

ACCESSIBLE TOURISM FACES CHALLENGES IN AUSTRALIA



Seniors and disabled travelers represent a growing market. Australia mostly offers quality services but there is still space for improvement.

Accessible tourism is on the rise but it still does not cover the demand. Australia is doing well in addressing the problem but according to local associations it still is not enough. **Accessible tourism** makes it possible for people with various disabilities to function independently of other people when on holidays. It relates not only to physically disabled people but also to seniors whose mobility might be limited.

According to the **Tourism Cooperative Research Centre** (STCRC) there are 730,000 people with physical disability in New South Wales. The majority of them (77 per cent) traveled within Australia in the previous year. There are approximately 4 million disabled people in Australia and their spending power is around \$1.5 billion per year. In Australia businesses must obey the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and provide some kind of accessibility to the disabled. Thanks to this regulation, situation for the disabled is better now. The government even provides information on accessible toilets around the country online.

Despite all the positive development it is still quite difficult for a disabled person to travel around the country, especially in some regions. According to the National Holiday Survey there are still **difficulties in finding a suitable accommodation for disabled people**. Hotels tend to display international symbols for access but some of them in fact lack wheelchair access. Most of the surveyed people say there is a lack of audio display and Braille or tactile signage in the hotels.

It may seem that making a hotel more accessible is too expensive, but the disabled and seniors are a growing market. Some of the changes that make the stay of these people more comfortable come very cheap. It is rather easy to have menus printed in bigger letters or provide information about local vets or dog walking areas. Some equipment for the disabled guests may be hired just for their visit.

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