



**visits4u Access Guide:
Recommendations for
Hotels**

Visits4u Access Guide: Recommendations for hotels and accommodation providers

As a business, your viability relies on making sure your customers enjoy their stay.

A happy customer will come back and will tell others to choose you.

Taking measures to improve accessibility of your hotel will make you more attractive to millions of people who:

- have access needs
- travel with someone who has access needs (friends, families, colleagues)

Who has access needs?

The international symbol of access is this:



However, across countries of the European Union, 94% of tourists with access needs do not use a wheelchair and the vast majority people's access limitations are not apparent (1). It is true that many people will benefit the entrance to your building is step-free or has a ramp: wheelchair users but also example someone with a baby buggy or a very heavy luggage. It is also true that many customers may have access needs that have nothing to do with ramps, for example someone who is hard of hearing or deaf, or someone who is on the autism spectrum.

What do I need to do?

Understand how big your market it and ensuring you offer everyone a high quality and pleasant customer experience at your premises.

For more information you can view the 'Who is Inclusive Tourism for?' document of the **visits4u Access Guide**.

Marketing and information

Knowledge is power! Often planning a holiday or a business trip requires a lot of information in advance; your customers therefore need to know exactly what they can find in your hotel, what to expect and how they can tell you what they are looking for.

- Give as many details as possible about your facilities on your printed or online publicity.
- Include recent photos of your premises: entrances, reception, rooms, restaurant, menu
- Give details on the type of rooms you have. If you have **adapted or accessible rooms, create a separate page (on your website or printed) with exact details:**
 - size of the bedroom
 - description and size of the bathroom (wet room, walk-in shower, bath)
 - dimensions and height of bed (from the floor)
 - is there a hoist available? If there no fixed hoist, can a portable one be provided?
 - are there any interconnecting rooms?
 - the floor (groundfloor, first, second etc)
- Include information about the help you can offer. This can be directly from staff and/or assistive equipment:
 - Vibrating pillows or vibrating alert under the mattress
 - Visual alarms
 - Information in Large Print format
 - Bath mats, shower stools, wheeled showers, commode chairs
- Consider making your information more accessible, for example:
 - Print the welcome pack in large print (recommended: point 14 or 16). This will be useful for people with visual impairments.

- Avoid using glossy paper or shiny laminated sheets for printed information as this can make the document more difficult to see and read.
- Use icons, symbols or images where possible to accompany the text. This can be useful for people who may not understand well or at all the language in which the information is written. It can also be useful for many learning disabled people.
- Include clear information how tourists can find you, including landmarks near your business and a map showing where you are. Not everyone can read maps, so clear directions in text are a helpful addition.
- Include information about accessibility in your region too, such as for transport options and key tourist attractions. It is very likely that your guests will want to visit important local cultural landmarks (such as museums, galleries, theatres) and probably have a nice day out at local bars and restaurants.

Building management and facilities

It is important that your building and external spaces are suitable for a range of people.

If you are building a new shop/restaurant or planning a refurbishment, make sure you involve access specialists who can advise you and your architects in how to design for accessibility. You can read more about finding and working with an access auditor in the **Frequently Asked Questions** document of the **visits4u Access Guide**.

Sometimes, there are limitations beyond your control, for instance if the building (or parts of it) is listed as significant heritage or because of a difficult location. There are still measures you can take in how you manage and maintain it, which will make a difference in welcoming people with access needs.

- If you have designated parking spaces for disabled drivers, make sure these are available when needed and not wrongly used by other drivers (including your staff).

- Keep circulation routes clear of obstructions at all times: corridors, routes to facilities for customers (such as to get to the toilet), emergency exits and fire escape routes.
- Never use toilet facilities for disabled people (accessible WC's) as a storage room.
- Arrange regular inspections and maintenance of your facilities and assistive equipment.
- Consider adapting the layout of your restaurant or spaces, where possible, to allow your guests to comfortably circulate. In cases where your space has limitations, be ready to offer alternatives, for example: a staff member is available to offer direct assistance or alternatives accessible circulation routes.
- Ensure there is good visual contrast between different elements and surfaces in the building. For example, between: the wall and the floor, the ceiling and the wall, doors and columns, furniture and the nearby walls/floor, tables and seating.
- Ensure any signs around your space are clearly visible and not obstructed or covered.
- Consider and review your policy on allowing and welcoming assistance dogs. Assistance dogs are professionally trained to perform certain tasks and support the individual - they are not pets. They might accompany a hearing or visually impaired person, someone who has epilepsy or someone who is on the autistic spectrum. Consider, also, relevant legislation in your region regarding: disability discrimination, health and safety.

Staff and customer care

Attitude is everything!

Your customers, with or without access needs, have expectations for the service you provide. Good manners and respectful language are important for everyone, and willingness to assist where possible is highly valuable. Remember that “a happy customer tells a friend; an unhappy customer tells the world!”.

- Train all your staff in disability and equality awareness.
- Ensure staff is aware of the access features your business provides and how to use / maintain any equipment
- Encourage your customers to tell you in advance if they have any access needs and how to contact you. You can add a question on your booking form or ask them directly on the phone or via email.
- Always follow these customer care tips and remind your staff to do the same:
 - Don't make assumptions about what people might need, simply ask. There are 'visible' and 'invisible' disabilities.
 - Offer assistance if you think someone might welcome it, but wait for them to accept before you help.
 - Talk to the person directly not the person accompanying them (eg a carer or Sign Language interpreter)
 - Don't ask questions about the person's condition or impairment. Focus on "How can we meet your access needs?"
 - Avoid staring. If someone looks "different", focus on what they are saying, not on the way they look.
 - Be patient. If someone has difficulty understanding you - perhaps because they have a learning disability or their first language is different to yours - be patient and be prepared to explain something more than once.
 - When talking to a D/deaf person, ensure your face is in the light, face the person, speak clearly and naturally, and avoid covering your face with your hands.
 - Always announce yourself when you meet a blind / visually impaired person. If you plan to move away, let them know. Don't leave them talking to an empty space
 - When you are talking to someone with a speech impairment, focus on what is being said, don't try to guess what they want to say and don't try to finish their sentences. If you don't understand, ask them to repeat, don't pretend you have understood

- Ask a blind person if they would like to take hold of your arm and gently offer your arm. As a guide always tell them when there are steps to go up or down.
- Guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people and other assistance dogs are working animals, not pets. Don't try to feed, pat or distract them while they work.

Further reading:

visits4u Access Guide documents

- (1) Source: Design for All in Tourist Destinations - ECA 2017, Published by EuCAN - European Concept for Accessibility Network. Available online:
<http://www.eca.lu/index.php/documents/eucan-documents/45-destinations-for-all-eca-2017/file>



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