

REDEFINING ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Accessible travel for people with mobility disabilities is experiencing a fundamental transformation. What was once dismissed as a niche concern has evolved into a substantial global market characterized by robust growth and increasingly sophisticated expectations.

Travelers with reduced mobility represent a demographic of considerable scale; millions worldwide who possess both the intent and resources to explore the world. Yet, despite this potential, they continue to face systemic obstacles at every stage of the traveller journey, from initial planning through to their return home.

This white paper examines the current state and future trajectory of accessible travel through the specific lens of mobility disabilities. It makes a clear case: accessibility has transitioned from optional consideration to business imperative for every organization in the travel ecosystem.

Our analysis explores several critical dimensions:

THE REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

How evolving legislation worldwide is establishing new baselines for accessibility standards and enforcement

UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Why designing for accessibility from the ground up creates superior experiences for all travellers

THE ORBITO TRAVEL SOLUTION

How purpose-built technology enables organizations to meet elevated expectations while capturing previously inaccessible market demand

The question facing travel providers, at this point, is no longer whether to prioritize accessibility, but how quickly they can adapt to serve this underserved market effectively.





UNDERSTANDING MOBILITY DISABILITIES IN TRAVEL

Mobility disabilities encompass a wide range of physical impairments that affect a person's ability to walk, climb stairs, or move independently.

Travelers who rely on wheelchairs, scooters, canes, walkers, or other assistive devices encounter significant barriers at every stage of their journey; from initial planning and booking through transportation, accommodation, and activities.

These challenges are rarely isolated incidents.

Instead, they compound across the entire travel chain, creating cascading obstacles that increase uncertainty and ultimately may discourage many people from traveling at all.

By prioritizing accessibility for mobility disabilities, travel providers can address some of the most impactful barriers in the industry.

This focus benefits not only wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments, but also extends to seniors, families with strollers, travellers recovering from injuries, and anyone who faces temporary or permanent reduced mobility.



KEY BARRIERS WHEN TRAVELLING WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES

TRANSPORTATION WITHOUT ADEQUATE ACCESSIBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Many transport systems lack essential features such as ramps, lifts, or properly secured wheelchair spaces, making travel difficult or even impossible.

ACCOMMODATIONS THAT PROMISE MORE THAN THEY DELIVER

Properties advertise accessibility but often fall short - offering rooms that are too cramped, doorways too narrow, or bathrooms without roll-in showers.

INADEQUATE BOOKING INFORMATION

Reservation platforms may not provide detailed, updated accessibility data, leaving travellers to guess whether a service will meet their needs.

UNDERTRAINED STAFF

Personnel often lack proper training in handling mobility equipment or providing respectful, skilled assistance.

INACCESSIBLE PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTS

Uneven terrain, poorly marked routes, and absent signage create unnecessary obstacles in destinations and venues.

HIDDEN COSTS AND RISKS IN AIR TRAVEL

Travelers face unexpected fees, restrictions on mobility devices, and the constant worry of equipment damage during flights.

STRESS ROOTED IN UNCERTAINTY

Past negative experiences and unclear information fuel anxiety, making trip planning exhausting rather than exciting.

These barriers represent both a moral imperative and a significant market opportunity.

By removing them, businesses can build trust, foster loyalty, and tap into substantial unmet demand.



MARKET SIZE & GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

THE ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL MARKET: A \$172.8 BILLION OPPORTUNITY BY 2033

The accessible travel market represents one of the fastest-growing yet chronically underserved segments in global tourism. Valued at \$92.7 billion in 2024, this market (serving travellers with mobility, visual, hearing, and cognitive disabilities) is on track to reach \$172.8 billion by 2033, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 7%. (DataIntelto)

MARKET SCALE AND MOMENTUM

The sector's expansion is supported by converging data across multiple analyses:

1 in 6 people globally live with a disability (WHO)

By 2030, 25% of EU citizens will be 64+ (POINT&)

U.S. travellers with disabilities alone generate approximately \$58 billion in annual travel expenditure. (MMGY)

Growth is propelled by three fundamental forces: rising consumer expectations for inclusive experiences, demographic shifts toward aging populations, and increasing global mobility.

THE MOBILITY INNOVATION SURGE

Within accessible travel, mobility-focused segments are experiencing rapid and intensive growth. Investment in assistive mobility technology, inclusive transport platforms, and accessibility-mapping infrastructure is expanding at double-digit rates; significantly outpacing the broader market's trajectory. This subsector represents the cutting edge of accessible travel innovation.

THE STRATEGIC CASE

The economics are straightforward: accessibility is not a niche consideration but one of the largest untapped growth opportunities in today's tourism. Travel operators, destinations, and mobility providers who prioritize inclusive design and accessible infrastructure now will capture disproportionate market share in a sector entering sustained, decade-long expansion.

FOR INDUSTRY LEADERS, THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER WHETHER TO INVEST IN ACCESSIBILITY, BUT HOW QUICKLY THEY CAN DEPLOY CAPITAL AND INNOVATION TO SERVE THIS MASSIVE, UNDERSERVED MARKET.



WHY ACCESSIBILITY IN TRAVEL MATTERS

Accessibility surpasses regulatory compliance and rather represents, a fundamental pillar of modern, customer focused travel. By enabling independence, social participation, and equal rights, accessible travel aligns with the values that increasingly define both consumer expectations and brand reputation.

The business case for accessibility extends well beyond serving travellers with disabilities. Universal design features, i.e. barrier-free access, wide pathways, intuitive booking interfaces, and multi-format communication, enhance the experience for all customers. Parents with strollers, elderly travellers, and those carrying luggage benefit from the same thoughtful design principles.

In today's market, accessible operators gain distinct competitive advantages since, they build trust through reliable, inclusive service delivery that travellers remember and recommend.

As online reviews and social media amplify every customer experience, accessibility becomes both a service imperative and a powerful marketing differentiator.

ORGANIZATIONS
THAT PRIORITIZE
INCLUSIVE DESIGN
POSITION
THEMSELVES NOT
MERELY AS
COMPLIANT, BUT AS
INDUSTRY LEADERS
WHO UNDERSTAND
THE FULL SPECTRUM
OF TRAVELLER
NEEDS.





KEY LEGISLATION SHAPING ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL

Governments worldwide are taking increasingly decisive steps to ensure mobility-impaired travellers receive equal access to transport, information, and services.

In the EUROPEAN UNION, Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 guarantees rights for disabled persons and those with reduced mobility when traveling by air, mandating free airport assistance, accessible communication, and protections against unjustified boarding refusals. Building on this foundation, the European Accessibility Act (EAA) standardizes accessibility requirements across digital services, booking systems, and transport-related information.

In the UNITED STATES, the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) prohibits airline discrimination and requires accessible seating, boarding procedures, communication formats, and assistance services. CANADA's Accessible Canada Act (2019) extends similar protections to federally regulated transportation, requiring barrier-free travel across all customer touchpoints. The UNITED KINGDOM's Equality Act 2010 mandates reasonable adjustments in transport services, with the Civil Aviation Authority enforcing aviation-specific accessibility standards.

AUSTRALIA's Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 establish comprehensive requirements covering aircraft design, boarding assistance, and information provision. JAPAN's Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2016) and Barrier-Free Act drive accessibility improvements across public transport infrastructure.

At the international level, ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) provides global guidance through Annex 9, which includes provisions for passengers with disabilities, while IATA (International Air Transport Association) has developed industry best practices through the Accessibility Enhancement Accord. ISO standards such as ISO 21542 cover accessibility in built environments including transport facilities.

Emerging markets including India, Brazil, and South Africa are developing accessibility frameworks as part of broader disability rights legislation, often inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which has been ratified by over 185 countries and serves as the foundational international treaty driving these reforms.

For travel providers, these regulations represent more than compliance milestone - they are opportunities to build trust, demonstrate leadership, and pioneer innovation in the accessible travel space.



“...travel
strengthens connections and broadens horizons,
yet historic, physical and societal barriers
often limit
equitable access to travel.

Disability is a natural part of the human condition.
Everyone should have the **right to travel,**
no matter their ability.”

Kathy Martinez
Vice President for Global Disability Inclusion
[Forbes, 2023](#)

GETTING STARTED WITH ACCESSIBILITY & UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal Design in Travel

Universal design offers a powerful framework for transforming travel experiences into truly inclusive adventures. Rather than creating separate, segregated solutions for people with disabilities, universal design focuses on environments and services that are usable by as many people as possible without requiring special adaptation. Such approach benefits everyone like, parents with strollers, travellers with luggage, older adults, and people with temporary injuries, while ensuring dignity and independence for those with permanent disabilities.

Travel operators can begin their journey toward accessibility by conducting a comprehensive assessment of the entire customer experience, from initial research and booking through to the return home. This means identifying mobility-related pain points at every touchpoint: browsing websites, making reservations, arriving at transportation hubs, navigating accommodations, accessing attractions, and managing unanticipated situations.

Key implementation steps

- Improving physical infrastructure with clear signage, level pathways, and adequate resting points throughout travel facilities.
- Ensuring accessible transportation options, from airport shuttles to tour vehicles, with proper equipment and instructions for safe assistance.
- Updating accommodations with thoughtfully designed rooms that go beyond minimum compliance.
- Implementing robust accessibility filters in booking systems that provide accurate, detailed information about available features, allowing travellers to make informed decisions with confidence.
- Perhaps most critically, staff training transforms accessibility from a checklist into a culture of hospitality. Team members need skills not only for handling mobility devices safely but also for providing respectful, dignified service that empowers rather than patronizes. This includes understanding diverse communication needs, offering assistance appropriately, and recognizing that each traveller's needs are unique.



Universal design in travel is not a one-time project but an ongoing process of refinement, consultation, and continuous improvement.

The most successful travel operators actively engage with mobility-disabled travellers, inviting their lived experiences to inform design decisions.

This collaborative approach ensures that accessibility features in fact meet real needs rather than assumptions, creating travel experiences where everyone can explore the world with confidence and joy.



BUILDING ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

CREATING MOBILITY-INCLUSIVE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

Truly accessible travel requires more than compliance but, it demands a comprehensive approach that puts mobility needs at the centre of every decision, from initial booking to journey's end.

ACCOMMODATIONS THAT WORK

Accessible rooms must deliver on their promise. Examples include adequate turning circles for wheelchairs, roll-in showers with proper seating and controls, zero-threshold entrances, and accessible placement of light switches, thermostats, and emergency features. Hotels should widely provide detailed room layouts and photos before or during booking, not after.

TRANSPORTATION WITHOUT BARRIERS

Whether by air, rail, or road, vehicles must accommodate wheelchairs securely with proper tie-down systems. Boarding procedures should be clearly communicated in advance, with staff trained to assist efficiently and respectfully. Elements such as gap bridges, ramps, and lifts must be maintained and reliably available though contingency planning should also be in effect.



BUILDING ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

ACTIVITIES EVERYONE CAN JOIN

Tour operators should evaluate every excursion for surface conditions, access routes, and realistic mobility requirements including, but not limited to, entrance widths, rest facilities, terrain challenges, and distance between points of interest. Rather than labelling activities as simply "accessible" or not, provide specific details that let travellers make informed choices on the basis on their individual abilities.

BOOKING SYSTEMS THAT INFORM

Accessibility features should be filterable, prominent, and described with precision. Generic terms like "accessible" mean little without specifics. Travelers need to know details of elements such as door widths, shower configurations, distance from parking to entrance, and availability of equipment like shower chairs or portable ramps.

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION ABOVE ALL

Uncertainty is the enemy of confidence and action. Travel providers must set accurate expectations through clear, truthful communication and in case limitations exist, state them upfront. If features vary by location or areas, they should specify which properties offer what and at which areas. When travellers know exactly what to expect, they can plan effectively and, in the end, decide to participate, since their anxiety will be transformed to anticipation and action.





BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE TRAVEL INDUSTRY TOGETHER

At orbito travel, we work alongside global travel partners to drive meaningful change in accessible travel. Our solution simplifies accessibility implementation and strengthen customer confidence, while amplifying your organisation's commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

BECOME A LEADER IN ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL

Partnering with us positions your organization as a recognized leader in inclusive travel, strengthening your Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) profile, enhancing brand equity, and differentiating yourself in an increasingly competitive market. Such leadership extends beyond reputation whereas it demonstrates a genuine commitment to creating travel experiences that welcomes all travellers.

UNLOCK GROWTH IN A VALUABLE MARKET SEGMENT

The accessible travel market represents significant untapped potential. By consistently delivering tailored, inclusive customer journeys, you can increase bookings and expand your satisfaction among travellers with reduced mobility. These travellers often travel with companions, multiplying your revenue opportunity while building lasting customer loyalty through exceptional, accessible journeys.

DRIVE SOCIAL IMPACT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Accessible travel creates effects that extend far beyond individual journeys since, by offering people with reduced mobility equal access to travel opportunities, you contribute to social equity while simultaneously boosting local economies. Increased visibility and traffic to accessible destinations benefits entire communities, creating economic opportunities and encouraging further investment in accessible infrastructure and services.

STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE AND ESG COMMITMENTS

Demonstrating tangible commitment to social equity strengthens your governance framework and builds stakeholder trust. Partnership with us provides concrete initiatives for inclusion in regulatory reporting and ESG disclosures, helping you meet evolving compliance requirements while advancing meaningful social progress.



LET'S MAKE
TRAVEL
ACCESSIBLE
FOR EVERYONE

Every accessible journey you enable creates impact.

FOR TRAVELLERS FOR COMMUNITIES FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Let's discuss how orbito travel can support your vision.



CONTACT INFO

orbito travel private company

www.orbito.travel
hello@orbito.travel

75 Thessalonikis Street, 183 45, Moschato, Greece

IATA 27219334 | GNT0 0206E70000866401 | HATTA 2554

