

Accessible Tourism For All - A Global Effort

Presentation abstract

Tourism is perhaps the fastest growing sector of the global economy. However, for many people, including the 1 billion of the world's population living with a disability, and many others such as older persons, travelling can be a challenging process.

Very often, people with disabilities or other access requirements face serious physical, sensory, cognitive and cultural barriers which are prevalent throughout the entire tourism supply chain, within the tourism sector and at many destinations. For many people with disabilities, it is extremely difficult, if possible at all, to find clear and trustworthy information on the accessibility of suitable facilities venues and tourism services.

This is mostly due to the lack of standards, lack of consistency in different documents and insufficient training of tourism professionals on providing customer service to persons with disabilities.

Currently, there are over 40 experts from over 20 countries representing persons with disabilities, private organizations active in the tourism supply chain and public sector organizations in regulatory roles - working as part of the International Standards Organization's ISO Technical Committee 228, Working Group 14 to develop an international standard on Accessible Tourism for All.

The goal of the ISO standard is to provide clear guidelines for tourism planning and destination management, providing detailed recommendations and clear requirements on the key aspects of policy making, strategic frameworks and specific characteristics of infrastructure, products and services to ensure accessibility for all, including persons with disabilities and older persons.

The International Standard on Accessible Tourism for All targets all tourism public and private sector stakeholders at all levels, namely local, regional, national and international, as well as other stakeholders from economic sectors related to tourism and the sphere of universal accessibility.

Currently, there are some standards and guidelines in place in the tourism sector which outline requirements on some of the key aspects of universal accessibility in different environments and services. However, the existing standards present gaps and may differ between countries creating unrealistic expectations about the accessibility of services and facilities that the visitor is expecting to find at the destination. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge among tourism operators about the existing tools, and possible solutions. There is a lack of information on where to find guidance and there can be contradictory information in different standards.

The development and application of an international standard will assist travel providers and their suppliers to consider their current accessibility provisions and make reasonable adjustments to meet the accessibility needs of visitors.

The international standard on Accessibility of Tourism and related services will be addressing the core requirements and recommendations (applicable to all stakeholders) for a full range of sectors and stakeholders:

- Policies and strategies for public sector.
- Transport.
- Urban spaces.
- Leisure activities.

- MICE (Meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions).
- Accommodation.
- Food and beverage services.
- Tour Operators and travel agencies.

The objective of the International Standard on Accessible Tourism is therefore to create a unique and useful tool, enabling the tourism sector stakeholders to incorporate accessibility in the design of their infrastructure and delivery of their products and services.

Lead speaker : Marnie Peters

Organisation : Marnie Peters & Co Inc.

City (Country) : Ottawa(Canada)

Biography : Marnie Peters has 20 years of experience related to Universal Design and accessibility, particularly in relation to the built environment. Marnie understands the complex legislative framework and the broad range of technical specifications of national and international building codes and accessibility guidelines and standards. Specializing in large public use facilities, Marnie's experiences includes public buildings, sports facilities, health care, housing, transportation educational complexes, and corporate facilities and campus environments. Marnie has also has expertise related to Emergency and Disaster Preparedness and Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR).

2nd speaker : Isabelle Ducharme

Organisation : Keroul

City (Country) : Montreal (Canada)

Biography : Ms. Isabelle Ducharme has been working on social integration of people with disabilities for more than 20 years. Her personal experience of living with a spinal cord injury gives her unique insight in the barriers many persons with disabilities face. Ms. Ducharme has a bachelor's degree in communications from the Université de Montréal and a Master's degree in business and tourism planning from the Université du Québec à Montréal. Ms. Ducharme is Chairman of the Board at Kéroul, a Quebec-based organization with the mission to make tourism and culture more accessible for persons with limited physical abilities. She is also active on the Board of Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.