

Brandenburg: approaches towards accessibility in the region all around Berlin

Presentation abstract

Brandenburg is the name of the federal state surrounding Germany's capital city, the region "all around Berlin". Here you will find all in one: the vibrant metropolis of Berlin, the Potsdam State Capital – the former center of Prussia with its castles and gardens (which are part of UNESCO's world cultural heritage) – as well as the idyllic Mark Brandenburg countryside with its more than 3,000 lakes and 30,000 km of watercourse - Europe's most extensive landscape of rivers and lakes.

In my contribution to the summit, I would like to present Brandenburg as a best practice example of how accessible travel can be implemented on a federal state destination level.

Accessible tourism has played an important role in Brandenburg as a travel destination since about 20 years. Since the publishing of our first travel guide for people with disabilities in 1999, and our guide book on accessibility written for the tourism sector in the year 2000, intensive staff training and coachings of numerous companies in the early 2000s, a lot has happened on the way of making Brandenburg an accessible destination for all.

First of all, it's the commitment of the decision makers that's important. Accessible travel is an essential part of the strategic guide lines and tourism concepts of the state and of our company.

In our destination marketing organization, we are two care takers among the employees who are responsible for dealing with accessible travel in all its diverse facets. We make sure the topic is included in all our brochures, websites and activities such as the development of a regional brand for Brandenburg (inclusive marketing). We also cooperate with a publishing house producing a popular affinity brochure named "Brandenburg für alle. Barrierefrei reisen" and operate the special interest website www.barrierefrei-brandenburg.de (which is accessible also for blind users).

We regularly train our colleagues, especially those working in call centers and tourist offices. Additionally, we offer workshops and courses open for all participants such as accommodation and restaurants, leisure activities and cultural businesses, transportation and many more.

Together with experts with different disabilities and tourism experts, we developed a whole bunch of check lists for collecting descriptive information about the accessibility of accommodations, restaurants and leisure activities. Since 11 years, more than 800 points of interest have been checked by trained accessibility experts with these lists. The data is centrally managed at our destination marketing organization and entered into the state wide data collection system. Via XML, it is published not only on our affinity website www.barrierefrei-brandenburg.de, but also on our main website www.reiseland-brandenburg.de, in our touristic app, our booking & reservation system TOMAS and many further websites on a regional or local scale.

We designed our system „Brandenburg für alle“ on an informational basis, it's not a certification system evaluating the grade of accessibility reached. We describe exactly which situation waits on site so people with disabilities can judge on their own if a touristic offer is fully accessible for them considering their very own needs and wishes.

Since this year, we are also license holder of the Germany-wide certification system „Reisen für alle“, allowing our companies to have their offers certified with this new system developed on a federal scale.

Regarding social media, we began taking some first steps with our affinity facebook fan page and bloggers who shared their experiences traveling through Brandenburg.

Concerning the strategy, whether inclusive or affinity marketing shall be preferred, we think: both is still necessary at the moment.

Looking into the future, we hope to concentrate on inclusive marketing only.

We implemented and trained a network of contact persons among our 12 regional tourism associations who spread the „accessibility spirit“ within their region, informing us about new touristic offers. They also support us with the collection of data on the accessibility of touristic offers and have become reliable partners throughout the years.

Since 2009, we co-operate with more and more German destination marketing organizations, having established a working group meeting twice a year. Those meetings mainly serve as a platform of knowledge sharing. We also organize collective exhibition stands like here in Brussels, where you can find information on almost all German federal states at our counter. We also visit German fairs like “Rehacare” in Düsseldorf, IRMA in Hamburg/ Bremen or “Miteinander Leben” in Berlin.

Our working group has strong bonds to various partners such as the “barrier-free destinations in Germany” and the German National Tourist Board whose international marketing actions we attend in many cases. We also organize trips for international tour operators in order to show them accessible offers in Brandenburg.

Lead speaker : Kerstin Lehmann

Organisation : TMB Tourismus-Marketing Brandenburg GmbH

City (Country) : Potsdam(Germany)

Biography : Kerstin Lehmann works for improving the accessibility of tourism in Brandenburg, the region all around Germany’s capital Berlin, since 2005. Employed at the tourism marketing company for Brandenburg “TMB Tourismus-Marketing Brandenburg GmbH”, she is responsible for inclusive marketing as well as affinity marketing. The co-ordination of regional networks and a state-wide information system closely interwoven with Brandenburg’s main touristic data base are two focuses of her daily work. Sensitizing the tourism industry for matters of accessibility is another main goal of her company. As a mother of twins, she knows accessibility concerns far more people besides wheel chair users.

2nd speaker :

Organisation :

City (Country) : ()

Biography :