



**visits4u Case Studies:
Port Aventura WORLD
Vilaseca, Spain**

Port Aventura WORLD, theme park

Vilaseca, Spain

Title: Promoting social responsibility in the tourist sector



Port Aventura WORLD is a large complex made up of theme parks and resorts, being the main one a full-blown theme park modelled on Busch Gardens in Florida, featuring 5 themed areas (Polynesia, Mexico, China, the Wild West and the Mediterranean). There are also two other theme parks within the same area: a large, all-year-round water park with a Caribbean theme (Caribe Aquatic Park) and Ferrari Land, a unique park in Europe impressive technology and innovation experience and discover all the secrets behind the legendary motoring Italian brand and its creator. The resort operates four 4-star and one 5-star themed hotels (Port Aventura Hotels) with a total of 2100 rooms, and a convention centre (Port Aventura Convention Centre) with capacity for up to 4000 people. The range of leisure activities on offer also includes 3 golf courses and a Beach Club with direct access to the beach.

It's very attractive to tourism from perspective, as it offers different worlds that enrich visitors' stays and offers a complete holiday experience, including leisure, culture, golf, beach club, accommodation and gastronomy for every type of visitor. In 2017, it has been named the

best theme park in Europe in the 'World of Parks Awards', one of the leading online portals for theme parks and leisure, by more than 35,000 participants. This award positions PortAventura World among the best leisure and family holiday destinations in Europe. The resort has welcomed more than 70 million visitors over its 22-year history and it has been described as a unique destination with numerous possibilities for each member of the family. This awards reflects the investment made in recent years to attract new international Markets, the focus on the quality and the satisfaction of visitors. In the next years some members of the main board assure that they will continue their investment strategy in their parks, shows and hotels, with more than 200 million euros, to maintain this leadership.

Becoming inclusive:

As a result of over 20 years dedicated to developing Corporate Social Responsibility in the areas of human resources, the environment and the support of NGOs and hospitals, '*Port Aventura Foundation*' was created as a not-for-profit foundation that fosters the integration into society of people belonging to groups at risk of social exclusion, especially children and young people.

Throughout this time, Port Aventura has strived to include disabled workers as part of its workforce. Furthermore, its concern for the environment has been constant, as reflected by the impetus for the implementation of environmental management systems, landscape conservation and responsible management and exploitation of natural resources. Port Aventura is a brand linked with happiness and emotion, so over the past years it has carried out various initiatives to make access to leisure easier for these groups: free tickets given to NGOs, support for blood donations campaigns, the launch of special services in its facilities for specific groups and visits from Port Aventura characters to hospitals.

For many years, they have been organising campaigns to raise awareness in different fields, such as the anual day 'Posa't La Gorra' in aid of children's cancer charities. PortAventura has also been awarded by the Queen Sofia Prize for not having architectural barriers for persons with disabilities and, from 2009, they are involved in a project of employment of persons with

mental disorders., which includes disability awareness training for all the permanent staff. In this same line, in 2011, Port Aventura Fund, together with the City Council of Salou, initiated an educational programme for young people with mental disorders: a group of youngsters graduated from Sant Rafael school of Tarragona (special school for children with mental disorders) obtained an opportunity to obtain vocational qualifications with further employment in the Theme Park Port Aventura or the Municipal Services Department of Salou.

1. Description

Port Aventura World has been involved in many initiatives in the field of accessibility and inclusive tourism for many years:

1. Family Tourism Destination Certificate: this certificate rewards commitment to quality and specialised attention to families and also takes into consideration the added values of comfort and tranquillity for guests to feel at home and fully enjoy the first-rate entertainment and leisure activities on offer.



2. The site of the Theme (www.portaventuraworld.com) has been designed to comply with the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) and with guidelines issued by ONCE (the Spanish Organisation for the Blind). The site is multi-lingual: it is available in Spanish, Catalanian, English, French, German, and Russian versions. It gives the detailed information about rides, shows, shops, and restaurants of the themed areas, including the information on its accessibility features.



3. Since 2008, PortAventura has adhered to the United Nations Global Compact, which is an ethical commitment undertaken by organisations in all countries to integrate into their operations and strategy its 10 Principles on Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. Besides, PortAventura World is committed to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Principles of the UN Global Compact. Both organisations advocate responsible tourism that contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to improve the lives of people and protect the planet.



2. Description of steps taken, changes and progress

In 2011, PortAventura World was already a theme park with many positive access features:

- Guiding services could be booked in advance
- People with disabilities and an accompanying person didn't have to stand in the queue to do a ride. Moreover, under normal circumstances, you were not able to do the second ride without standing in the queue, but they were usually asked if they wanted to do another ride.
- There was an accessible entrance for people with reduced mobility and 45 parking spaces reserved for drivers with disability.
- The whole park was completely accessible, except for the "Gran Canyon" ride and access to the Area of China, which required assistance due to the steep gradient of the terrain.
- There were alternative accesses to rides and restaurants for visitors with disabilities.
- At all shows, there were reserved areas for visitors with disabilities.

These adaptations translated in an increase of the visitors and customers of the resort. For instance, statistics show that in 2015 there were +3.2% visitors in PortAventura Theme Park and +3.3% of rooms

occupied compared to 2014. That year, PortAventura Park also received the Travellers' Choice, the highest award given by TripAdvisor.

In 2017, the resort joined the International Year for Sustainable Tourism initiative of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation in order to promote the role of tourism in the following 5 key areas: inclusive and sustainable economic growth; social inclusion, employment and poverty reduction; efficiency of resources, environmental protection and climate change; cultural values, diversity and heritage; and mutual understanding, peace and security

New steps were taken in the field of accessibility and a new information office for people with special needs was set up. Among their objectives, they aim to:

- Assist visitors with special needs in a closer and specialised way.
- Inform about what rides, restaurants, shows and what services/facilities are better adapted to their needs.
- Offer special fees for people with a minimum of 33% of disability and free season-pass for people with over 75% of disability.
- Provide special bookings in table service restaurants in locations free from architectural barriers.

Two other new initiatives were:

(1) an accessibility guide, available in several languages, with a detailed description of the access to all their leisure offer for people with reduced mobility. They have adapted their 6 theme areas to make it easier for everyone to access the fun, including disabled visitors.



(2) a food intolerances and gluten-free guide (available in several languages). Port Aventura shows to be careful to cater for visitors with food allergies and intolerances by identifying allergens present in their ingredients and adapting to different needs so that the whole family can safely enjoy eating in all restaurants.



Port Aventura Hotel



Shower
Seat



Ramped
pool access



Wheel-in
shower



Grab rails
by Toilet



Grab rails
in shower

In 2012, we participated in a project on accessibility and were able to audit the resort's facilities with a group of 12 people on wheelchairs. Some problems were identified: the mirrors in the hotel were too high for them; blankets, duvets and bedsheets were stored in inaccessible places; most doors around the hotel were practicable and accessible but much effort had to be made to open them...

All these issues with accessibility were addressed after this project and now the services and facilities from this hotel are highly recommended for people with reduced mobility.

There is a level entry access to hotel and there are lifts to all the floors. The entrance to the theme park from the hotel is fully accessible and flat.

Bathrooms are well adapted with wheel-in showers, a pull down seat and grab rails at the shower and WC. Rooms have lowered wardrobe rails. Bedroom and bathroom door width 80cms. Bed height 57cms. Toilet height 40cms



There are 2 outdoor swimming pools; however, only one is accessible for persons with wheelchairs. The main pool area is a lagoon style pool which has a sloped entry as well as large steps with a rail. There is a wheelchair access to the reception, restaurants, bars, and conference rooms. There are disabled car parking spaces



3. Main Stakeholders

The visitors and customers are able to leave their comments in the visitors' comments book or via TripAdvisor website. Based on these comments, the necessary changes are either implemented at once (low-cost and short-term modifications) or included in the plan of the Theme park development pending approval by the Managing Director/Board of Directors. Also, to identify necessary modifications, regular meetings with representatives of disability organisations take place.

If the company needs advice on accessibility, they consult a College of architects or national cross-disability organisations, such as ONCE, or organisations of people with specific type of disability, such as PREDIF, an association of people with physical disability.

When selecting staff, through an individual process based on skills assessment interviews, Port Aventura collaborates with social organisations such as the Down Tarragona Association, CPEE Sant Rafael (Tarragona), ECOM Foundation, ASJTET Regional Program Centre (Support for Youths that are Wards or Ex-Wards of Court in Tarragona), and the Maragda and Heura Programs run by Baix Camp Regional Council. This group receives specially adapted training courses, and monitoring takes place through interviews with the supervisor/tutor. To supplement this direct recruitment, PortAventura World purchases goods and services from special employment centres in the region, to fulfil its commitment in this regard.

The company collaborates with organisations of people with disabilities that act as disability awareness experts.

Results and Impact

Although no stats or numbers have been provided, after the evaluation and analysis done by Port Aventura of the new initiatives and adaptations, it was concluded that the impact of their accessibility and inclusion project was very positive for both the company and the costumers.

All costumers that provided feedback were more satisfied with the services after the adaptations (be it people with reduced mobility or not).

It all also resulted in an increase of the number of visitors and more awareness among staff members about the need to offer an accessible and adapted service for all costumers.

They are planning to continue improving the accessibility of all services, but no details were provided from the park.

Lessons learnt

According to the resort, the three factors that have been key towards the success of the accessibility adaptation have been:

1. Commitment of the company to the principles of the universal design in all areas: rides, hotels and Convention Centre.
2. Integration of responsible and sustainable management
3. Synergy with the cross-sectoral stakeholders: people with disabilities, associations and civil organisations, access experts, public bodies, private and public sponsors.
4. Professionalism and people skills, the attitude of the all the members

PortAventura World's accessibility project process has shown that the most important principle and guideline to follow when making significant changes in your business is being persistent in achieving your goals.

Further information

- Resort/theme park website: www.portaventuraworld.com
- Foundation website: www.fundacioportaventura.org



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