



## tourism

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Department:  
Tourism  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

### UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY IN TOURISM DECLARATION

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities broadly outlines and emphasizes the importance of Universal Accessibility. Article 9 states that persons with disabilities have a right to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life and that State parties should take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access on an equal basis with others.

Universal Access is defined as the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all persons to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design, including assistive devices and technologies for particular groups of persons with disabilities where these are needed., universal access means the removal of cultural, physical, social and other barriers that prevent people with disabilities from entering, using or benefiting from the various systems of society that are available to other citizens, (UN Convention Article 2).

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Act 4 of 2000, prohibits unfair discrimination on the grounds of disability.

We are also guided by the 1996 White Paper and the National Responsible Tourism Development and Promotion of Tourism Guidelines of SA (2002), which state that we should create opportunities and eliminate barriers to access mainstream tourism and importantly, understand the needs of people with disabilities when designing, operating and marketing tourism.

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, released by the Presidency in November 1997, recommends that “the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, in consultation with the National Environmental Accessibility Programme (NEAP) and the South African Tourist Organisation (SATOUR), develop national norms and standards as well as monitoring mechanisms to ensure barrier-free access in the tourism industry”

Section 2.2 of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism states that “tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women; that they should promote human rights and, more particularly, the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples”.

It is in light of the above that:

**We, the participants at the 'Universal Accessibility in Tourism' Stakeholder Consultative Workshops as Tourism Stakeholders and Government Departments:**

**Recognise** that South Africa is a rapidly growing tourism destination and hence the importance of ensuring that our systems are geared to serve all tourists in particular people with disabilities, older persons and families with young children;

**Acknowledge** that the National Department of Tourism has prioritized accessible tourism for people with disabilities, elderly people, pregnant women and parents with young children with a view to identifying key policy and strategy elements for promoting accessible tourism;

**Note** that accessible tourism is becoming an increasingly important feature in a competitive global tourism market and can serve as an effective tool for enhancing the socio-economic benefits of the tourism industry for the overall development of the country;

**Affirm** our commitment to promoting accessible tourism in South Africa;

**Urge** all parties concerned with tourism policy and practice, including the tourism industry, to strengthen tourism infrastructure, facilities, services and programmes by enhancing universal access to meet the needs of all tourism consumers, in consonance with social and demographic trends;

**We, representatives of Government, the Private Sector, Organizations concerned with accessibility in tourism, Organizations of and for persons with disabilities and the hospitality sector, therefore recommend that the following actions be taken by the key stakeholders:**

**(a) Organisations of and for persons with disabilities should:**

- ❖ Develop empowerment programmes focusing on skills for advocacy and negotiation with the tourism industry;
- ❖ Support people with disabilities in acquiring training and employment in the tourism industry.
- ❖ Document and share information on the quality of tourism components and user experiences (accommodation, transportation, tourism sites and services, tour programmes, tourist guiding services, information and communications systems);
- ❖ Acquire skills in offering an appraisal service tourism facilities, programmes and services, and in recommending action;
- ❖ Offer consulting services to training institutions and policy-making bodies concerned with tourism services;
- ❖ Communicate the right of tourists with disabilities to universal access and design and reasonable accommodation in an effective manner, especially to those who are unaware and inexperienced in accessible tourism;
- ❖ Collaborate with research institutions and experts in conducting research on locally available, appropriate, and cost-effective technologies which promote universal design-based dimension.

**(b) Government authorities should:**

- ❖ Ensure that tourism master plans, policies and programmes incorporate the principle of universal access to tourism infrastructure, products and services;

- ❖ Further explore granting accreditation to tourism industry establishments that are universally accessible, with emphasis on accessibility for people with disabilities ;
- ❖ Ensure that government and state owned enterprises at all levels should conduct access audits of key public facilities on a regular basis and use findings to enhance policy development and effect immediate action, and that the findings should be made available to the public in accessible formats;
- ❖ Create local accessible guides and visitor maps; develop and implement curricula for accessibility and universal design, and involve persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of the curricula, across all faculties at public higher institutions;
- ❖ Together with the private sector and in collaboration with representatives of persons with disabilities organizations, expose all employees with disability awareness, equality and universal design orientation as a key component of induction programmes for new employees;
- ❖ Support the development of training materials on disability awareness in tourism education and training for use in government and private sector training programmes;
- ❖ Facilitate the universal access training Department of Home Affairs officials and tourist guides concerned with passport and visa applications
- ❖ Conduct access surveys in tourism businesses;
- ❖ Create safe environments in respect of personal safety within tourism attractions, public areas and transport.

**(c) Tourism Service Providers should:**

- ❖ Provide the same choices for all consumers to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities, the elderly and parents with young children and ensure protection of the individual's rights to travel with dignity;
- ❖ Include in training curricula (for all levels) a client focus that respects the rights and needs of diverse consumer groups, including persons with disabilities;
- ❖ Ensure that persons with disabilities have equal rights of access to all tourism infrastructure, products and services, including employment opportunities and benefits that the tourism industry can provide;
- ❖ Develop in-house programmes to raise awareness, sensitivity and skill levels in order to provide more appropriate services for persons with disabilities;
- ❖ Strengthen engagement with people with disabilities and their organizations to exchange accurate and reliable information for strengthening tourism services to better meet diverse consumer needs;
- ❖ Make their web sites universally accessible for people with visual impairments;
- ❖ Involve persons with disabilities with the requisite experience and skills in conducting access surveys of premises and to serve as resource persons and advisors in improving tourism services;
- ❖ Contract representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities to provide all employees, members, and staff with disability awareness, equality and universal design training as part of any induction programme for new employees;
- ❖ Develop training content and capability to strengthen passenger services at transport interchanges (bus, railway, taxi, ship and airplane terminals);
- ❖ Introduce Universal Accessibility as a criterion in the grading of hotels and restaurants.
- ❖ Develop and use training modules for sensitizing front-line service staff to relate, in an appropriate manner, with disabled travellers.
- ❖ Encourage their members to attend courses and workshops in Universal Accessible Tourism;
- ❖ Introduce accessible tourism into the agendas of their regular meetings;
- ❖ Develop an outline of core contents for training tourism personnel;

- ❖ Collaborate with organizations of and for people with disabilities, research institutions, and experts in conducting research on locally available, appropriate, and cost-effective technologies which promote universal design-based dimension.
- ❖ Ensure the inclusion of universal design in tourism development to create environments, products and services that are useable by a wide spectrum of consumers, irrespective of their experience, knowledge, skills, age, gender, as well as their physical, sensory, communication and cognitive abilities;
- ❖ Ensure that the spirit of accessible tourism means the reduction of all physical and non-physical barriers, access to information and dangers so that they do not adversely affect tourism experiences and activities;
- ❖ Encourage tourism access improvements by taking into consideration the rights and needs of diverse user groups, including single disability groups, persons with multiple disabilities, elderly people and parents with young children;
- ❖ Provide for emergency planning taking into context unique tourist requirements and required assistance, focusing on personal safety;
- ❖ Improve on signage that is universally accessible to tourists with disabilities.

**DECLARATION ON UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBLE TOURISM**

**SIGNATORIES:**

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National Department of Tourism  
DATE:

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Tourism Business Council of South Africa  
DATE:

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Department of Women, Children and People  
with Disabilities  
DATE:

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South African Tourism / Tourism Grading  
Council of South Africa  
DATE:

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South African National Parks (SANParks)  
DATE:

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South African Disability Alliance (SADA)  
DATE:

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South African Older Persons Forum (SAOPF)  
DATE: