

ACCESSIBLE OUTDOORS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

OUTDOOR **NC**

OUTDOOR RECREATION BENEFITS & TRENDS

- Promotes physical and mental health
- Inspires appreciation of nature
- Builds community
- Contributes to local economy
- Participation continues to grow
- Gaining legislative and funding support
- Building outdoor communities and workforce
- Becoming more diverse and equitable



BARRIERS TO TRAVEL & CHALLENGES ACCESSING OUTDOOR RECREATION

- People with disabilities face challenges to travel
- Lodging (82%) and transportation (79%) accessibility are cited as two of the biggest barriers to travel for travelers with mobility disabilities.
- Accessing outdoor recreation comes with obstacles

- Parking and restrooms aren't connected
- Gates and steps block access to interpretative signage and picnic areas
- Trails lack resting areas or mileage markers

ACCESS FOR THE LARGEST MINORITY IN THE WORLD

Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DEI) is a key pillar for outdoor recreation and tourism.

To be fully inclusive, we must improve **ACCESS** for the largest minority in the world – People with Disabilities!

A disability is “any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)”

26%

of US Adults have
a disability

- 12.8% cognitive
- 12.1% mobility
- 10.8% self-care or independent living
- 6.1% hearing
- 4.8% vision

And they travel

According to Portrait of Travelers with Disabilities (2022), a study conducted by the international research firm, MMGY, three-quarters of respondents (75%) have taken a leisure trip in the past 12 months, just below the percentage of active leisure travelers (83%).

These travelers took an average of 3.4 trips during that time, slightly higher than the average number of trips (3.0 trips) taken by active leisure travelers.

It is estimated, travelers with disabilities generated \$58 Billion in visitor spending.

ACCESSIBILITY IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Infrastructure

- Trails, boat launches, picnic areas, overlooks, and interpretive signage are all examples of outdoor recreation infrastructure.
- Federal, state, and local land managers utilize development standards to improve access to outdoor infrastructure.
- Universal design is the highly inclusive process of designing products, environments, and services to be accessible, usable, and convenient to everyone, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.

Activities

Outfitters and organizations that host and lead outdoor recreation activities have a special role in connecting people with disabilities with the outdoors.

THESE ACTIVITY PROVIDERS:

- Offer adaptive and Inclusive programming
- Offer access to expensive adaptive equipment
- Create safe environments to do unsafe activities
- Build community by providing life-changing experiences

Communications

It isn't a lack of trails, it's a lack of information to make an informed decision.

The concept is simple and empowering – people can make their own determinations if they are just provided the right information.

DMOs are conduits of information and are perfectly positioned to share reliable information with a wide audience of visitors and residents, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATIONS

People First Language

“People First Language” (PFL) puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. PFL uses phrases such as “person with a disability,” opposed to “disabled person.”

Other considerations with this language is to use a “person without a disability” instead of a “normal person” and in cases where “handicapped” might go in front of a service such as parking, restroom, and transportation, use the word “accessible”.

Representation

Disability-inclusive marketing is built on the premise that marketing should represent and be accessible to all people with or without disabilities. Not only is including people with disabilities your marketing the right thing to do, it also makes marketing more authentic. Remember, 26% of the US population has some form of disability. Not to mention, Globally, over \$58 billion is spent by travelers with mobility disabilities.

But representation is about so much more than capturing a market segment. It's about making real steps toward becoming a more inclusive industry, one that is truly open and welcoming to each and every traveler.

Design Elements

There are many design elements that must be considered for a variety of disabilities including vision and hearing disabilities. Different design considerations are related to fonts, colors, photos, videos, audio, and graphics in addition to content components. There are now tools to help you identify accessibility issues on a webpage but working with an expert can help make sure that the content can be easily understood by all users.

Accessibility is so multifaceted – it affects almost every aspect of a destination's digital and physical experience – that it's extremely difficult to keep up with the many nuances and changing recommendations.

That's why it's important to know when to call in the pros. There are tons of organizations out there, both local and national, that specialize in helping companies level up their accessibility efforts. This can include technical behind-the-scenes updates or guidance on your consumer-facing messaging. Working with the people who encounter accessibility first-hand in their everyday lives. Incorporating these perspectives into your marketing efforts will not only make these communications more authentic, but more helpful to potential travelers.