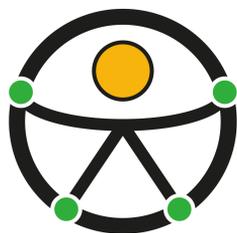


accessible horizons



A Practical Guide to Outdoor Tourism for All



Co-funded by
the European Union



ONAT4ALL – Outdoor activities and nature and adventure tourism for All

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED ARE HOWEVER THOSE OF THE AUTHOR(S) ONLY AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OR THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA).

NEITHER THE EUROPEAN UNION NOR EACEA CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.

PROJECT: ONAT4ALL – OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND NATURE AND ADVENTURE TOURISM FOR ALL.

NR.2021-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000034670



Contents

	<u>Introduction</u>	1
1	<u>Chapter 1: How to make the best of this Guidebook?</u>	4
2	<u>Chapter 2: The Principles of the Guidebook</u>	6
	<u>2.1 What does independent living imply in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities?</u>	8
	<u>2.2 What barriers do people with disabilities face in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities?</u>	14
	<u>2.3 Which outdoor activities are most suitable for people with disabilities?</u>	23
	<u>2.4 What should be considered when planning outdoor activities with people with disabilities?</u>	28
	<u>2.5 What are the risks to be considered when managing outdoor activities with people with disabilities?</u>	33
	<u>2.6 Universal Design</u>	38
3	<u>Chapter 3: Resources and references</u>	44



INTRODUCTION

ONAT4All Guidebook

TO IMPROVE PERSONAL AUTONOMY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN NATURE/ADVENTURE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines independence for people with disabilities as being self-sufficient, having the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making processes and to experience the physical, social, economic and cultural environment.

For a **person with disabilities**, a **sense of independence** will help them gain self-confidence and feel more autonomous, positive and fulfilled in life. There is ample evidence that time spent in nature offers a range of physical, emotional and mental benefits and can strengthen a sense of belonging.

However, the people who need these benefits most – the community of people with disabilities – are often excluded from the outdoors.





It is not the abilities of people with disabilities that are the main barriers to the outdoors, but rather the inaccessibility of built environments, the lack of accessible resources and information. There are many ways to create accessible and inclusive opportunities for outdoor recreation, and it starts by considering how people approach disability and the outdoors.

This guide is one of a **series of practical tools** ([Self-Assessment Tool](#), [Training Course](#) and [Accessible Digital Marketing Toolkit](#)) designed as part of the ONAT4All project, with the aim of raising awareness of accessibility in the tourism sector and promoting the participation of people with disabilities in the aforementioned activities.



Living Labs

The content of the guide reflects the results of the **Living Labs** organized in **France, Spain, Italy, and Ireland** as part of the **ONAT4All** project.

By bringing together a wide range of stakeholders – tourism professionals, public and private tourism management and promotion bodies, associations active in the field of inclusion and people with disabilities – the aim of the Living Labs was to discuss together how to promote the autonomy of people with disabilities in their participation in nature and adventure tourism activities.

Thanks to contributions from participants, we have co-created this practical guide with the aim of highlighting what is important to consider in order to facilitate **the participation of people with disabilities in outdoor and adventure tourism activities.**





◆ CHAPTER 1

How to make the best of this Guidebook?

This Guidebook, together with the training course of the ONAT4ALL project, intends to support stakeholders active in the field of accessible and outdoor tourism. Inside the Guidebook, interested organizations can find the pillars and basic concepts that should be taken into account when designing and implementing outdoor activities with people with disabilities. Being the main objective of this document to improve the personal autonomy of PWDs in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities, here are some **tips** you should consider:

01

VERSATILE RESOURCE

The ONAT4ALL Guidebook can be adapted, updated and expanded by interested users. Always consider your context and the target group you work with.

02

VALUABLE RESOURCE

The ONAT4ALL Guidebook constitutes a valuable resource ready for future use by travel agency/tour operator, accommodation facilities, outdoor events organizer (micro, small or medium-sized enterprise, association, club, sport organization, tour guide, etc.), local bodies (Municipality, Tourist Office, Destination Marketing Organization, National, Regional and Local parks, etc.). Such organizations can develop the professional skills of their staff in terms of accessibility.



03

PART OF A LEARNING PACKAGE

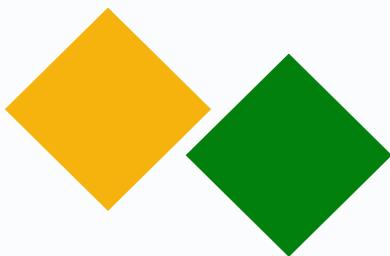
The ONAT4ALL Guidebook represents a valuable learning package together with the other results of the ONAT4All project and as such it should be used: starting from the self-evaluation of one's own organization through the ONAT4All SAT, the staff can move one and develop the staff's skills thanks to the Guidebook and the online course. Finally, all users can access an Accessible digital Marketing Toolkit to promote outdoor activities. We strongly invite the users to make the best use of all the resources combined.

04

DUAL PURPOSE

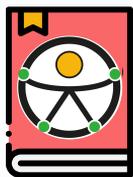
The ONAT4ALL Guidebook has the dual purpose of training operators to improve their professional skills in offering outdoor opportunities to people with disabilities through the innovative application in a sector such as outdoor tourism and at the same time promoting accessibility in the tourism industry. Keep that in mind when designing your outdoor and touristic offer. Such an approach will promote the emancipation and legitimacy of groups at risk of marginalization.

The tourism industry has a huge market, let's make the best of the ONAT4ALL Guidebook to ensure that the sector can be as accessible as possible!





◆ CHAPTER 2



The Principles of the Guidebook

The **principles of the Guidebook** are rooted in promoting the autonomy and inclusion of people with disabilities in nature and adventure tourism activities. Recognizing that independence for individuals with disabilities involves self-sufficiency, active participation in decision-making processes, and experiencing a supportive physical, social, economic, and cultural environment, the Guidebook aims to bridge the **gap** between the benefits of outdoor experiences and the exclusion faced by the disability community.

The Guidebook emphasizes that the **main barriers** preventing people with disabilities from accessing the outdoors are not their abilities but rather the inaccessibility of built environments, lack of accessible resources and information, and societal disregard. To overcome these barriers, the Guidebook advocates for creating accessible and inclusive opportunities for outdoor recreation.

By bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism professionals, public and private tourism management and promotion bodies, inclusion-focused associations, and people with disabilities, the Guidebook was co-created through Living Labs held in France, Spain, Italy, and Ireland as part of the ONAT4ALL project. It serves as a **practical resource** that highlights essential considerations for facilitating the participation of people with disabilities in outdoor and adventure tourism activities.



The dual purpose of the ONAT4ALL Guidebook is to improve the professional skills of operators in offering outdoor opportunities to people with disabilities while promoting accessibility in the tourism industry as a whole. Organizations are encouraged to consider this perspective when designing their outdoor and touristic offerings, recognizing the potential for social emancipation and the economic opportunities associated with accessibility.



The Guidebook is structured into **six sections**, covering topics such as the implications of independent living in nature and adventure tourism, barriers faced by people with disabilities in outdoor activities, suitable outdoor activities for individuals with disabilities, considerations for planning inclusive outdoor activities, risk management, and universal design.



Overall, the Guidebook serves as a comprehensive resource that promotes the principles of **autonomy**, **accessibility**, and **inclusion**, enabling stakeholders in the tourism industry to create meaningful and inclusive outdoor experiences for people with disabilities.



◆ 2.1

What does independent living imply in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities?

The tourism value chain encompasses various stages and components that contribute to the overall travel experience. From transportation and accommodation to dining and entertainment, each phase plays a vital role. However, one often overlooked aspect is the inclusion of accessible leisure activities, particularly outdoor excursions. Ensuring that such activities are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their physical abilities, is crucial in promoting inclusive tourism.

Accessibility not only aligns with the principles of equal rights and opportunities for all but also enhances the overall visitor experience. By prioritizing accessibility in the planning and implementation of outdoor activities, the tourism industry can contribute to creating a more inclusive and enjoyable travel environment for everyone.

When discussing disability, it is indeed important to differentiate between independence and autonomy. While these terms are related, they have distinct meanings and implications in the context of disability. Here's a breakdown of the difference:

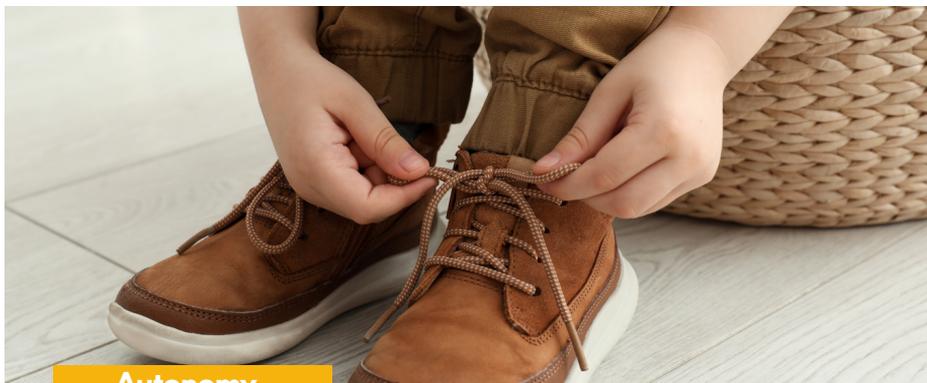




Independence

Independence refers to the ability of an individual to perform tasks, make decisions, and carry out daily activities without reliance on others. It is often associated with self-sufficiency and the ability to function without assistance. In the context of disability, independence can be achieved through various means, such as assistive technologies, adaptations, and support services.

For example, a person with a physical disability may use a wheelchair or mobility aids to achieve independence in mobility, or someone with a visual impairment may use assistive devices to enhance their independence in accessing information.



Autonomy

Autonomy, on the other hand, pertains to an individual's right and capacity to make choices and decisions that affect their own life. It involves having control over one's own actions, values, and goals, and being able to act in accordance with one's own wishes and preferences. Autonomy emphasizes personal agency and the freedom to live according to one's own values and desires. In the context of disability, autonomy may involve having access to inclusive decision-making processes, being provided with relevant information and options, and having the opportunity to participate fully in society without undue external influence or paternalism.



The distinction between independence and autonomy is important because it recognizes that while a person with a disability may require support or assistance to achieve independence in certain areas, they should still be afforded the right to make choices and decisions that align with their own autonomy. It emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals with disabilities to have control over their own lives, participate in society on an equal basis, and have their voices heard in matters that affect them.

By acknowledging and respecting the difference between independence and autonomy, we can promote **inclusive practices** that enable individuals with disabilities to lead self-determined lives, while also addressing their specific support needs and ensuring they have the necessary resources and opportunities to exercise their autonomy.

In the context of nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities, independent living refers to a style of travel or exploration where individuals or small groups take on **self-sufficiency** and **self-reliance** while engaging in outdoor adventures. It emphasizes a more autonomous and immersive experience in nature, often involving activities such as hiking, camping, backpacking, mountaineering, or wilderness exploration.

Independent living in nature/adventure tourism implies that participants take responsibility for their own well-being, safety, and basic needs during their outdoor adventures. They rely on their own skills, knowledge, and resources to navigate and survive in the natural environment.

This may include skills like **navigation, wilderness survival, campsite selection, water purification, fire-making, and other outdoor skills.**



In contrast to guided tours or organized trips, independent living allows individuals to have greater freedom and flexibility in designing their own itineraries and exploring at their own pace. It provides an opportunity for personal growth, self-discovery, and a deeper connection with nature, as individuals rely on their own abilities to overcome challenges and adapt to the natural environment.

While independent living in nature/adventure tourism offers a sense of freedom and adventure, it also requires careful planning, preparation, and risk management. Participants must be knowledgeable about the environment they are entering, be aware of potential hazards, and possess the necessary skills and equipment to mitigate risks. Safety considerations, such as weather conditions, wildlife encounters, and emergency procedures, should always be considered.

Overall, independent living in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities provides an avenue for individuals to embrace a self-reliant and immersive experience in the natural world, fostering a greater sense of connection, resilience, and appreciation for the outdoors.

In conclusion, independent living in nature/adventure tourism for people with disabilities therefore means being looked after by a professional who has foreseen your needs.



Need for equipment, infrastructure, and facilities
= **Autonomy**



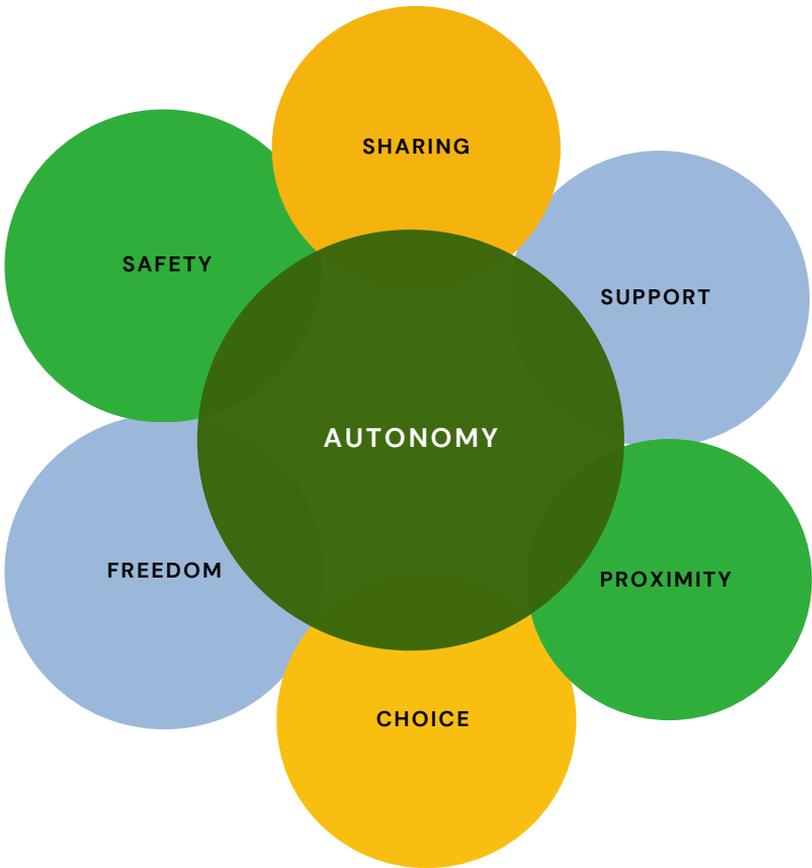
Trained staff to enable people with disabilities to participate in activities
= **Support**



Welcoming and communication tools
= **Sharing**



Independence is :



What does independent living imply in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities?

01. The tourism value chain comprises various stages and components that contribute to the overall travel experience.
02. The inclusion of accessible outdoor activities is often overlooked in tourism.
03. Accessible outdoor activities are essential to promote inclusive tourism.
04. Independence in the context of disability implies the ability to perform tasks without assistance.
05. Autonomy in the context of disability concerns the right to make decisions and choices.
06. The distinction between independence and autonomy is important to give disabled people control over their lives.
07. In nature/adventure tourism, independent living implies self-sufficiency and autonomy in outdoor activities.
08. Participants are responsible for their own well-being and rely on their own skills to navigate the natural environment.
09. Independent living offers more freedom and flexibility than organised trips.
10. Safety, planning and preparation are essential in nature/adventure tourism.

◆ 2.2

What **barriers** do people with disabilities face in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities?

People with disabilities can face a diverse set of challenges when participating in in nature or adventure tourism and also in outdoor activities in general. In general, the **barriers can be classified into 3 categories: natural, social, and physical.** In the following paragraphs we will develop them more. This is useful to be aware of the difficulties that could face a person and to find appropriate solutions.



Natural barriers



Social barriers



Physical barriers





Natural barriers

These are barriers related to the physical characteristics of the environment where the tourism activity is taking place. Most of the time, to overcome these barriers it could be adequate to implement inclusive design principles, improving the accessibility infrastructure, providing appropriate safety measures, and considering the diverse needs of people with disabilities at the moment of designing and implementing an outdoor tourism activity.

◆ Terrain and landscape

As nature has different terrains and landscapes (mountains, trails, uneven surfaces, and even rocky terrains), individuals can face mobility challenges, sometimes being impossible to navigate around without the appropriate accessibility measures which could include accessible trails, ramps, or pathways.

◆ Water bodies

Frequently, outdoor activities, involve water bodies (lakes, rivers, oceans). In this kind of settings, people can have difficulties to participate in activities such as swimming, kayaking, or boating. To overcome these challenges, the tourism activity should consider accessible entry points, adapted equipment, and the provision of assistance with transfers.



◆ Weather

Another important challenge to consider, is the climatic conditions. High temperatures, humidity or extreme cold can affect people with respiratory conditions, heat sensitivity or temperature regulation difficulties. Service providers should be aware of these conditions and adapt the activities accordingly to reduce the discomfort that their customers might experience.

◆ Lack of infrastructure and facilities

Some nature and adventure tourism destinations are in remote areas. This translates in a reduced availability of infrastructure and facilities, such as transportation, accommodation, medical services, etc. When preparing an inclusive outdoors tourism product, it is important to consider these challenges and think of alternative solutions to ensure that basic needs of customers are met.



Social barriers

These are barriers that arise from attitudes, perceptions, and societal norms. Because these barriers are originated from human behavior, it is important to be aware of them, and to sensibelize the staff who will be in contact with customers. In order to address social barriers, it is important to promote inclusive attitudes, to raise awareness, foster proper training and increase representation and visibility of people with disabilities.

Following you will find some of the social barriers that people with disabilities can face in nature tourism and outdoor activities:



◆ **Stereotypes and stigma:**

Negative attitudes and misconceptions regarding disabilities can discourage people with disabilities to participate in outdoor activities and make them feel unwelcome. Service providers need to be aware on how these stereotypes and stigmatization can create prejudice, discrimination and even social exclusion for this part of the population.



◆ **Lack of awareness, understanding and sensitivity**

There is still limited knowledge and understanding about disabilities in a great part of the population, including tourism professionals and providers. This translates in a lack of awareness and sensitivity which reduces the implementation of inclusive practices and services, lack of support in outdoor settings and, in general, it makes it more difficult for people with different disabilities to join and enjoy outdoor activities.

◆ **Underrepresentation**

People like to feel represented and part of a group. In the case of nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities, there is an underrepresentation of people with disabilities in media, promotional materials and advertising. As people with disabilities do not see themselves represented, they may feel that these activities are not appropriate for them or even that they are not welcome to join. It is important to market inclusive tourism products and services properly, where everyone feels represented, welcomed and capable of joining the activities offered.

◆ **Lack of social support networks**

Some people with disabilities might have limited social support networks, communities or peer groups that engage in nature activities. They are faced with limited or inexistent inclusive recreational programs that could increase their social interaction. When possible, it would be appropriate to enhance the community by allowing interactions between individuals and groups or associations that share the same interests and which have an inclusive approach.

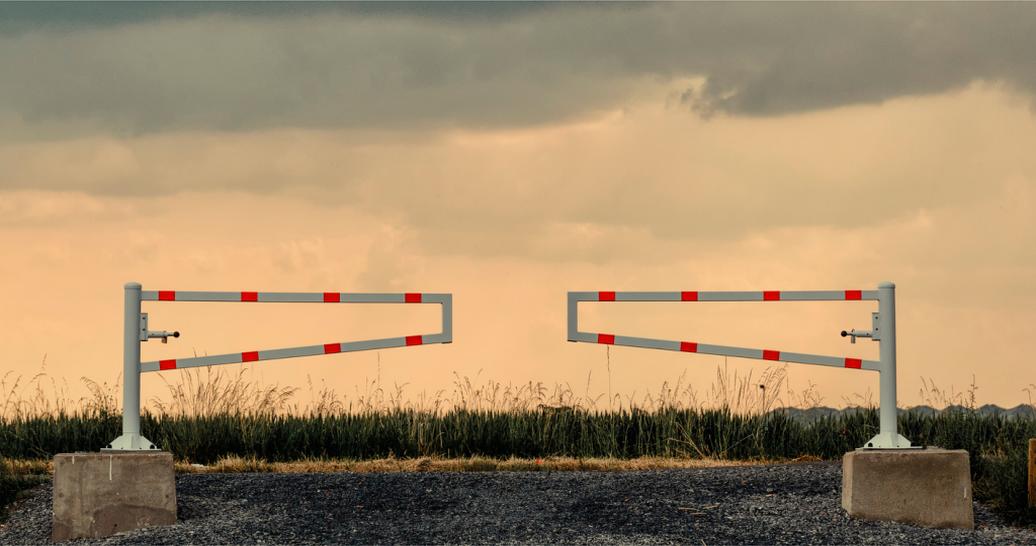
◆ **Communication barriers**

Communication barriers: Inaccessible information or lack of communication aids, can hinder effective interaction between people with disabilities and tourism service providers or even other tourists. This can create difficulties in obtaining necessary information, expressing needs, or seeking assistance.





Physical barriers



Physical infrastructure, facilities and design of the outdoor environment are the typical physical barriers that people with disabilities faces in nature/adventure tourism and outdoor activities. Overcoming these barriers involves incorporating universal design principles, providing accessible pathways and facilities at the destination, ensuring the availability of assistive technologies and adaptive equipment, improving the accessibility of signage and information, and, in general, considering the different needs of people with disabilities when designing and managing outdoor spaces.



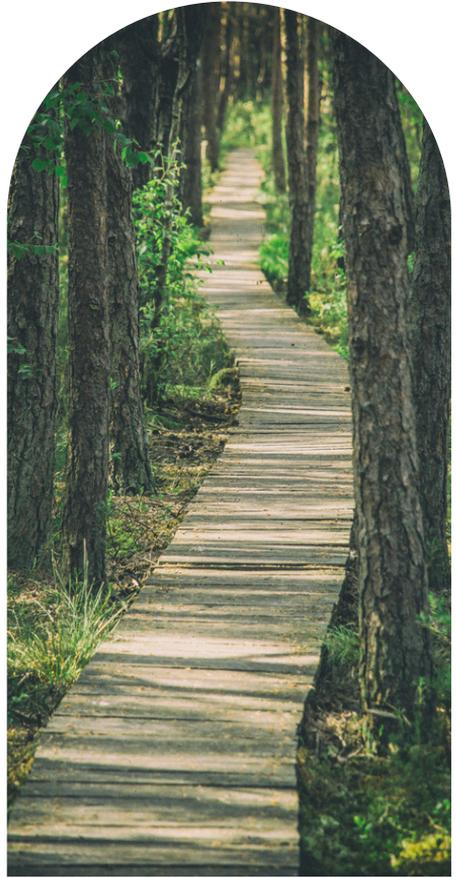
SOME OF THE PHYSICAL BARRIERS THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MIGHT ENCOUNTER ARE:

◆ Inaccessible pathways and trails

Unpaved, uneven surfaces, narrow paths, or even obstacles such as tree root or rocks can create barriers for people with disabilities. They are part of the natural environment, however accessible pathways and trails can be designed, implemented, and maintained to provide outdoor activities for people with disabilities.

◆ Limited presence of assistive devices and equipment

Outdoor activities often require specialized equipment and assistive devices that may not be readily available or adapted for people with disabilities. For instance, adaptive hiking gear, all-terrain wheelchairs, or accessible boating equipment may be lacking, preventing their active participation.



◆ Lack of accessible facilities

When designing any tourism facility is relevant to consider the universal design principles. This will allow to include accessibility features such as ramps, grab bars, wide doorways and accessible seating. The lack of consideration of this principle, translated in visitor centers, restrooms, picnic areas and campsites that are not accessible for everyone.



◆ **Difficulties to access water-based activities**

Water-based activities like swimming, snorkeling, or kayaking can pose physical barriers for people with disabilities. Inaccessible entry points, lack of appropriate flotation devices, or limited availability of adaptive equipment may restrict their ability to participate in these activities.

◆ **Inadequate signage and information**

Insufficient or unclear signage can make it difficult for people with disabilities to navigate outdoor spaces, find accessible trails, or locate amenities. Inaccessible information, such as brochures or maps that lack alternative formats or tactile features, further hinders their ability to gather necessary information.

◆ **Transportation accessibility**

Accessible transportation to outdoor destinations can be limited, especially in remote areas. Lack of wheelchair-accessible vehicles, accessible public transportation, or transportation services equipped to accommodate specialized equipment can hinder people with disabilities from reaching outdoor destinations.

The obstacles are there, so let's overcome them together and take on bigger challenges!



What should be considered when **planning outdoor activities** with people with disabilities?

NATURAL BARRIERS



- TERRAIN AND LANDSCAPE
- BODIES OF WATER
- WEATHER CONDITIONS
- LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

SOCIAL BARRIERS



- STEREOTYPES AND STIGMA
- LACK OF AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND SENSITIVITY
- UNDER-REPRESENTATION
- LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS
- COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

PHYSICAL BARRIERS



- INACCESSIBLE PATHS AND TRACKS
- LACK OF ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES
- LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES AND EQUIPMENT
- DIFFICULTY ACCESSING AQUATIC ACTIVITIES
- INADEQUATE SIGNAGE AND INFORMATION: PROVIDE CLEAR SIGNAGE AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION
- ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT

◆ 2.3

Which outdoor activities are most suitable for people with disabilities?

When it comes to outdoor activities, it is essential to recognize that with proper adaptations, all leisure activities can be enjoyed by people with disabilities. The focus should be on creating inclusive environments and making necessary adjustments to ensure accessibility for everyone. By implementing specific modifications, a wide range of outdoor activities can be made suitable for individuals with different needs.

Adapted outdoor activities offer opportunities for people with disabilities to experience the thrill of adventure and the joys of nature. Let's explore a few examples of aquatic, terrestrial, and aerial activities that have been successfully modified to accommodate individuals with disabilities:



WATER Activities



ACCESSIBLE BEACH AREAS

Accessible beach areas with wheelchair-friendly pathways, beach wheelchairs, and accessible water equipment such as floating beach mats, amphibious chairs, or floating wheelchairs.

SCUBA DIVING PROGRAMS

Adaptive scuba diving programs that provide specialized equipment and support for individuals with mobility impairments.



KAYAKING OR CANOEING

Kayaking or canoeing with modified seating arrangements and assistive devices like stabilizing outriggers or paddle adaptations.

TERRESTRIAL Activities

ACCESSIBLE HIKING TRAILS

Accessible hiking trails with smooth surfaces, gradual inclines, and handrails where necessary.



ADAPTIVE CYCLING PROGRAMS

Adaptive cycling programs offering a variety of specialized bicycles, such as handcycles, recumbent trikes, or tandem bikes, to accommodate different abilities.



NATURE WALKS OR GUIDED TOURS

Nature walks or guided tours that incorporate sensory elements for individuals with visual impairments.



AERIAL Activities

HOT AIR BALLOON

Accessible hot air balloon rides with larger baskets and ramps for wheelchair access.



ZIP-LINING EXPERIENCES

Adapted zip-lining experiences using harnesses and seating arrangements that provide stability and support



HANG-GLIDING EXPERIENCES

Para-gliding or hang-gliding experiences with specially designed harnesses and trained instructors to ensure safety and comfort.



In the following lines, we will present specific examples of different activities **that can be adapted to be accessible for everyone**.

By implementing certain modifications and considering diverse needs, these activities can be enjoyed by people with disabilities as well.



➤ **Accessible hiking and nature trails**

Outdoor activities such as hiking and walking can be made accessible through the presence of well-maintained, flat or gently sloping trails with appropriate surfaces. These trails should have accessible features like handrails, resting areas, and clear signage, allowing individuals with mobility impairments to enjoy nature and scenic views.

➤ **Adaptive water sports**

Water activities like kayaking, canoeing, or paddle boarding can be made accessible through the use of adaptive equipment, such as sit-on-top kayaks, accessible docks, and transfer-assist devices. These adaptations enable individuals with mobility impairments to experience the thrill of water sports while ensuring their safety.

➤ **Adaptive cycling**

Cycling can be made accessible through the availability of adaptive bicycles, such as handcycles, tricycles, or tandem bikes. These specialized bikes allow individuals with mobility impairments or balance issues to enjoy cycling in outdoor settings, either independently or with the assistance of a companion.



➤ **Nature photography or birdwatching**

Activities that involve observation and appreciation of nature, such as photography or birdwatching, can be particularly suitable for individuals with sensory disabilities. These activities require minimal physical exertion and can be adapted to accommodate various needs, focusing on the sensory experience and capturing the beauty of the natural surroundings.

➤ **Adaptive skiing or snowboarding**

Winter sports like skiing or snowboarding can be made accessible through adaptive equipment and trained instructors. Devices such as sit-skis, ski outriggers, or snowboarding bindings designed for individuals with disabilities enable them to participate in these exhilarating activities, even with limited mobility or balance.

These examples demonstrate that with careful planning, modifications, and a commitment to inclusivity, outdoor activities can be made accessible to individuals with disabilities. By embracing the principles of universal design and considering diverse needs, we can create a world where everyone can participate and enjoy outdoor adventures, regardless of their abilities.

ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITIES

no limits, just adaptations.



Which outdoor activities are most suitable for people with disabilities?

With regard to outdoor activities, it is essential to recognise that, with appropriate adaptations, all leisure activities can be enjoyed by people with disabilities. The focus should be on creating inclusive environments and making the necessary adjustments to ensure accessibility for all. By making specific modifications, it is possible to adapt a wide range of outdoor activities to people with different needs.

WATER ACTIVITIES



- ACCESSIBLE BEACH WITH WHEELCHAIR-FRIENDLY PATHS.
- SCUBA DIVING PROGRAMMES ADAPTED FOR PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY.
- KAYAKS OR CANOES WITH MODIFIED SEATS AND ASSISTIVE DEVICES ETC.

LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES



- ACCESSIBLE HIKING TRAILS WITH SMOOTH SURFACES AND GENTLE SLOPES.
- ADAPTED CYCLING PROGRAMMES WITH SPECIALISED BIKES (HAND BIKES, TRICYCLES, TANDEM BIKES).
- NATURE WALKS OR GUIDED TOURS WITH SENSORY ELEMENTS FOR BLIND OR PARTIALLY-SIGHTED PEOPLE ETC.

AERIAL ACTIVITIES



- ACCESSIBLE HOT-AIR BALLOON RIDES WITH LARGER BASKETS AND ACCESS RAMPS.
- TYROLEAN TRAVERSE EXPERIENCES ADAPTED WITH HARNESSSES AND STABILISER SEATS.
- PARAGLIDING OR HANG-GLIDING EXPERIENCES WITH SPECIALLY DESIGNED HARNESSSES AND TRAINED INSTRUCTORS ETC.

◆ 2.4

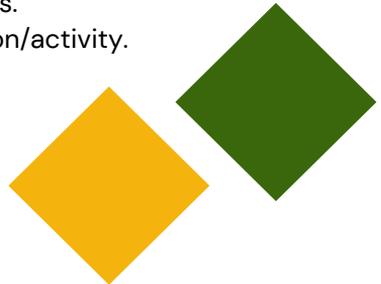
What should be considered when planning outdoor activities with people with disabilities?

As with any activity, planning outdoor activities with people with disabilities, requires mindful planning, foresight and the sections suggested in this guidebook can be very helpful.

Making sure that the activity/destination is suitable and doing a positive risk assessment prior to the activity is of utmost importance. It is important to focus on the person's ability, rather than disability. People with disabilities participate in outdoor adventure pursuits for the same reasons that people without disabilities participate for, such as, the thrill of adventure, to try new things, to exercise, to take risks, to challenge themselves, meet new people, to feel adrenalin, to feel a sense of achievement, to have fun, and all of the many benefits that outdoor adventure pursuits and being an adventure tourist can bring.

In this section we will look at some key considerations to have as a checklist when planning your outdoor activity. As with every activity, and every individual, there will be specific considerations to be taken into consideration, but below we have listed some of the most common.

1. Accessibility of the Location and of the activity.
2. Inclusivity and Adaptive activity options.
3. Accessibility of the amenities at location/activity.
4. Communication and Information
5. Health and Safety.
6. Comfort and Wellbeing
7. Considerations to keep in mind



1

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE LOCATION AND THE ACTIVITY

Before confirming the activity it is important to choose an activity that is most suited to the participants ability and will give them the most sense of achievement and enjoyment. If you are the activity provider, information on a participants ability and needs can be gathered by asking everyone to fill in a registration form beforehand. This will give you valuable information on their abilities and needs and ensures you have the right activities available. Ensure the area is easy to access and to navigate whilst there. Does the area have accessible ramps, parking, pathways, restrooms and facilities. Is the terrain manageable and free from obstacles that may hinder mobility. Can the activity be easily accessed once the participant has gotten there. Is there accessible transport to and from the activity?

2

INCLUSIVE AND ADAPTIVE ACTIVITY SELECTION OPTIONS

Consider if the activities you have on offer or that are offered, if they can be modified or adapted safely to suit the abilities of the participants. Can the chosen activity or location meet the needs and abilities of the participants?

Do you have the correct and safe equipment to make the activities accessible ? Having reviews of your accessible activities alongside photos that tell a story of inclusivity, accessibility and adaptation can be very effective. Reviewing and researching a place or activities is a highly effective way for people to find the most suitable activity for themselves or for others. If your area or activities have been adapted and are accessible, consider finding ways to make this known. There are many places that will have activities or equipment that has been adapted so that people with and without disabilities can enjoy adventure and the outdoors with the most amount of independence and enjoyment. Having these options visible and having staff trained in this area will be what people will be searching for.



3

ACCESSIBILITY OF AMENITIES

Are restrooms and amenities accessible. If there is catering, is it accessible. Is there an accessible parking, changing rooms and seating area. Is there a quiet space/safe space/relaxation space. Is there shading, shelter, hydration areas. Is it easy for people to navigate these amenities. Is there correct signage and symbols to represent all amenities.

4

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Clear and accessible communication is so important. Communication with everyone involved in the activity and/or on the trip. Communication about where you are going and what you will be doing (Videos can be very helpful sometimes) Discuss potential challenges (positive risk assessment plays a valuable part here). Clear communication between participants and the activity providers is very important. Make sure that information provided is in whatever format is needed, such as braille, large print, audio, so as to cater to various needs. Ensure staff or activity providers are prepared to communicate effectively with individuals who may have speech or hearing impairments.

5

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ensure that you are aware of any medication, allergies, or apparatus that the person might need for medical reasons, and that you have these, and the right people needed to administer them if this is not the individual or you. Preparation and risk assessment helps to eliminate risks. Everyone has the right to take risks, and positive risk assessment can be a wonderful tool in making this happen safely and with confidence. Know the potential hazards. Know the terrain and inform people about it. Provide the proper safety equipment and clothing and ensure that staff or guides are trained in disability awareness and emergency procedures. Ensure you have a way of contact in case of emergency, phone with battery, sat Nav, satellite etc, extra battery charge for wheelchairs if needed. Be aware of the weather and tides.



6

COMFORT AND WELLBEING

Take into consideration the comfort and wellbeing of participants by ensuring that they have the right clothing for the activity. Suncream, hats, raingear, umbrellas. Are there rest areas, sheltered and/or shady spots? Is there hydration options and access to areas for personal care needs. Are there quiet, safe, relaxation areas. Pay attention to potential triggers for individuals with sensory sensitivities, such as loud noises or strong scents, and know in advance what steps you can take to minimize their discomfort.

7

CONSIDERATIONS TO KEEP IN MIND

Strive to find a way that the participants can participate and enjoy the activity with the greatest sense of achievement and enjoyment. Keep in mind, that just because someone has a disability, this does not make them fragile, and they do not need over protection. With the correct equipment, knowledge and adaptability, the possibility for joy, fun and adventure is within everyone's reaches.

**anticipate
and get help.**



What should be considered when planning outdoor activities with people with disabilities?

Accessibility of venue and activity

01. Choose an activity suited to the abilities of the participants and ensure that the venue is easily accessible with appropriate facilities.

Inclusivity and adapted activity options

02. Offer activities that can be safely modified or adapted to suit participants. Have the necessary equipment available to make activities accessible.

Accessible facilities at the venue

03. Ensure that facilities such as toilets, catering and changing rooms are accessible. Provide quiet, safe and relaxing areas.

Communication and information

04. Ensure clear and accessible communication by providing information in different formats and training staff to communicate effectively with people with speech or hearing impairments.

Health and safety

05. Be aware of participants' medical needs, assess risks and provide appropriate safety equipment. Provide a means of contact in the event of an emergency.

Comfort and well-being

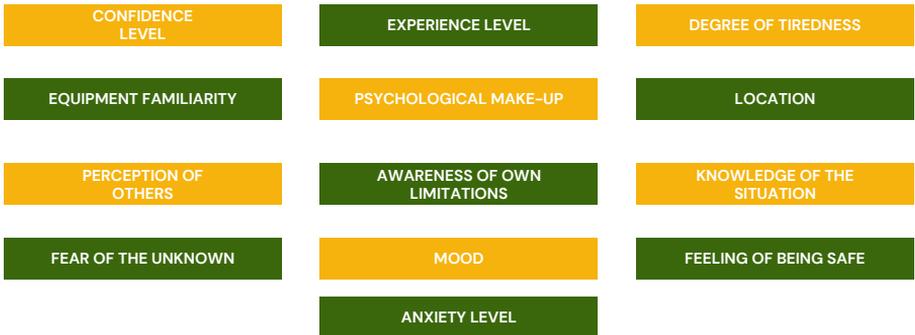
06. Consider the comfort of participants by providing suitable clothing, rest and hydration areas, as well as minimising potential triggers for people with sensory sensitivities.

◆ 2.5

What are the risks to be considered when managing outdoor activities with people with disabilities?

All organizations that might be involved in providing quality outdoor experiences for people with disabilities must be aware of and manage a variety of risks, including psychological, emotional, physical, cultural, social, and other risks. These organizations range from travel agencies and tour operators to outdoor event organizers like micro, small, and medium-sized businesses, associations, clubs, and local bodies. These companies must properly manage outdoor activity risks in order to uphold their legal and ethical obligations. Physical (broken bones), mental (fear), social (embarrassment), or monetary (lost equipment) effects are all possible outcomes.

Risk Management procedures are used to keep risks and losses within an acceptable range. What appears to be risky to one person may not be to another. People may be influenced by factors such as:



Consider each technique in turn and apply it to each identified risk or hazard. When choosing risk-reduction strategies, you should divide them into **three groups**.

Let's take the example of a hike that involves river crossings.

ELIMINATE RISK

If the degree of risk in the activity is determined to be too high, it should be removed, either by removing the risk or by removing the activity. For instance, reduce the risk by avoiding the river crossing. Turning around or picking an alternate path that avoids crossing rivers are two ways to accomplish this.

ISOLATE RISK

The next stage is to try to isolate the risk if the degree of risk in the activity is determined to be undesirable but it is not possible to eradicate it. This is done by putting in place a procedure or mechanism that keeps people away from the danger. Choosing a path that crosses the important rivers using buildings like bridges, walkways, or aerial ropeways is one approach to reduce the risk associated with doing so.

MINIMISE RISK

The next stage is to minimize the risk if you have tried to eliminate and isolate the risk but determined that these measures are not feasible. To reduce the danger associated with the activity, you should use your skills and knowledge of acceptable safety procedures. For instance, choose your crossing location carefully and/or go to a different portion of the valley, like the headwaters or braided river flats, to cross the river. Alternatively, wait for the river to recede to a safe level before attempting to cross.



There are two things to consider when evaluating the potential risks associated with outdoor activities: **environmental risks and human risks.**

Regarding **Environmental dangers**, there are:

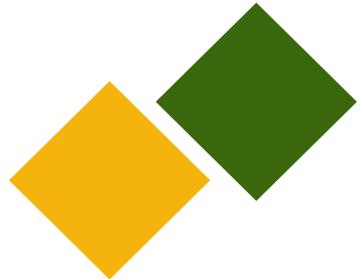
- ⚠️ Activity hazards** (static activities in which the environment is relatively unchanging e.g., hiking; dynamic activities in which the environment changes very quickly in unpredictable ways, e.g., swimming, biking).
- ⚠️ Location & terrain** (remoteness, away from medical help, troubled waters, walking off trails, exposed ledges, darkness, poison ivy, wild animals).
- ⚠️ Season/Climate** (cold temperatures, overexposure to sun etc.). In addition to the activity itself, other environmental dangers include the equipment and the driving/transportation.



The second category is **Human Factor Risks**, which can be organized into:

-  **Participants** (Lack of risk awareness, inability to avoid risks, disobedience to orders, reckless or negligent behavior toward oneself or other equipment, lack of physical stamina, dread, and anxiety).
-  **Organizer** (Lack of understanding of environmental dangers, inability to protect oneself and one's group from dangers, lack of knowledge of vital skills, confusing instructions, poor supervisor who fails to address issues, ineffective under pressure, and absence of a sound strategy).
-  **Group** (group not yet formed, lack of cooperative structure, unresolved interpersonal conflicts, poor communication habits, scapegoating or lack of concern for slow or different people, excessive pressure, or stress to "perform", lack of experience working peacefully under stress, lack of leadership within groups, dividing up into smaller groupings).

risks :
solutions exist.



What are the risks to be considered?

01. Organisations involved in outdoor activities need to manage risks to meet their legal and ethical obligations.
02. Risks can be psychological, emotional, physical, cultural or social in nature.
03. Risk management procedures are used to reduce losses and mitigate risks.
04. Factors such as level of confidence, experience, fatigue, familiarity with equipment, psychological state, location and perception of others influence people's perception of risk.
05. Risk reduction strategies can be divided into three groups: risk elimination, risk isolation and risk minimisation.
06. Environmental risks associated with outdoor activities include risks associated with the activity itself, the location and terrain, and the season and climate.
07. Human risks include participants (lack of awareness of risks, reckless behaviour), organisers (lack of understanding of dangers, poor supervision) and groups (lack of cooperative structure, interpersonal conflicts).
08. Environmental and human risks must be taken into account when assessing the potential risks associated with outdoor activities.
09. The examples given relate to a hike involving a river crossing to illustrate the different risk reduction strategies.
10. Good risk management is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of participants in outdoor activities.

◆ 2.6

Universal design

“Universal Design is the design of products and environments that is usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. It is a framework for the design of places, things, information, communication and policy to be usable by the widest range of people operating in the widest range of situations without special or separate design. It is not a design style but an orientation to any design process that starts with a responsibility to the experience of the user.”

RON MACE,
AMERICAN ARCHITECT, AND CREATOR
OF THE TERM “UNIVERSAL DESIGN”.

Tourism is a fundamental aspect of human life, offering opportunities for exploration, cultural exchange, and relaxation. However, for individuals with disabilities or limited mobility, accessing and enjoying travel experiences can be challenging due to physical and social barriers. Universal Design, an innovative approach that promotes inclusive environments and products, holds the key to transforming the tourism industry into a realm of equal opportunities and unforgettable experiences for all.

Understanding Universal Design

Universal Design is a concept that seeks to create products, environments, and services that are accessible, usable, and enjoyable for people of all abilities, regardless of their age, size, or disabilities. It goes beyond mere compliance with accessibility standards and focuses on accommodating the widest possible range of users from the outset.





Applying Universal Design to Tourism:

- **Accessible Infrastructure:** Designing tourism facilities, such as hotels, restaurants, and attractions, with accessibility in mind is crucial. This includes features like ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and accessible restrooms that allow individuals with mobility impairments to move freely and comfortably.
- **Inclusive Transportation:** Developing inclusive transportation systems is essential for enabling individuals with disabilities to travel conveniently. This involves ensuring that public transportation, such as buses, trains, and airports, are equipped with accessible features like ramps, lifts, and visual or auditory announcements.
- **Adaptive Technologies:** Embracing technology can significantly enhance the travel experience for individuals with disabilities. The use of assistive devices, smartphone apps, and audio guides can provide valuable information and assistance, allowing visitors to explore destinations independently and confidently.
- **Sensory Considerations:** Sensory impairments can pose unique challenges for travelers. By incorporating features such as Braille signage, audio descriptions for visual content, and tactile elements, tourism destinations can ensure that individuals with sensory disabilities can fully engage with their surroundings.
- **Staff Training:** Education and training play a crucial role in creating an inclusive tourism industry. Hospitality professionals should receive training on disability awareness, communication techniques, and assistance skills to better serve and accommodate guests with disabilities.



So, when applied to accessible tourism, the principles of Universal Design ensure that travel destinations, facilities, and services are welcoming and accommodating for individuals with disabilities.

Here are the **seven principles** of Universal Design as applied to accessible tourism:

- **Equitable Use:** Ensure that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can use and benefit from the tourism services and facilities. This principle involves eliminating barriers and providing equal access to information, transportation, accommodations, and attractions for everyone.
- **Flexibility in Use:** Offer a variety of options and choices to accommodate a wide range of preferences and abilities. Provide accessible features, amenities, and services that can be easily adjusted or customized to meet the specific needs of different individuals.
- **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Make the tourism experience user-friendly and easy to understand, regardless of a person's cognitive abilities or previous experience. Clear signage, intuitive layouts, and straightforward instructions can enhance accessibility and reduce confusion.
- **Perceptible Information:** Ensure that important information is effectively communicated to all individuals, including those with visual or hearing impairments. This can be achieved through multiple means, such as written, auditory, visual, and tactile cues, to accommodate different sensory needs.
- **Tolerance for Error:** Design the tourism environment in a way that minimizes the negative consequences of mistakes or accidents. This principle involves creating forgiving and safe spaces, considering potential hazards, and providing clear emergency procedures for all visitors.



- **Low Physical Effort:** Minimize physical effort and fatigue required to access tourism facilities and services. Consider the needs of individuals with mobility challenges by providing accessible pathways, ramps, elevators, and other assistive devices.
- **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Ensure that the physical spaces and layouts of tourism facilities allow for easy maneuverability and access for individuals with different mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers) or assistive devices. Provide adequate space for approach, reach, and use of amenities and services.

BENEFITS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN TOURISM

- ✔ **Increased Market Potential:** Universal Design broadens the customer base for tourism destinations, as it attracts not only individuals with disabilities but also older adults, families with young children, and those seeking enhanced convenience and comfort.
- ✔ **Positive Brand Image:** By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity, tourism businesses can cultivate a positive brand image. Word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied customers will further boost their reputation and attract a diverse range of travelers.
- ✔ **Social Responsibility:** Embracing Universal Design aligns with the principles of social responsibility, promoting equality and eliminating discrimination. It demonstrates a commitment to creating a more inclusive society by breaking down barriers and providing equal opportunities for all.
- ✔ **Enhanced Experiences:** Universal Design enhances the travel experience for everyone. Thoughtful design and inclusive practices create welcoming environments that allow all visitors to fully appreciate and enjoy the destination's offerings.



In conclusion, Universal Design is transforming the tourism industry, ushering in an era of inclusivity, accessibility, and equal opportunities. By implementing Universal Design principles, tourism destinations can create environments that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of all travelers. Embracing accessibility is not only a legal requirement but also a moral and ethical imperative. Let us work together to build a future where everyone can explore the world without limitations and experience the wonders of travel with joy and freedom.



Universal design



The seven principles of universal design applied to accessible tourism

- 1.Fair use
- 2.Flexibility of use
- 3.Simple and intuitive use
- 4.Perceptible information
- 5.Tolerance of error
- 6.Low physical effort
- 7.Size and space for approach and use.



Benefits of universal design in tourism

- 1.Increased market potential
- 2.Positive brand image
- 3.Social responsibility
- 4.Enhanced experiences.



◆ 3.

Resources and references

Bibliography:

- Buhalis, D., & Darcy, S. (Eds.). (2011). Accessible tourism: Concepts and issues. Channel View Publications.
- Darcy, S., & Dickson, T. (2009). A whole-of-life approach to tourism: The case for accessible tourism experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 16(1), 32–44.
- Darcy, S., Cameron, B., & Pegg, S. (2014). Exploring outdoor recreation participation by people with disability: A sociodemographic analysis. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 6–7, 18–32.
- Koens, K., Postma, A., & Papp, B. (2018). The role of tourism in sustainable development: Integrating tourism and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(11), 1901–1918.
- Papp, B., & Koens, K. (2020). Social inclusion through tourism: A systematic review. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(4), 493–513.
- National Board of Forestry (2005) : [Access to the forests for disabled people](#)
- Irish wheelchair association (2020) : [Best Practice Access – Guidelines – Designing Accessible Environments](#)
- Irish wheelchair association sport (2018) : [Great Outdoors – A guide for accessibility.](#)
- [Recommendations on Accessible Tourism : World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#)
- [Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices, World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#)
- [Inclusion U website](#)
- [Active Disability Ireland website](#)





ONAT4ALL – Outdoor activities and nature and adventure tourism for All

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED ARE HOWEVER THOSE OF THE AUTHOR(S) ONLY AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OR THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA).

NEITHER THE EUROPEAN UNION NOR EACEA CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.

PROJECT: ONAT4ALL – OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND NATURE AND ADVENTURE TOURISM FOR ALL.

NR.2021-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000034670