



**visits4u case studies:**

**Tactual Museum**

**Athens, Greece**

## Tactual Museum

### Kallithea-Athens, Greece

Title: Come in Touch with the Ancient Greek Culture

#### Description

In 1983, the president of the Lighthouse for the Blind, Protopapadaki L. and the managing director Kefakis Manolis, were looking for a way that would give visually impaired people the opportunity to come in touch with ancient Greek Culture. The first artefacts were bought by Lighthouse, followed by several donations by supporting organizations and others. At the same time it was realized that the ability to touch and feel the exhibits was an excellent new way of approaching the ancient Greek civilization not only for blind but for sighted people, too.

#### Becoming inclusive:

##### 1. Description



Tactual Museum was founded in 1984, and housed on a two-floor neo-classical building, on Doiranis Street 198, Kallithea-Athens, donated by Empeirikos to the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece. After a 3-year period of enforced closure due to the earthquake of 1999, it opened again in 2004 following subsidies and sponsorship from the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and the American Friends of the Blind in Greece Organization, based in Massachusetts, USA.



The Tactual Museum was officially re-opened by the President of the Republic, Mr Konstandinos Stefanopoulos, on the 19th of March 2004.



In 1988 the museum was chosen 70 other European museums to receive the "Museum of the year" Award.

In 2004, it also won an award from the Greek Union of Friends of Museums for the realization of its accessibility program.

## 2. Description of steps taken, changes and progress

It is one of 4-5 Museums of its kind in the world. The main difference between the Tactual Museum and other Museums is the opportunity for all visitors to touch all the Exhibits that are copies of the originals displayed in other museums of our country.



The exhibits in the Tactual Museum, - statues, vessels, sculptures and useful artifacts - are exact replicas of the originals which are displayed in the Museums of Greece, such as the National Archaeological museum, the Acropolis, Delphi, Olympia, Heraklion Museums and the Museum of Cycladic Art, dated back to the Cycladic, Minoan, Geometric, Archaic, Austere Rythm, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods.



Besides the Olympic Games Exhibition there exist information material printed in Braille regarding the Olympic Games and the Paralympics, as well as relief maps of Athens with the Olympic Facilities pointed out, made by the artist Maria Veropoulou.



In addition, the Tactual Museum is home to the sculpture of the recognized blind sculptor Petros Roukoutakis, as well as, Works of Art made by visually impaired individuals at Ceramic and Sculpture Studio of the Lighthouse for the Blind.

The Museum is accessible to people with mobility problems, via the ramp, next to the main entrance of the building Access to the second floor by use of stair elevator, donated by the Bank of Greece.

Tactual Museum is the best place for visually impaired individuals, to come in touch with ancient Greek culture.



To help visitors obtain the information they require regarding the exhibits, an automatic tour guide has been created in both Greek and English.

There are also descriptive signs written in Braille and enlarged letters for partially sighted individuals.

In Tactual Museum different Educational Programs for children or even for teachers can take place upon request.



From the Greek Children's Museum's, Interpreters Education program which took place at the Tactual Museum on 25.05.2005.

Tactual Museum Web Site has been designed according to the recommendations and standards for XHTML 1.0, CSS-2, developed by the World Wide Web Consortium [W3C]

For people using Screen Readers (Hal, Jaws etc.), there exists an alternative set of Tactual Museum webpages, with exactly the same content, that have been designed and developed according the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines produced by the World Wide Web Consortium.

### **3. Main stakeholders**

The Tactual Museum belongs to the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece. Mrs Georgia Roukoutaki, member of LightHouse's Board of Directors is in charge of the development, operation and promotion of the Museum. Tactual Museum as a non-profit institution must rely on the generosity of its friends and supporters in order to enrich its collection as well as to meet the cost of its overall operation. All donators of the Museum are being recorded in the Museum's donations Book.

### **Results and Impact**

Citizens and tourists, from Greece or abroad, who visit the Tactual Museum can enjoy a high quality and inclusive visitor experience, thanks to the measures taken and the range of access features available. Particularly for visually impaired tourists, the Tactual Museum can be a popular visitor attraction, as it offers the opportunity to learn about the history and modern culture of Greece through its range of tactile exhibits.

One of the main priorities of the Lighthouse for the Blind of Greece, was and still is the development of voluntarism. This helps further promote awareness regarding the barriers that visually impaired and blind individuals may face.

## Lessons learnt

- As a conclusion the infrastructure and services' accessibility can be a strong tool for the development, progress and economic growth of touristic and non-touristic cities.
- Promotion of positive attitudes and awareness of barriers that visually impaired and blind individuals may encounter.
- Developing volunteering programmes can help manage the museum's running costs in conjunction with its mission to raise awareness on access and to promote the Greek culture.

## Further information

[www.tactualmuseum.gr](http://www.tactualmuseum.gr)



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