Lodging Accessibility Guide

This guide will focus on mobility, sight, and hearing accessibility best practices for Lodging properties in the Hospitality Industry.

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Contents

*Anything underlined in this document is linked to a specific location in this document, or to an external resource.

Accessibility in Travel

What is accessibility in travel and why is it important

According to Oxford Languages, accessibility means "*the quality of being able to be reached or entered*". But what does it mean to society? When referring to accessibility, modern language associates Accessibility with "the ability to access." In a sense, it is **the design of products, services, and environments to be used by people with disabilities.** In more recent years, accessibility is related to inclusive design, where products are created to be usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities.[1]

To understand accessibility, it is important to also understand the term <u>disability</u>; a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more life activities. Disabilities can be <u>situational</u>, <u>temporary</u>, and <u>permanent</u>. There are four major archetypes of disability: <u>cognitive</u>, <u>sight</u>, <u>hearing</u>, and <u>mobility</u>. It is important to note that a person can have multiple disabilities, which can be visible and non-visible.

So, what does this have to do with travel? Inclusive travel puts an emphasis on making sure experiences can be enjoyed by everyone – regardless of the range of their abilities. The Return on Disability Group **estimates a population of 1.85 billion people with disabilities** *with their friends and family adding another 3.4 billion*.[2] It is expected that these figures will continue to grow as Global Statistics estimates the populations of people aged over 60 will double by 2050[5] and the prevalence of disabilities in people over 65 is close to 52%. This means that disability touches 73% of consumers.[2] With **a combined total of over $13 trillion in annual disposable income,**[2] it is the demographic least catered to and with the greatest amount of revenue potential. According to Open Doors Organization's 2020 Market Study, travelers with disabilities spent nearly $59 billion on travel and took a total of 81 million trips (2018-19)![3]

As you explore this guide and determine how inclusive design applies to your property, keep in mind that Millennials and younger demographics are "values-based," meaning they will spend more with companies that prioritize inclusion. In this document, we will review inclusive design, provide resources on how to market appropriately and providing the best experience for all travelers.

Did you know?

- According to the CDC, **1 in 4 adults in the US have some type of disability** as of 2020.[5]

- **Travelers with disabilities are multi-customer**; it seems that for every person with disability, an average of 1.5 people travel as well.[6]

- Travelers with disabilities have a significant impact on **reducing the seasonality** of certain destinations.[6]

- Travelers with disabilities **generate more than the average revenue** resulting from conventional tourism.[6]

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Market Appropriately

Listing Accessible Rooms

In a perfect world, a hotel would have an accessible option for every room type they have, or better yet, offer universally designed rooms to welcome guests of all abilities. We realize this may not be possible – yet.

We encourage hotels to list all room types to provide all options for our travelers regardless of ability. Keep in mind that just because a room is not classified as accessible, doesn't mean it can't have accessible features such as lowered lever handles, flashing alarms, vibrating pillow alarms, etc.!

Different disabilities means needs will vary depending on disability type. Please consider that when updating content on our channels and creating livable spaces for all.

Hot Tips to be Accessible for All

Tip #1: Take unique photos of all angles of the accessible room, so someone who is disabled can determine if that room will fit their needs.
Ideal photos are:
- ✓ Sink space and clearance under
- ✓ Desk and clearance under
- ✓ Bed in relation to side table
- ✓ Bed in relation to wall
- ✓ Lowered power outlets and light switches
- ✓ Type of bathroom features- shower or bathtub
- ✓ Threshold of accessible showers to show potential barriers

Tip #2: Adjust your room type name to outline the accessibility features available in the room, such as roll in shower or bathtub with accessible appliances, or if it is Hearing Accessible.

Tip #3: Are all websites used to book your rooms accessible, including your personal website? Ensure your own website meets accessibility standards! Can someone who is colorblind see all your text? Can someone with a mobility disability navigate your website with only a keyboard and without the use of a mouse? Are there transcripts for audio?

Tip #4: If a guest reaches out regarding an accessible room, provide them with the details that will make their stay that much easier. Is it close to the elevator for a mobility disabled traveler? Do you have quiet rooms for an autistic traveler? Will you be ready with a hearing kit?
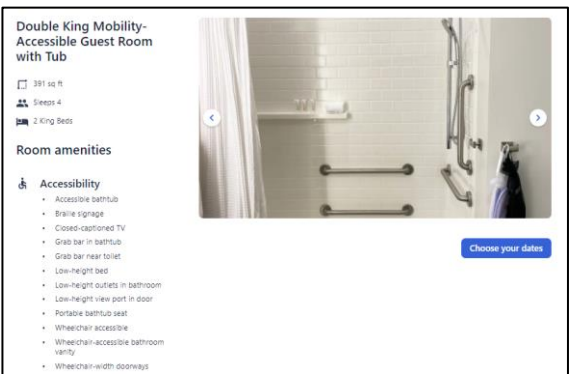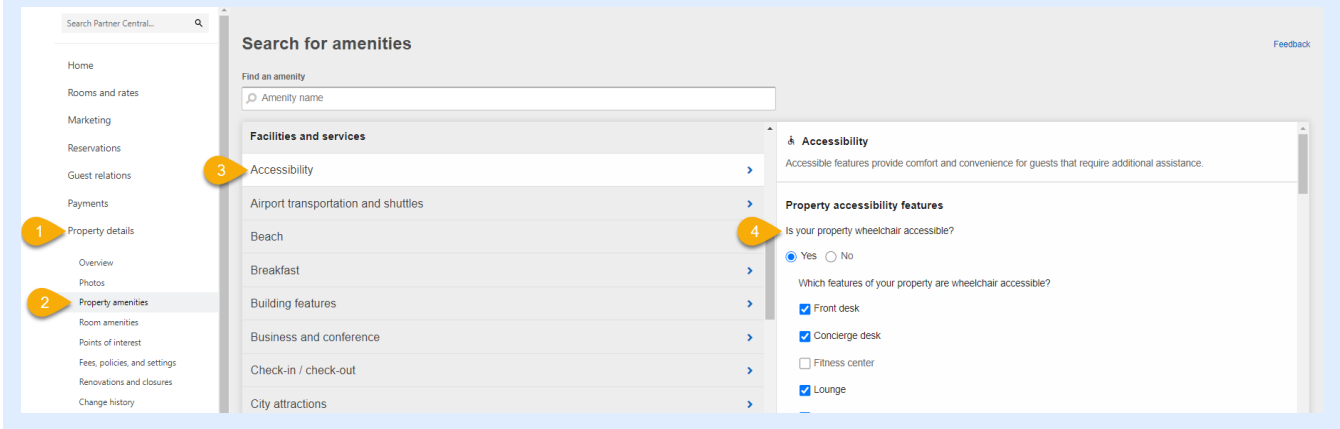
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How to set up Accessible Rooms

Accessibility means a lot of things to different people. Please provide as much details on amenities to ensure we are providing the right information to our disabled guests.

*To update your Accessibility in Partner Central, go to:*

Property Details > Property Amenities > Accessibility (picture instructions below)

Clear title description with key accessible features listed. It also includes image of accessible tub with grab bars.

Updating Accessible Content Partner Central Link

Clear description and photos of theme rooms. For example, themed rooms would be great for children or neurodevelopmental disordered travelers.
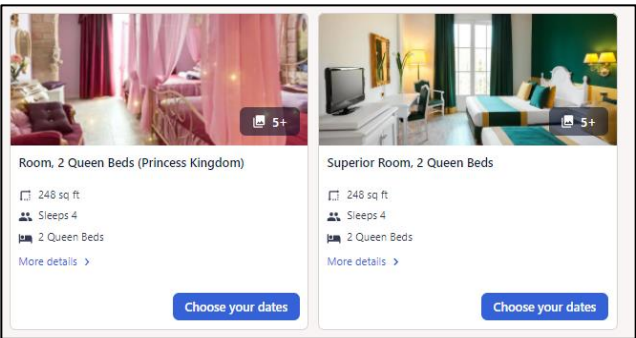
Pool amenity image showcases accessible features available.

Taking Accessible Photos Partner Central Link

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Provide the Best Experience

Guest Relations

Most times, poor guest experiences can happen for travelers with accessible needs, not from outright discrimination but from lack of education. Take time to properly educate staff on how to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Be Traveler Centric

First and foremost, keep the human element in accessibility. To be customer centric, always approach accessibility logistically and inclusively; not as a compliance checkmark. Did you know that there are low-cost assessments available by various companies to identify areas of opportunity for your property specifically? Search online for "accessibility assessment of my hotel" for local options.

One of the top complaint's travelers with disabilities share, is the common attitude of treating accessible features as first come, first serve. A traveler with disabilities cannot take the chance that an amenity they need, such as a roll-in shower or portable shower seat, will not be available when they arrive. They will most likely cancel their existing reservation and book with a property that is able to guarantee amenity availability. Furthermore, properties unable to honor the requests are likely receive negative reviews, which ultimately can negatively impact a property's revenue.

Some accessible requests can be managed directly through the message center in Partner Central. Make sure to respond to these messages in a timely manner so the traveler and the property can make necessary adjustments!

Do	Avoid
• Assess your property	• Assumptions of traveler
• Train your staff	• Manage accessibility features as first come, first serve
• Use inclusive language	• Treat training as one and done
• Guarantee accessible requests	
• Ask how to help	

Training Resources search web for "tips on serving customers with disabilities"

- American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute
- Hospitality & Disability – An ADA National Network Initiative

- National Disability Authority
- ADA National Network
- UNWTO

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Inclusive Travel

Moving from Compliance to Inclusive Design

Compliance is a term used to describe rules and policies that regulate specific product, services or processes. It's often legally binding and enforced by government agencies.

However, compliance isn't inclusive. Inclusive design focuses on exploring ways of serving a full spectrum of people who make up a diverse market.[6]

Toby Willis, Sr. Product Manager for Inclusive Travel at Expedia Group and President of the Alliance of People with Disabilities shares that it is important for all of us to focus on **shifting the paradigm from compliance to inclusive design**. One way to approach inclusive design is through the 'social model'. The social model takes the human centric approach and explains that an individual may have a condition, but they become 'disabled' by the barriers that exist within society. Barriers are not only physical but can exist in the way we communicate, environments we create, technologies we use, and attitudes we act upon. Using the social model will help identify these barriers and determine the best way to remove them.[4]

Inclusive design is the future of the travel industry, and benefits everyone. For example, automatic doors benefit people using wheelchairs, as well as parents pushing strollers or people with their hands full! Remember, disabilities can be situational, temporary, and congenital.

Inclusive design also encompasses the ability to make people feel valued and included. According to the Center for Global Inclusion, an inclusive environment "ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all, as well as enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued for who they are and for their contributions toward societal goals."[7]

According to a study conducted by Accenture, 42% of travelers with disabilities surveyed, shifted more than 10% of their travel spend away from a company that did not reflect their inclusive values.[9] This means that to be successful in the travel industry, inclusive design is the only way forward.

Resources on Inclusive Design

- Accessible Design vs. Inclusive Design
- 3 Principles of Inclusive Design and Why It Matters
- Global Google Design
- An Accessible Design to Inclusive Design
- Inclusive Design by Microsoft
- The Inclusion & Diversity Compendium for Designers

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End Notes

1. Accessibility, Usability, and Inclusion, Web Accessibility Initiative, 2022.

2. Design Delight from Disability - 2020 Annual Report: The Global Economics of Disability, Return On Disability, 2020.

3. 2020 Market Study, Open Doors Organization, 2020

4. Breaking down barriers to travel, Leonard Cheshire in partnership with Expedia Group, 2020

5. Disability and Health Overview, CDC.gov, 2022

6. What are the differences between universal design, accessibility, and inclusive design?, Say Yeah Inc., 2022

7. Manual on Accessible Tourism for All, UNWTO Publication, 2015

8. World Population Aging - Highlights, UN, 2017

9. The Travel Sector's Best Amenity? Diversity, Accenture, 2019

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Acknowledgements

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Appendix A: Additional Resources

Marketing

- Accessible Marketing for Small Businesses: Microsoft eBook
- Understanding the Disability Market: Solutions Marketing Group Video
- Why Accessibility Must Be Part of Your Marketing Plan: Bureau of Internet Accessibility

Guest Relations

- Disability Etiquette: DisabilityIN.org
- Inclusive Language: BBC Blog
- Disability Language Guide: National Center on Disability and Journalism
- Hospitality Resources: Open Doors Organization
- Accessible bathrooms not so accessible: TravelAbility Insider

Inclusive Travel

- Myths about universal design: VRBO Blog
- Inclusive & Accessible Travel Guidelines: World Travel & Tourism Council
- Breaking down barriers to Travel, Championing disability inclusive and accessible travel: Leonard Cheshire report in partnership with Expedia Group
- Rare hotel featuring inclusive design opens in Amherst: The Buffalo News

US & Canada Resources

- ADA Design Requirements for Hotels: WheelchairTravel.org
- How to Ensure your Hotel Website is ADA Compliant: Pegasus Legacy
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act – Accessible Hotel Rooms for Guests: AODA.ca Inc.
- Summary of Accessible Canada Act: Canada.ca
- Web Accessibility Initiative: Web Accessibility Initiative

International Resources

- The World Tourism Organization - Accessible Tourism: World Tourism Organization
- United Kingdom Digital Accessibility Laws: An Overview: Bureau of Internet Accessibility
- EU Web Accessibility Laws: WhoIsAccessible.com
- International Disability Rights – by Country: Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: United Nations ESCAP
- Disability Laws and Acts by Country/Area: UN Department of Economic & Social Affairs

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Appendix B: Glossary

Types of Disabilities

Mobility	Affect's a person's mobility and/or dexterity
Hearing	Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound
Sight	Includes low-vision, blindness, and color blindness
Cognitive	Impacts the ability to complete mental tasks

Terminology

Disability	A physical or mental impairment that limits one or more life activities
Situational	One's physical or mental ability changes with situation (Ex: In loud crowd, can't hear well)
Temporary	Short-term injury or context affects a person ability to interact (Ex: arm injury)
Permanent	Physical or mental impairment that indefinitely diminishes one's ability to perform daily activities
Accessibility	The ability to access
Usability	The extent to which a product, service, environment can be used by specific users to achieve specific goals
Inclusive Design	Focuses on exploring ways of serving a full spectrum of people who make up a diverse market. Includes places, architecture, systems, and services
Universal Design	Serves the broadest range of users possible. Historically focused on places and architecture
Inclusive Language	Language that avoids the use of certain expressions or words that might be considered to exclude groups of people

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Appendix C: Partner Central Terminology

This terminology is meant to serve as a guide.
Please check with local government accessibility requirements to ensure full compliance.

Front Desk/ Concierge desk	Reception desk located on a clear floor space and consider the additional space (at least 30-48" *(76-122cm)*) that can accommodate the movement of a person with reduced mobility and wheelchair turn space. Height of reception desks between 28-34" *(71-86cm)* Minimum length of parallel approach should be 36" *(91cm)* Minimum length of forward approach should be 30" *(76cm)* Knee space under the reception desk should be 12" *(30cm)*
Fitness Center	Doorway is 32" *(81cm)* wide, and enough space in gym for a wheelchair to turn easily
Lounge	Minimum of 32 Inches to move around lounge space between couches/chairs/tables
Meeting Spaces/ On Site Restaurant	Doorway is 32" *(81cm)* wide and enough space to enter and move around Knee space under the reception desk should be 12" *(30cm)*
Parking & Van Parking	Designated accessible parking spaces available close to entryway of building 5 ft *(152 cm)* Access Aisle available for entry/exit of vehicle Sidewalk ramp from access aisle to ensure easy access to sidewalk
Path of Travel	An accessible path of travel at least 32" *(81cm)* wide of sidewalks, curb ramps and other interior or exterior pedestrian ramps; clear floor paths through lobbies, corridors, rooms, and other improved areas; parking access aisles; elevators and lifts
Pool	Accessible pools include stairs, slopes, lifts and transfer systems
Assistive Listening Devices	These help address listening challenges in three ways: minimizing background noise; reducing the effect of distance between the sound source and the deaf or hard of hearing person; and overriding poor acoustics such as echo. Devices available at front desk for individuals to use in their guest room

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Public Washroom / Guest Room Bathroom	Clear floor space and consider the additional space (at least 30-48" *(76-122cm)*) that can accommodate mobility needs Sinks and countertops should be no more than 34" *(86cm)* high and should have enough space 12" *(30cm)* to allow for knee clearance Faucets for sinks, flush mechanisms and any other valves/knobs must be operable with one hand. Faucets and controls that need to be turned or twisted must be usable with force of 5lbs *(2,268 grams)* of pressure or less Further information: "Guestroom Bathroom Features" on pg. 10
Elevators	Elevator easily accessible in a public space (instead of a cramped hallway). Doors must remain fully open for at least three seconds. Automatic verbal announcement of stop or non-verbal audible signal of passed floors and stops must be used Emergency controls must be grouped at the bottom of the elevator control panel and have their centerlines no less than 35" *(89cm)* above the finish floor Call buttons are a minimum of 0.75" *(1.9cm)* in diameter Button heights must be centered 42" *(107cm)* from the floor Door width must be at least 36" *(91cm)* and space must be at least 51" *(130cm)* deep and at least 68" *(173cm)* wide Braille must be below or next to floor numbers on the control panel and Two-way communication must be available in elevator cabs that deaf/blind users can use
Handrails	The handrail must be at a consistent height with the top of the gripping surface between 34-38" (86-97 cm) above the walking surface, stair, or ramp. A clearance of at least 1.5" (3.8cm) between the handrail and wall or adjacent surface
Braille Signage	Characters are raised above the signs background with a minimum of 1/32" *(0.08cm)*. No sharp edges. The sign itself is a matte or glare-free finish. Sign characters should contrast with the background. Ideally a 70% color contrast between background and characters

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Visual Alarms in Hallways	A visual alarm provides persons with hearing loss the same warning delivered to hearing persons by an audible alarm. Electrically powered illuminated emergency exit signs shall flash as a visual emergency alarm in conjunction with audible emergency alarms. The flashing frequency of visual alarm devices shall be less than 5 Hz
Lowered Guestroom Amenities	Door handles, pulls, latches, locks and other operating devices shall be installed 34-48"*(86-122cm)* above the finished floor. One peephole should be at "typical" height, and the other located 43" *(109cm)* above the floor. Beds in the accessible guestrooms to measure 20-23" *(51-58cm)* high from the floor to the top of the mattress, whether or not compressed vs. typical beds 25-30" *(64-76cm)*
Guestroom Bathroom Features	Accessible bathtubs can be used by people with limited mobility or the disabled. Accessible Showers should be easy to enter and exit for all users alike (whether walking or using a wheelchair). Bather can access all items including the shower controls, water, soap and shampoo from both a seated and standing position. Controls easy to operate (i.e. single lever style). Bathtub/Shower Seats are an assistive technology device that helps people with functional limitations to bathe. Either installed shower seat (ideally flip-up style seat) or adequate space for a portable one. Slip-resistant flooring and provide helpful handholds or grab bars for balance and support. Raised toilet seats are either raised toilet bowl or raised toilet seat to hit the 17-19" *(43-48cm)* floor to bowl rim height, including the seat.
Lowered Electrical Outlets	The receptacle height range for an unobstructed front or side reach is 15-48" *(13-122cm)*
Doorbell/Telephone Notification	Visual notification by way of flashing light or notification on TV. A telephone handset amplifier for those who need amplification for the telephone volume and to indicate the phone is ringing

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