including information on the policies and legislation that encourage or make it a legal requirement for services and buildings to be accessible.

## **LANGUAGE TIPS**

In terms of the language you use, aim to be welcoming and use sensitive wording.

- The terms ‘inclusive’ and ‘accessible’ are now commonly used – although sometimes used interchangeably, inclusive is generally a broader term.
- It is better to describe a person with access requirements as just that. Avoid labelling a person as disabled, impaired or wheelchair-bound. Rather, they are a person with a disability or impairment, or a person who uses a wheelchair.
- Handicapped is considered an outdated term. Blind and deaf are also outdated terms – refer to a person with a vision or hearing impairment.

Information compiled by Adelaide Hills Tourism in October 2017 based on resources and presentations by [Push Adventures](#).