

How to apply ISO Standard 21902 *Accessible tourism for all*¹

Recommendations for key players in the transportation sector





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Tourism plays a key role in economic development and delivers a series of benefits. However, tourism must be sustainable and inclusive, of all people. **By including accessibility and Universal Design principles² from the beginning, investment costs over the business cycle can be kept to a minimum;** by committing to equality, tourism companies become **more sustainable, attract new audiences and can employ people with functional diversity, generating business opportunities and greater product differentiation.**

Inclusive policies make it possible to create a supply of accessible tourism offerings. Moreover, entrepreneurs who apply a ‘design for all’ approach can offer quality services that position them better in the market by addressing the needs of a wider range of visitors.

The absence of globally agreed regulatory and guidance tools still makes it impossible to benchmark destinations in terms of their level of accessibility. ISO Standard 21902 establishes a comprehensive set of guidelines for key players in the tourism value chain to support their efforts in making their infrastructure, products and services accessible.

The “How to apply ISO Standard 21902” collection of guides highlights the key aspects of this tool for administrations, accommodation and hospitality establishments, transport facilities and tourism resources and its implementation in companies and services.

Managers and employees of transport infrastructure, facilities and companies, who wish to provide a safe, reliable, and dignified travel experience to passengers with disabilities, can use ISO 21902 as a guidance to assess, develop or adapt their services. This guide focuses rather on transport infrastructure, facilities and companies that passengers use to travel to and within a destination, than on vehicles and their adaptive design.

¹ ISO 21902:2021 Tourism and related services — Accessible tourism for all — Requirements and recommendations (English original), <https://www.iso.org/standard/72126.html>. UNE-ISO 21902:2021 Turismo y servicios relacionados. Turismo accesible para todos. Requisitos y recomendaciones. (Spanish translation), <https://www.une.org/encuentra-tu-norma/busca-tu-norma/norma?c=N0066245>.

² The 7 Principles - Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles/>.

Why should we care about accessibility? Universal accessibility in tourism is about:

1. Equality, diversity, and inclusion, regardless of our age and abilities
2. Understanding the integrity of the accessible tourism value chain
3. Ensuring the provision of infrastructure, products and services, suitable for all people
4. Environments enjoyed by both tourists and local people
5. Improvements in people's comfort, safety and life quality
6. Change of mindset by fostering the sector's interest in accessibility
7. New experiences, revenue streams, innovation and improved business results
8. Consumer loyalty and worker satisfaction
9. Coordination between administrations, private sector and local communities
10. Working together with organizations of persons with disabilities
11. Training and continuing education of professionals in the tourism sector

Why is ISO Standard 21902 relevant to me? It provides me with tools to:

- Identify and eliminate** all kinds of access barriers in my services
- Ensure** the integrity of the tourism value chain
- Raise** awareness among the general public
- Train** transport sector professionals
- Analyze** the offerings of competitors and understand the market
- Gain** knowledge on the benefits and business opportunities that accessible transport for all entails
- Optimize** customer service at information points of transport infrastructure
- Improve** product design, marketing and promotion
- Deliver** quality accessible transport experiences
- Design** economic and fiscal incentives for companies to implement accessibility in transport
- Save** on costs for improvements in coordination by including accessibility in the planning stage



**As a manager or an employee of a transport infrastructure, facility and company,
what should be my areas of action according to ISO 21902?³**

We should act in 11 different areas:

	AREAS⁴	ACTIONS
I ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT	Collecting information on the accessible transport market volume and its end-users; Analyzing accessibility levels of similar infrastructure and companies prior to setting accessibility priorities; Deciding which environments, spaces and services should be prioritized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identify common concerns and access requirements of passengers with disabilities, seniors and families with young children.● Commission experts with lived disability experience to conduct accessibility audits of core transport infrastructure and facilities.● Identify experts and end-users with a broad range of disabilities to work together in planning, building, refurbishing and maintaining transport facilities.● Assess accessibility of accompanying services, such as retail shops, information desks, news-stands, catering, security check and waiting areas.

³ In many countries, standards which apply to transport have been already stipulated by national laws. In case this kind of laws have not been adopted yet, international standards can be the starting point.

The European Union Regulation 1107/2006 – air travel; Regulation 2021/782 – rail travel; Regulation 1073/2009 – coach and bus travel; Regulation 1177/2010 – sea and inland waterways travel can be consulted given the absence of universal regulations.

⁴ The brief descriptions of the areas do not include official definitions approved by UN Tourism, but rather tourism concepts in the context of universal accessibility and transport.

	AREAS	ACTIONS
<p>II</p> <p>AWARENESS-RAISING AND TRAINING</p>	<p>Ensuring that decision-makers and all staff have skills to understand a wide array of individual access requirements of passengers; Raising awareness on the legal requirements, and social and economic advantages, of making transport accessible, based on data; Tackling biased attitudes, as the starting point.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design training schemes with organizations of persons with disabilities, transport and education professionals. ● Carry out beginners' level and continuous training for all personnel, at all levels, including decision-makers. ● Train particularly customer and ground service personnel, on attending to passengers with disabilities and meeting their needs. ● Ensure staff has skills on manipulating, loading, storing and transporting mobility aids, without harming passengers, staff and equipment⁵. ● Create aid tools to support travel configuration and safe operations involving mobility devices. ● Showcase good practices of a dignified approach with customers with disabilities and seniors, throughout the travel experience. ● Sensitize staff on invisible disabilities to avoid false perceptions and standard check-list approach. ● Make sure all staff has skills in evacuation procedures and processes involving people with disabilities. ● Provide skills to key staff would understand specific requirements of passengers, as well as support tools required for a disability-inclusive evacuation.
<p>III</p> <p>REMOVAL OF BARRIERS</p>	<p>Engaging competent multidisciplinary professional profiles and organizations of persons with disabilities in eliminating all types of barriers; Applying Universal Design principles in all construction, renovation and procurement procedures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish protocols to remove barriers across the entire value chain. ● Develop specific procedures to address architectural, transport, communicational, technological, and attitudinal barriers. ● Facilitate accessible alternatives in case some barriers cannot be removed.

⁵ IATA Guidance on the Transport of Mobility Aids, First Edition (2023), <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/7b3762815ac44a10b83ccf5560c1b308/iata-guidance-on-the-transport-of-mobility-aids-final-feb2023.pdf>

AREAS

ACTIONS

IV

COMMON AREAS AND OPERATIONS

Creating a complete and dignified experience for passengers using any kind of transport, throughout the journey; Implementing agreements on interoperability of different transport modes to enhance accessibility; Designing solutions with end-users, supply chain providers and destinations.

- Create **accessible routes** in the busiest and most frequently used spaces, including the sanitary facilities catering to persons with disabilities and their families.
- Display **user-friendly maps** on physical and digital platforms, featuring common areas and accessibility symbols.
- Provide **direct accessible purchase** options of tickets, in accessible formats.
- Make available menus indicating **allergens** in catering facilities, in accessible formats.
- Reserve **quiet areas** for passengers with autism, intellectual disabilities or mental health conditions, by refraining from overstimulation and using Multi-Sensory Stimulation Environments (MSSEs)⁶.
- In case land, water or air transport are used for organized trips, tourism attractions and activities within the destination **should also be accessible**, during stops and upon arrival.
- Offer **priority queuing** and pre-boarding for passengers with disabilities and their caretakers.
- In the event of **emergency, offloading or overbooking**, prioritize transport of passengers with disabilities and the accompanying persons.

V

PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

Arranging personal assistance services for passengers with disabilities, as a basic right; Assisting end-users by considering their best interests, safety regulations and operational realities; Analyzing the increase of assistance requests, beneficiaries' profiles and their routes, to better manage assistance services.

- Ensure delivery of assistance based on **appropriate service booking systems**, information exchange with customers and traceable communication between service providers.
- Make sure all passengers using a **powered wheelchair or an assistance animal** communicate specific information required by security and safety protocols, to guarantee boarding.
- Bear in mind that for air travel, the passengers must know that it is an **absolute requirement** to comply with dangerous goods rules, relevant to battery safety and animal welfare.
- Make **all possible efforts** to provide assistance on the spot to passengers who failed to formalize the official request, beforehand.
- Consider requests from passengers without disabilities who do need help, **while prioritizing** hop on and hop off shuttles from point A to point B.
- Apply common sense judgment in **peak traffic periods** to discern priority passengers.
- Set up personal assistance points with **trained staff** and accessibility features.

⁶ Spence Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications, Senses of place: architectural design for the multisensory mind, article number 46, (2020), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s41235-020-00243-4>

VI LAND TRANSPORT

AREAS

Covering public passenger and travel infrastructure, vehicles, and services, taking place on land; Including urban and interurban facilities relevant to land vehicles, such as buses, car transfers, car rental, railway, metro or trams⁷; Making mobility with autonomy the ultimate goal of transport companies.

ACTIONS

- **Eliminate height** differences and gaps between the platforms and thresholds to access vehicles.
- Use ramps, portable lifts, platforms or safety signage indicating hazards and warnings, as **alternatives**.
- **Signal** tripping hazards with tactile surfaces that cater to different disabilities.
- Provide stops with **easy-to-access**, clearly signposted and weather-proof sheltered platforms.
- Design **spacious stops** with seats at different heights and arm rests, and sciatic support, to facilitate seating and standing.
- Make sure stops have **correct signage** in place, with alternative solutions catering to different disabilities.
- Install **audible and visual signals** on doors to disembark buses, trams or metro wagons.
- Facilitate enough **Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs)**⁸ so that they can be reserved, contacted and used by any person.
- Make possible for **rent-a-car fleets** to include adapted vehicles with hand controls or inverted pedals, to guarantee an autonomous driving experience for all.
- Equip **tourist transport companies** with accessible vehicles (vans, coaches or buses) and trained professional drivers to accommodate passengers with disabilities.
- Ensure that these vehicles are available at the same time and on the same basis as other transfer vehicles, without supposing additional costs for end-users with disabilities.
- Ensure that **railway companies**, station and infrastructure managers, guarantee boarding and alighting of passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility⁹.
- Provide information on services for persons with disabilities and the nearest staffed facilities in accessible formats, at **unstaffed stations**.
- Provide information online and through all booking channels, to ensure that people requiring assistance are aware of unstaffed stations and can understand the alternative routes.

⁷ Urban transport within tourism destinations is a key aspect of the travel experience. It often coincides with land transport but can also comprise water transport, depending on the geographical features of each location.

⁸ Specially designed passenger transport vehicles that provide mobility solutions for individuals who depend on wheelchairs. These vehicles are permanently adapted to carry a wheelchair user, allowing them to enter and travel without leaving their wheelchair.

⁹ Based on Art. 6 UIC IRS 10145:2023 Recommendations for the organisation of assistance services for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (2023).

AREAS

ACTIONS

VII

AIR TRANSPORT

Applying accessibility standards and passenger requirements in air transport infrastructure such as airports and aircraft, and the related facilities, vehicles and services.

- **Collect mandatory information** on passengers' accessibility requirements to coordinate all logistics key to air travel, in accordance with international regulations¹⁰.
- **Educate passengers** to request assistance as early as possible, starting from the booking process.
- Request characteristics of **personal mobility aids**, such as weight, size and battery type, to ensure flight planning and safety, and carriage protocols, including dangerous goods requirements.
- Communicate information on assistance needs by using **four-letter codes**¹¹, supplemented with the use of free text as appropriate.
- Perform boarding and disembarking of passengers through a **low-slope telescopic bridge, avoiding the exclusive use of stairs** to access the aircraft.
- Use mechanical lifting platforms and ramps to board the aircraft, **as alternatives**.
- Ensure airlines and travel agents have the **Passenger Name Record (PNR)** with accurate special service codes (SSR)¹².

VIII

WATER TRANSPORT

Embarking and transporting passengers by sea or fresh water, so end-users can reach their destinations or enjoy leisure activities on board and upon arrival, at each port, without obstacles.

- Develop accessibility protocols for **boarding and disembarking** of ship and boat passengers.
- Collaborate with **ports and local shore excursion agents** to ensure their services attend to passengers with disabilities.
- Make sure to have **accessible coaches** in place for day trips from the ports, to be used both by passengers with or without disability.
- **Implement accessibility** technical criteria when installing gangways, ramps and piers.
- **Minimize the height** or distance gaps between the piers and the vessels.
- Enable **quieter assembly points** during safety drills, low volume entertainment and respite rooms, for adults and children with autism spectrum, and their families.
- Improve access to and on-board experience on river cruises and expedition boats, while bearing in mind their **size and functional limitations**.

¹⁰ IATA 'One Click Away' Best Practices, First Edition, <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/7b3762815ac44a10b83ccf5560c1b308/iata-guidance-on-the-transport-of-mobility-aids-final-feb2023.pdf>

¹¹ Special Service Requests (SSR) uses a four-character IATA code: For example, 1) WCHR Wheelchair assistance required; passenger can walk short distance up or down stairs 2) WCHS Wheelchair assistance required; passenger can walk short distance, but not up or down stairs , or, 3) WCHC Wheelchair required; passenger cannot walk any distance and will require the aisle chair to board. And 4) WCOB On-board aisle wheelchair requested (for use during flight).

¹² As mandated by IATA Resolution 700, available at <https://www.iata.org/en/publications/directories/resolution-directory/>

IX INFORMATION AND SIGNPOSTING

AREAS

Providing updated, reliable and accurate information on the company's services and accessibility features; Determining which channels, media and platforms work best for communication and wayfinding; Offering information on accessible services in accessible formats, using a simple language.

ACTIONS

- Facilitate **accessible web content**, including texts, images, forms, multimedia and mobile Apps that comply with WCAG – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines¹³.
- **Innovate in multimedia**, digital channels, text, contrast, simple reading, tactile and interactive features.
- **Complement public address sound system**¹⁴ with alternative sensory features.
- Ensure timetables and signposting are available in **different languages** and alphabets.
- **Install signage** with both written information and universally recognised symbols, icons and pictograms, especially in large and open areas.
- Design an **intuitive trail** which provides confirmation to all passengers that they are heading in the right direction.
- **Choose colours carefully**, along with other important accessibility features such as appropriate contrasts between the signage materials and the surrounding environment.
- **Validate wayfinding systems** through research, planning and testing to ensure a connected end-to-end journey in busy terminals, as well as ease of identification and navigation for all people.

¹³ WCAG – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines available at <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

¹⁴ PA system is an electronic system comprising microphones, amplifiers, loudspeakers, and related equipment.

AREAS

ACTIONS

X

SECURITY MANAGEMENT

Guaranteeing accessibility of all passengers without reducing safety and security levels; Designing security protocols for passengers and personnel with disabilities that ensure dignity and privacy; Facilitating priority lines for persons with disabilities for security checks.

- Elaborate **maintenance, evacuation and safety** plans for any transport infrastructure, by including people with disabilities throughout the process.
- Follow appropriate **building codes** and regulations to ensure safety, within transport infrastructure and facilities.
- Ensure that passengers with disabilities are aware of their rights to be treated appropriately.
- In the event of an **emergency, provide the same level of notification, instruction and protection** to persons with disabilities as to end-users without disabilities.
- Negotiate security regulations with **government and law enforcement authorities** to diminish distress of passengers with disability when travelling.
- Bear in mind that hearing-enhancement systems, pacemakers, breathing and orthopaedic devices or assistance dogs can have an impact on **security** checks and need to be handled sensitively.
- **Make fingerprint-reading** and biometric devices accessible for users with disabilities.

XI

FEEDBACK AND IMPROVEMENTS

Ensuring a seamless passenger experience and feedback from suppliers and staff; Implementing quality control and deciding on improvements to enhance passengers' wellbeing.

- **Engage end-users** with disabilities to test and provide feedback on accessibility interventions.
- Make sure passengers understand how to obtain relevant information on starting, transfer and final destination points, when **combining different transport modes**¹⁵.
- Facilitate **accessible communication channels** for feedback by customers, personnel and service providers.
- **Revert to customers** in an expedient manner, on the actions taken to address their complaints.
- Identify **hands-on solutions** that further guarantee an efficient and accessible information provision, passengers' autonomy, comfort and safety.
- Set up a corporate-level **committee** entrusted with decision-making on accessibility improvements.

¹⁵ Also known as "intermodal" transport which combines two or more modes within the transport chain.

In collaboration with:

European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

International Union of Railways (UIC)

Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)



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