

ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Concepts and Issues

Edited by Dimitrios Buhalis and Simon Darcy



ASPECTS OF TOURISM

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CHANNEL VIEW PUBLICATIONS

Bristol • Buffalo • Toronto

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Accessible Tourism: Concepts and Issues/Edited by Dimitrios Buhalis and Simon Darcy.
Aspects of Tourism

Includes bibliographical references.

1. People with disabilities—Travel. 2. Tourism. I. Buhalis, Dimitrios. II. Darcy, Simon, 1964-

HV3022.A2215 2011

910.68'40-dc222010041488

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-84541-161-9 (hbk)

ISBN-13: 978-1-84541-160-2 (pbk)

Channel View Publications

UK: St Nicholas House, 31–34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.

USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.

Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

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Typeset by The Charlesworth Group

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Charlesworth Press.

Acknowledgements

Like any project this book has a history that brought it to fruition. Back in 2005 Ivor Ambrose put a team together to work on improving the information provision for accessible tourism through the European project OSSATE. He included Dimitrios Buhalis as an information management expert in tourism and a handful of disability and tourism experts, many of whom had disabilities themselves and were passionate about making a difference. At the outset of this project it was immediately evident that there was a body of research already in the area, primarily instigated by Simon Darcy and his collaborators. A couple of trips to Sydney and a few beers later, a close friendship and partnership were developed, fuelled by a passion for research on accessible tourism. A global network of friends/collaborators emerged rapidly to harness the best conceptual developments in the topic. Discussions were always about making a positive difference and taking this area forward and to the mainstream academic enquiry and industry practice. As a result the idea of these books emerged as a way to achieve this and to assist the area to grow.

When we are discussing accessible tourism, all around the world, there is a realisation that several issues emerge immediately. People with access requirements are often frustrated with the lack of facilities and also information that would make travel planning and, hence, travelling easier. They are dissatisfied with the public sector for the lack of regulation, control and implementation. They are also critical of the private sector for not understanding their needs as they would for any other consumer group and for being unwilling to invest in facilities that can improve accessibility. When talking to tourism operators, especially in countries where accessibility is not at the forefront of legislation and practice, they are unable to understand the complexity that is inherent to disability and access: they want simple practical guidelines and worry about the extra cost they will bear to adapt their facilities. In the centre of this mismatch in the marketplace, there are a number of misunderstandings or misconceptions from both sides that prevent the development and the implementation of accessible tourism.

This book then brings together key issues and themes to provide a comprehensive resource for positive dialogue. It aims to explore and demonstrate the key concepts of accessible tourism and in this way to bring together all stakeholders in the international debate. It also brings accessibility into the mainstream of tourism inquiry and encourages all

relevant stakeholders to engage in the discussion and negotiation towards universal design. This will not only allow a much more inclusive approach for clientele but will also enable tourism suppliers to open their doors to new markets which have a great potential, as well as acting appropriately, or effectively and efficiently, to improve their operational bottom line.

The editors were conscious of the need to make the material 'research driven'. Each of the contributing authors has attempted to honour the intent of the editors and we thank them for their collegiality and enthusiasm. As editors we also wanted to ensure the overall quality of the manuscript and subjected the chapters to blind external review in addition to our own editorial processes. These processes have been important to ensure that the book has coherence and continuity in the development of the concepts and issues.

The editors would like to express their gratitude to Ivor Ambrose for his contribution in various parts of the book and also for his collaboration and support. They would also like to thank Stephen Schweinsberg who has overseen most of the reviewing process, as well as assisting the editorial work in each stage. We would also like to thank all our contributors for engaging in the debate and contributing to the project, and our publishers Elinor Robertson and Tommi Grover for their trust and support.

Dimitrios Buhalis and Simon Darcy
March 2010

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Editors

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Foreword

It is my great pleasure to recommend *Accessible Tourism: Concepts and Issues* as a fine addition to academic writing and industry practice.

While the economic importance of tourism is undeniable within developing and developed nations, tourism is also an agent for social change by promoting human rights and sustainability. Accessible Tourism provides a wonderful link between human rights, sustainability and tourism, affirming that one cannot exist without the other.

This important book connects the economic growth potential of tourism with a very important area of social change, an ageing population and increasing rates of disability. For tourism to be a true social agent of change, equal opportunities for all society groups to participate independently and with dignity in tourism activities must be assured.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) works to promote 'responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism'. In particular, Article 7 of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism approved by the UN on the 'Right to Tourism' states that 'family, youth, student and senior tourism and tourism for people with disabilities, should be encouraged and facilitated'. *Accessible Tourism: Concepts and Issues* progresses our knowledge and understanding in this important area and supports both tourism destinations and organizations as they work towards total tourism accessibility.

Dr Taleb Rifai
Secretary General
United Nations World Tourism Organization

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