

ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE TOURISM

Accessible tourism will not only provide an important market opportunity, it will help ensure that all people are able to participate in tourism and enjoy unforgettable travel experiences.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Introduction

Every second of every day, we have an incredible opportunity to create accessible and inclusive tourism experiences. What we know for sure is that creating these kinds of experiences don't just happen. They are created by inclusive tourism leaders. It's a simple reality. It's our choice to say "yes" – as it always has been. In your journey to say "yes" to creating tourism destinations, products and services that are accessible to and inclusive of everyone, the following resources may be of interest. All of these resources are readily available on the internet.

Tourism Landscape

Tourism is becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization reports that international tourism represents seven percent of world exports in goods and services. In Canada, tourism reflects similar growing market characteristics. Recently, the federal government announced that in the first nine months of 2016, tourism spending reached 74 billion dollars. That was an increase of 4.3 percent over the same period in 2015. Ontario's data reflects this trend as well. The provincial government reports that tourism has consistently experienced growth and currently generates 28.5 billion dollars annually and supports 362,000 tourism-related jobs and 160,000 tourism-related businesses.

Selected Readings:

Tourism Snapshot: A Monthly Monitor of the Performance of Canada's Tourism Industry (Volume 12, Issue 12): December 2016. This monthly publication provides key highlights of the tourism industry in Canada based on a performance dashboard with links to trends in the United States, Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

Ontario's Tourism Action Plan was published by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Province of Ontario in June 2016. This document provides an overview of the tourism industry in Ontario and articulates priorities for future development.



Accessible and Inclusive Tourism

There is no single, universally accepted definition of inclusive and accessible tourism. Dr. Scott Rains, a recognized consultant and advocate, defines inclusive tourism as “a global movement to ensure the full social participation of all persons with disabilities in travel, citizenship, and cultural contribution – and in the process, to ensure the same for everyone else.” Accessible tourism means that a destination, product or service can be physically accessed by everyone, regardless of ability. But accessibility and inclusiveness are not the same, and it's not enough for a destination, product or service merely to be accessible...it must provide a positive human experience that can be enjoyed by everyone.

Selected Reading:

Universal Design: Guide for Inclusive Tourism is a resource of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation that addresses the difference between “accessible” and “inclusive” tourism, the importance of universal design and basic access considerations. This document is in a concise, easy to read format with helpful photographs.

Growing Accessible and Inclusive Market

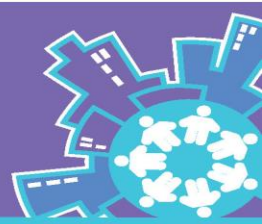
In their findings in a global study on disability, the World Bank and the World Health Organization estimated that more than 1.1 billion people, or 15 percent of the world's population, experience some form of disability. To help you better visualize this statistic, that number is nearly equal to the total population of either China or India. Research conducted by Dr. Simon Darcy in Australia found that 88 percent of people with a disability take a holiday each year. On top of that, the average travel size group for a person with a disability is 2.8 people for a domestic overnight trip and 3.4 people for a day trip.

Selected Reading:

Accessible Tourism Challenges and Opportunities is a publication of the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre. This publication summarizes research into disability and accessible tourism undertaken by Dr. Simon Darcy and his colleagues.

Inclusive Tourism...The Competitive Edge

So, how does the industry capitalize on that accessible and inclusive tourism competitive edge? Based on the well-documented growth of accessible and inclusive tourism, the wise entrepreneur sees an opportunity and adopts a new way of thinking. This mindset is centred on the premise that if we create a positive tourism experience for people with disabilities, then people of all abilities will benefit. This perspective allows for the creation of destinations, products and services that can be used by *all* travellers and tourists.



Selected Reading:

A Blueprint for the Development of a Successful Accessible Tourism Strategy was published by TravAbility in 2015. presents findings from research in Australia and Great Britain. This research illustrates the significant impact of people with disabilities and their companions and the Baby Boomer This document has an interesting section titled “The Economics of Accessible Tourism” that generation on the tourism industry. A quote by Tom Peters at the conclusion of this section reminds the tourism industry that people requiring an accessible tourism experience “...will be the center of your universe for the next twenty-five years. We have arrived.”

Information is Key to Success

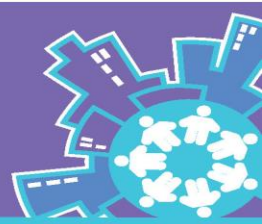
A contributing factor to ensuring that travellers with disabilities have a positive experience is to make clear in promotional materials the degree to which a destination, products and services are accessible and inclusive. The wheelchair symbol alone or the words “special assistance” are meaningless unless they are accompanied by a detailed and accurate description. When it comes to promoting inclusive tourism, communicating how people of different abilities are welcomed is critical – whether it’s including information in marketing resources and websites or ensuring that service personnel are well informed. The most common tool everyone uses now to plan a trip is the Internet. If a visitor to a website can’t find information about the level of accessibility or inclusion of a product, service or destination, then, click...they’re off to pursue another opportunity.

Selected Reading:

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) published their **Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism** in February 2016. This document is designed for the tourism industry to promote accessible information for all travellers at every stage of their journey and experience. Specific strategies related to printed material, digital documents, audio-visual content, websites, apps and self-service terminals, mobile/smart devices and signage are addressed in this publication.

Walk the Talk

The business case for accessible and inclusive tourism is compelling. To benefit from this growing market, tourism professionals need to take an honest look at and assess whether their destination, products and services create a positive tourism experience for people of all abilities. Then, the next step is to explore strategies to improve the tourism experience and implement solutions within a defined timeframe. Even small things can make a difference.



Selected Readings:

Accessible Tourism – It’s Your Business is an Accessibility Resource Kit published by Tourism Victoria. Although this resource is based on Australian tourism, the chapter titled “Make Low Cost Changes” outlines practical suggestions that can be adopted with limited investment. There are helpful tips on improving marketing information, reservations, staff orientation and training.

Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices was published by the World Tourism Organization in 2016. This manual is designed for tourism networks, governments, operators and businesses. The publication is divided into five distinct sections, each addressing key issues regarding accessible and inclusive tourism. International best practices are highlighted in each section including the smart design in services offered by Scandic Hotels based in Stockholm; Accessible Tourism Training Certificate developed in Europe; The Accessible Road Travel Guide for Quebec, Ontario; and the Take Charge of Your Travel Guide of the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Inclusive Tourism Making Your Business More Accessible and Inclusive was released by the State of Queensland, Australia in 2017. This guide was developed primarily for tourism operators and features a range of strategies to create accessible accommodations (see pages 11-15), information (see pages 14-15), accessible places (see pages 16-23) and accessible attractions and activities (see pages 24-25). Of particular interest is the description of “wayfinding” which is the ability to safely and independently orient a visitor to a building and navigate from place to place. There are also links at the end of each section related to other tourism guides and checklists.

Together We Rock!

This handout complements the presentation titled “Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Rocks!” by John Draper, Founder of Together We Rock!, delivered at the Central Counties Tourism Symposiums in Durham, York and Headwaters in March 2017.

Together We Rock! is a socially responsible business founded in 2006 by John Draper. Together We Rock! strives to achieve its mission to inspire learning and champion leadership to create accessible and inclusive communities through presentations, resources and products.

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