

Building an inclusive and sustainable tourism sector for all

The third of December marked International Day of Persons with Disabilities as well as the start of Disability Awareness Month, in South Africa. Observing this month affords the tourism sector to once again place greatly needed emphasis on universal accessibility.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

It is estimated that one billion people worldwide live with disabilities, and face many barriers to inclusion in many key aspects of society. The United Nations Social and Economic Council (UNESCAP) estimates that the potential global market for Universal Accessible Tourism (UAT) is 650 million people with differing disabilities and 600 million elderly people.

While this signifies a huge potential market for travel and tourism, it still remains vastly under-served due to inaccessible travel and tourism facilities and services, as well as discriminatory policies and practices.



Making travel more inclusive and accessible to all

Robin Fredericks 2 Jul 2018



"As a sector, we have a responsibility to continuously advocate for universal accessibility in tourism products, in order to ensure that we achieve the necessary levels of inclusivity. It is prudent for tourism service providers to consider the merits of accelerating measures to address the needs of this sector, based on the predicted demand which exceeds the current availability of universally accessible accommodation, services and facilities," says Sthembiso Dlamini, South African Tourism acting CEO.

Dlamini urges all stakeholders within the tourism industry to be cognisant of universal accessibility and be inclusive and open up their businesses to more people.



We all have a role in promoting accessible tourism

Josephine Wawira 29 Sep 2016



"Universal access is of utmost importance. I would like to appeal to the role players in our industry to make universal access a priority by ensuring that all tourist attractions and establishments are not only graded but also universally accessible. This will not only elevate South Africa's competitiveness as a tourism destination, but also afford the same access opportunities and standardised experiences for everyone," she said.

The future is accessible

"Through the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, we work in partnership with all our stakeholders to create awareness and encourage tourism operators to implement best-practice standards and to be universally accessible.



Partnership working towards making all of SA's Blue Flag beaches universally accessible

27 Nov 2017



"Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable development policy. It is both a human rights imperative, as well as an exceptional business opportunity. In this context, accessible tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities, but it also benefits all of society.," concludes Dlamini.

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