

Guide to Inclusive Travel



Visit Finland



Foreword

The goal of inclusive travel is to ensure that travel experiences are equally accessible to all, regardless of age, sexual orientation, religion, culture and special needs.

Accessible travel requires equal hospitality to all and a constant effort to develop travel services, destinations and products that serve all consumer groups. Everyone should be free to experience and achieve the widest possible spectrum of travel experiences, equally and independently. Non-discriminating, inclusive travel contributes to an open, equal and engaging society and promotes the goals of sustainable development.

Long-term dedication to product development and quality assurance produce happier customers, higher profitability and an attractive service portfolio. With an increasingly competitive travel market, key factors for success include sustainable practices, utilisation of new digital opportunities, data-driven customer understanding and development of year-round services. This guide is meant to help you understand the needs of different target groups, which should make your business more profitable, more competitive and more in line with your sustainability goals.

Customer orientation and attention to service alone are not enough if your company or staff don't have the skills to properly serve various target groups or identify their specific needs. This guide intends to show how you can include different target groups in your customer service, digital platforms, physical spaces and other services. We also provide various perspectives and concrete tools for meeting travellers as equals as well as communicating with your target groups.

This guide is primarily meant for travel operators who want to promote the values of equal travel. We discuss different target groups as travellers, i.e. customers, rather than as employees, for example. Note also that this guide doesn't provide a comprehensive description of every special target group or all their specific needs, as we are focused on providing information related to travel.

For equal travel!

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Image: LUKA project

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1. Introduction to inclusive travel

What is equal and inclusive travel?

In a just society, personal qualities such as place of birth, skin colour, religion or disability cannot affect an individual's ability to live a full and meaningful life. After all, basic human rights are the same for everyone. Inclusivity is a philosophy that promotes equal access to active participation in society.

In fact, inclusivity is a global trend that Finnish travel companies and destinations can no longer ignore.

Diversity is increasingly seen as a core competence for businesses. It simply means that everyone is valued and respected just as they are, regardless of their individual characteristics. To achieve this, you need an inclusive mindset that permeates the company's business management, product development, human resources, marketing and communication – the entire workplace culture.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY REPORT



Visit Espoo's Sustainable Travel Road Map 2021–2030 highlights the theme **Travel belongs to all** and includes steps that facilitate diverse and inclusive travel.

Inclusive travel is non-discriminating and accessible travel where all customers can use the services and have experiences on an equal basis. Inclusive travel takes all target groups equally into account. This requires empathy, a comprehensive assessment of the company's operations and efforts to ensure that different user groups are considered in all stages of the customer journey. Implementing inclusivity requires that the needs of different target groups are identified and taken into account – followed by determined action.

Equally accessible services, products and environments ensure that everyone can feel involved and participate equally at the travel destination. Promoting non-discriminating, accessible travel is an integral part of Visit Finland's sustainable development goals.

Additionally, inclusivity is featured prominently in the European Union's measures, Finland's government platform and the Finnish national travel strategy.

The Finnish tourism strategy, Achieving more together – sustainable growth and renewal in Finnish tourism, aims to create world-class Finnish destinations that stem from local communities and cultures, comply with the principles of sustainability and are economically sustainable, customer-oriented and mindful of their Arctic surroundings. This requires the adoption of responsible know-how and procedures – both in travel companies and destinations – and therefore inclusivity in travel as well. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2019.)

Why do travel companies and destinations need to worry about inclusivity?

If you have no disabilities and are not part of a minority, for instance, it may be difficult to understand how many are affected by inclusivity. According to the World Health Organization (2011), accessible services are needed by approximately 15% of the world's population, senior citizens and people with disabilities included. This number gets even higher, up to 40%, when you include people with a temporary need for accessible services. This includes, among others, persons recovering from an accident and families with small children. Travellers also represent numerous different religions as well as gender and sexual minorities: for example, the number of Muslim tourists has increased strongly in recent decades (UNWTO 2012, CrescentRating 2017) and the number of LGBTQ+ families has tripled in Finland in the 2010s (Pietiläinen & Pohjanpää 2019). A lack of access to information or services as well as feelings of insecurity can make it difficult – or even impossible – for these groups to travel. A travel company or destination can address these problems by making an effort to understand the needs of these target groups.

Diversity and inclusivity are assets for travel companies and destinations – they even elevate the company brand and image. Ignoring diversity can

at worst exclude both customers and potential employees. Understanding and acknowledging special needs in your marketing, communications and services will improve market performance, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Paying attention to diversity in human resources, such as recruitment and staff dynamics, affects many things: employer profile, employee happiness and turnover rate and the company's ability to take different perspectives into account, for instance.

With special groups, their choice of destination depends on their needs. If a group, such as a family, has a single person with special needs, the group as a whole will adapt to these needs. When inclusivity and diversity are considered in every aspect of your operations, more and more customers will feel welcome and safe to choose your services. Even small changes can improve your customer service. Investing in inclusive operations can also help you reach new target groups and markets. A broad customer base boosts your competitiveness and flexibility in turbulent times. Services, events and products tailored to various target groups also help with seasonal variability.

This is also a strong value decision: who do we include and who do we exclude? In short, everyone benefits from a more inclusive operation. By increasing inclusivity, both the destination and travel company help create a more open society for all and fight inequality at the individual level.

This guide explains how human diversity is reflected in society and helps you understand the specific needs of the groups that benefit from

inclusive travel. We provide tips on taking special needs into account when designing and developing services and integrating inclusivity into your communications and marketing. Our objective is to provide practical and concrete advice on incorporating inclusive thinking into your business operations. The guide also provides a set of best practices and tips. At the end, you will also find a list of different guides and instructions as well as a comprehensive list of sources if you want to learn more.



Image: Petri Jauhiainen, Visit Finland



Image: Tatiana Syrikova, Pexels

2. Customers and markets

Inclusive travel affects all markets as well as all people at some point in their life. You might say that the inclusive travel market includes the whole world, Finland and your own region. We're talking about millions of potential customers who dream of new experiences just as everyone else. Traveller groups are becoming more and more personalised, and businesses need to evolve accordingly to thrive. By accounting for human diversity and the special needs of customers from different backgrounds, you're offering travellers a unique opportunity to experience the safety and equality of Finland.

People with disabilities

A disabled person has some physical, mental or intellectual disability which places limitations on their mobility, seeing, hearing or understanding, for instance. Their limitations are caused by obstacles in their built environment, such as oppressive infrastructure and attitudes, which can make common activities challenging for a disabled person. They may need help with moving around and communicating, for example. In addition to their main disability, people can also have other limitations caused by associated disabilities or diseases from a very wide spectrum.

People with mobility impairments, i.e. people with reduced mobility, make up the largest group of people

with disabilities. Their disability may be caused by birth defects, injury, amputation or chronic illness. Restricted growth can also cause major limitations on mobility. People with mobility impairments use mobility aids, such as a wheelchair, walker or crutches, either all or some of the time. Accessible structures are therefore very important for them (see chapter 4. **Developing accessible services and products** on page 15).

People with visual impairments or blind and partially sighted people face challenges in their everyday life because of their reduced eyesight. Both blind and partially sighted people are considered visually impaired. The most common limitations caused by visual impairment are experienced with orientation, i.e. navigation, assessing distances, detection of heights and inability to see in low light, for instance. If visual impairments are not considered in the design and construction of spaces, the risk of fall, collision or injury is increased. Many visually impaired people can manage everyday life, activities and even travel independently with the help of a guide dog.



Image: Sini Merikallio, Vastavalo

As the name suggests, assistance dogs assist people. They may be able to remove socks, search for items, close doors, switch off lights and even pick up a pin from the floor. Guide dogs guide people by recognising traffic light signals and keeping their human on the sidewalk. Pet bans cannot apply to guide or assistance dogs by law.

People with hearing impairments have some level or type of hearing impairment, from mild hearing loss to complete deafness. People with hearing impairments may use hearing aids or other instruments, such as an induction loop system. Lip reading is also used by some. Hearing aids help their users with communication, benefit quality of life and increase sense of security. Deaf people (and some people with impaired hearing) use sign language, which is usually their mother tongue.

People with learning disabilities or intellectually disabled people face challenges with cognition. They have difficulties learning and understanding, therefore requiring more time than usual with new things. The extent of learning disabilities can vary greatly between individuals: a person with a slight learning disability

usually manages daily life quite independently, whereas a difficult learning disability requires constant support and supervision. Many people with learning disabilities also use various aids.

People with disabilities are often thought to travel only with groups of other disabled people. This is incorrect. Disabled people do travel and want to travel with their family and friends or even alone – either solo or with an assistant. It is important for a disabled person to know which activities they can participate in and what arrangements can be made to help, rather than being told what they are excluded from. As a rule, always ask the person in question about their abilities. A disabled person is first and foremost an individual and you should not make any assumptions about them.

LGBTQ+ community

The LGBTQ+ community is a group of people from different sexual and gender minorities: lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals and transgender and queer people, which form the initialism LGBTQ. There are other versions of the abbreviation, such as LGBTIQ, where the letter I refers to intersex, and LGBT. For clarity, this guide uses the abbreviation LGBTQ+, as used by Visit Finland. The gender spectrum refers to gender being more diverse than just two sexes.

Although the diversity of sexual orientation and gender is increasingly more mainstream in Finland, these minorities still face daily discrimination in many countries. Some countries don't treat sexual and gender minorities as fairly as Finland, and not all travellers know that Finland is a relatively safe destination for LGBTQ+ people. Due to fear of discrimination, violence and harassment, some people hide themselves and even avoid travel if they don't have prior knowledge of the prevailing attitudes in their destination. This is why promoting inclusive travel through images and text can help you reach a whole host of LGBTQ+ customers.

Services targeted to the LGBTQ+ community are internationally marketed as gay-friendly and LGBT-friendly. The Finnish equivalent is typically "sateenkaariystävällinen". The most important customer groups include couples without children and LGBTQ+ families, i.e. families with children where one or more parents identify as LGBTQ+. However, LGBTQ+ customers come from all socio-demographic groups and usually travel with other people without highlighting their own identity. It is critical to work through your company's attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community, train your staff to consider the diversity of genders and sexuality and to communicate about your LGBTQ+ friendliness with text and images.

If you want to focus on catering to LGBTQ+ customers, you can also develop products specifically for them. These can include various cruises and activities as well as wellbeing, cultural and senior trips – services that appeal to most everyone, but targeted to LGBTQ+ customers. Group trips to various LGBTQ+ events, such as Pride events or sports events like EuroGames and Gay World Games, are also popular.



Image: Satu Mali/lifeof2men/LGBTQ

Religions and ideologies

Religion can mean a wide range of faiths and doctrines. They need to be considered because of the customer needs they create, as religion has a significant impact on people's actions, expectations and hopes when they travel. Members of the same faith may vary greatly in their practices, but by acknowledging and understanding the main tenets of different religions and the reasons behind their practices, it's easier to meet their special needs. In addition to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are among the world's most notable religions.

Islam is a world religion that more than one billion people follow. A person who follows Islam is a Muslim. Muslim travellers prioritise following the main rules of Islam, so they are typically most interested in so-called Muslim-friendly

destinations where times of prayer and halal food, among other things, are taken into account (halal means pure, permitted – suitable according to Islam). Services that follow the rules of Islam even more strictly are marketed as halal-friendly. The Muslim month of fasting, Ramadan, comes with its own set of rules. Note that the time of Ramadan varies year to year, as the Islamic calendar is based on lunar cycles and its year has 354 or 355 days.

The demand for Muslim-friendly and halal-friendly services has created an entire halal travel sector and a set of internationally recognised standards. For instance, the internationally renowned [CrescentRating](#) service has published an online tool that classifies hotels and restaurants based on their halal-friendliness. CrescentRating also produces data on halal travel and Muslim travellers and creates marketing campaigns for destinations.

CRESCENTRATING'S HALAL-FRIENDLY TRAVEL CRITERIA

crescent rating THE WORLD'S LEADING AGENCY ON HALAL TRAVEL LOGIN

Halal Food facilities
To what extent is Halal food available? Does the hotel offer:

- 1 List of Halal Restaurants in the vicinity?
- 2 Halal meals and menus?
- 3 Halal items in the mini-bar?
- 4 Halal certified Kitchen
- 5 Restaurants that are all Halal Certified
- 6 Only Halal Food regulation on entire premises?

Salaath (prayer) facilities
What Salaath facilities are provided? Does the hotel offer:

- 1 List of Mosques in the vicinity?
- 2 Answers to queries regarding prayer times & direction?
- 3 Qurans, prayer mats or prayer time tables
- 4 Qiblah marked in rooms?
- 5 Every facility for a Muslim guests to pray? >

Services during Ramadan
To what extent is Halal food available? Does the hotel offer:

- 1 Basic necessities to breakfast? (Dates & Water)
- 2 Iftar during Ramadan?
- 3 Suhoor & Iftar buffets?
- 4 Halal room service? Halal room service? Halal restaurants in the area?
- 5 Meals for Suhoor & Iftar and transport to local mosques?

CrescentRating, an expert in halal-friendly travel, has created [their criteria for halal travel](#). [Halaltrip](#) is a website run by CrescentRating that provides Muslim travellers with ideas and information about their destinations. Reservations are also supported. The site contains Muslim-friendly city guides for Helsinki, Turku and Tampere. In addition, Vaasa has a short description and there are a few blog posts about Helsinki.

Hinduism is a group of very diverse religions and sects. It is the third-most practiced religion in the world after Christianity and Islam. Practicing Hinduism revolves around various daily rituals, meditation and yoga. Hinduism originates from India, and it's the nation's main religion. Everyday life in India is still strongly tied to the caste system, even though it has been abolished by the state. The caste system can affect an Indian traveller's feelings towards group travel if members of different castes are included, for instance.

Other widely practiced religions and moral doctrines that affect the customs, values and expectations of different customers include Judaism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Jewish people have similar religious food practices as Muslims. In Buddhism, meditation is central, as it is in Hinduism. Confucianism is a moral doctrine that

guides the values of Taiwanese and Chinese people. Considering different religions and their practices can help you better serve more customers.

Some people travel for religious reasons. Examples of religious travel include pilgrimages, trips to holy sites and visits to churches, mosques and temples. Holy sites also attract people of other religions and non-believers because of their cultural and architectural importance, aesthetic beauty or historical value. In many Finnish regions, the local church can be the most architecturally and historically significant building, serving as a cultural site and destination for travellers.



Image: cottonbro, Pexels

3. Accessibility in a nutshell

Accessibility in its different forms is an important prerequisite for a just society: it is needed so everyone has the ability to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of society. The word “accessibility” actually includes multiple meanings that are usually discussed together. There is usually no need to make a distinction between them in everyday operations.

Physical accessibility means equal consideration of all people in physical environments, entailing the design and construction of built environments. Accessible buildings and structures offer services to more customer groups, such as people with disabilities, families with children or people using a walker.

Digital accessibility often refers to digital environments, but accessibility also applies to information, services and applications. This aspect of accessibility aims to make sure that everyone can use your website and understand its contents equally. The accessibility of websites

depends on the clarity of content, visual design, technical implementation and usability, among other things.

Social accessibility means taking all visitors into account equally regardless of their appearance, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, age or background. In practice, this applies to customer service situations where, for instance, prejudices and attitudes can affect the staff’s behaviour. With digital services, social accessibility includes imagery that reflects human diversity and language that does not contribute to stereotypes.

Accessibility in its different forms must be integrated into the entire service chain, from travel and destinations to accommodation, ancillary and program services and communication. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link: if the destination has accessible trails but the information about them is not accessible, the chain is broken from the outset.



Image: Mikhail Nilov, Pexels

4. Developing accessible services and products

This chapter covers transport to the destination, accessible structures, such as places to visit and accommodation, and accessible environments, such as routes and paths.

Transport

One of the most significant problems related to travel that disabled people face is not being able to reach their destination or service venue on their own and having difficulties finding information on transport services. This is why it's so important that your website provides information on accessing your venue, including what accessible transport services and other services are available. Our chapter on digital accessibility details how you can create a website where information is accessible for all.

In the long term, you can learn what types of accessible transport services are needed in your destination, plan how to provide them and decide on their provider. For example, rental companies should have cars with hand control equipment – or at least inform their customers whether they can mount their own hand controls. Ideally, removable hand controls should be provided for rent.

Accessibility in accommodation, places to visit and built environments

An accessibly-built environment requires no special solutions for accessibility-related problems, as the facilities are suitable for everyone. Good guidance helps all who use the space. Ramps are suitable for everyone, stairs are not. This is one example of how senior citizens and families with children – people who use mobility aids or baby carriages – also benefit from accessible environments. Eliminating doorsteps and stairs also helps with deliveries, cleaning and maintenance. When

accessibility has been designed and implemented well, it doesn't cost extra, but improves usability and the customer experience.

ACCESSIBILITY SURVEYS

[The Land Use and Building Act \(132/1999\)](#) defines the criteria for accessibility in built environments. These are complemented by the [Finnish Building Code](#) and the [ESKEH guidance and survey method](#) from the Finnish Accessibility Centre ESKE. When developing built environments, it's best to conduct **an accessibility survey**.

The ESKEH survey method accounts for all issues related to movement, vision, hearing, understanding and communication. It provides reliable, objective and commensurable information on the accessibility of built environments, nature trails and venues. An accessibility survey should be conducted for small changes as well as larger construction projects. Even minor repairs and changes can significantly improve the customer experience and usability.

Environments can also be mapped through the four main senses – hearing, vision, touch and smell. You can use [a checklist](#) (only in Finnish) to help identify things that produce sensory irritation and things that are particularly pleasing to the senses. This helps you plan spaces that are more kind to the senses. (SAMK, Autism Finland & HSP Finland 2014.)

WHEN REQUESTING BIDS FOR AN ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY, PLEASE NOTE:

- Check trained providers from the register maintained by the [Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities](#). In your request for bids, describe as accurately as possible
 - the venue and its size (surface area, number of rooms, structures and buildings, purpose, website, digital operations)
 - the purposes of the accessibility survey
 - what you expect to receive (written report with development proposals, cost estimate)
- You may state that the provider should
 - be trained for accessibility surveying
 - have previous experience from similar surveys
 - have sufficient references for accessibility surveying from previous projects that match your needs

Private service providers and other organisations conduct various types of user inspections and accessibility reviews. During accessibility evaluations or audits, the service provider assesses the technical accessibility of your services according to the WCAG 2.1 criteria (see **Digital accessibility on page 32**). These services are useful for developing services, but they

cannot replace formal accessibility surveys.

Information related to accessibility, such as door widths and threshold heights, should be reported on the company website even if they do not meet the official criteria. This way, customers can assess in advance whether the venue is suitable for them.

Tip: Get the “[Yhdenvertaista palvelua kaikille](#)” badge (only in Finnish) from the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities. It’s easy to do and provides visibility while improving the accessibility of your facilities, services and products.

Accessibility in nature

Nature has a proven wealth of benefits for wellbeing, and it’s no wonder people are recreating in nature more and more. Finland’s appeal on the international markets is largely based on our nature. If you want travellers to take an interest in your destination, you must provide reasons to stay at your destination specifically. It follows that activities in nature must be offered to a wider range of customer groups. This means that the accessibility of trails and structures of various types and levels must also be promoted. Your communications need to address the needs of target groups that use accessible services. High-quality, accessible trail information is also an essential part of accessible nature experiences.

[The Nature ESKEH](#) method is used to survey the accessibility of nature trails and their structures, such as campsites, outdoor toilets or shelters (ESKE 2014). It’s

complemented by the [demanding accessible nature trail](#) survey method, which aims to promote the diversity of accessible trails ([Finnish Paralympic Committee 2020](#)). These methods help identify problems with trails. Additionally, the latter method tells you how to write good route descriptions, when to cooperate with others and details best practices for creating accessible trails.



The Finnish Standards Association SFS renewed their standards for outdoor and physical exercise signage in 2020 and added accessible nature trails and demanding accessible nature trails to their selection of signs (Finnish Paralympic Committee 2020).

DESCRIPTION OF ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

TOP Kesänkijärven vaativa esteetön reitti

Luontopolut ja teemareitit - Pallas-Yllästunturin kansallispuisto



Tästä sisällöstä vastaa
Metsähallitus



REITTI MUITA TIETOJA REITTIOHJE SAAPUMINEN OPAAAT JA KARTAT AJANKOHTAISTA

Pätkoi jylhien tunturien syleilyssä, tervehdi tuttavallista kuukkeliä ja nauti tulistelun tunnelmasta järven rannalla. Tämä helppo reitti soveltuu myös lapsiperheille.

Pakkaa eväät reppuun ja lähdet retkeilemään Kesänkijärven laavulle. Jylhien tunturien ympäröimällä helpolla retkeilyreitillä näet Lapin hienoita luontoa. Taukopaikalla kannattaa kuitenkin olla tarkkana, jos ei halua jakaa eväitään rohkeiden kuukkeliensa kanssa.

Kesäyön aurinko kultaan maiseman ja jyrkkärinteiset Kesänkitunturi ja Kellostapuli kuvastuvat järven pinnasta. Reitin keskelle jäävää Kesänkijärveä reunustavat aarmimetsät, purot ja rehevät lähteet. Taigametsien salaisuuksista saa lisätietoa luontopolun opastetaloista.

Pysäköintialueelta (ei merkittyjä inva-palkkoja) lähtevä kivituhkapolku esteettömälle laavulle on 1,7 km pitkä ja kokomatkalta 1,5 m leveä. Edestakainen reitti kulkee pääosin tasaissa maastoissa noin 50 metriä järven rannasta.

Reitin haastavimmissa kohdissa pituuskaltevuutta on 14 % ja sivuttaiskaltevuutta 8 %. Lisäksi juuri ennen taukopaikkaa reitti on kulunut ja on sivuttaiskaltevuudeltaan 11 % Reitillä on myös lyhyehköjä osuuksia, joiden sivuttaiskaltevuudet vaihtelevat välillä 7-10 % ja pituuskaltevuudet välillä 8-14 %, sekä 30 m pitkä osuus, jossa ei ole suoja-reunasta.

Kesänkijärven päässä reitti haarautuu. Kahvilalle vie 150 m pitkä esteetön ja 1,3 m leveä puupohjainen reitti, joka alkumatkasta haarautuu edelleen laiturille. Puupohjainen reitti laiturille on esteetön, mutta laiturin liitoskohdissa on kaksi 12 cm rakoja, jotka voivat vaikeuttaa kulkemista.

Risteyksestä kuljetaan myös 100 m päähän esteettömälle laavulle. Luiska puuliiterille ja esteettömälle wc:lle on jyrkkä (11 %). Puuliiterissä on kynnyks, mikä voi hankaloittaa puuliiterin käyttöä. Risteyksessä ei ole opasteita laiturille tai laavulle

Reitti on kuvailtu yhteen suuntaan pysäköintialueelta Kesänkijärven laavulle.

Vaativuusluokka **Vaativa**

Pituus 3,4 km ↔

Arvioitu kesto 1:00h ⌚

Nousumetrit 11 m ↕

Laskumetrit 9 m ▼

Edestakainen reitti Kauniit maisemat

Virkokkeita saatavilla Sopii perheille ja lapsille

Geologisia nähtävyyksiä

Kiinnostavaa kasvistoa

Kiinnostavaa eläimistöä Esteetön

Lastenvaunuille soveltuva

AJANKOHTAISTA

-4 °C

HUHEKUNNA 3 °C | -4 °C

KESÄVIEKONKA 3 °C | -3 °C

Retin alkupiste

katka sääennusteeseen

powered by MetGIS

Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park has created excellent descriptions for their accessible trails – albeit only in Finnish at the time. [The Kesänkijärvi demanding accessible nature trail's](#) description starts with the experience. The title already establishes that it is a demanding accessible nature trail. The route description includes the most demanding sections (slope angle, chokes, terrain) and their location. The most challenging areas are also marked on the map. The 15 images in the photo gallery give an idea of the experience and provide necessary information.

Assistive technology in nature

Developing accessible trails, producing useful route descriptions and providing rental services for mobility aids will create conditions where accessible nature and adventure travel can flourish. Accessible nature experiences and the availability of rental equipment will in turn increase the demand for ancillary and program services.

Mobility aids allow active users to travel independently, help people with significant disabilities move with an assistant and allow even severely disabled users get outside with the help of assistants. Typical mobility aids include walkers, different types of wheelchairs, electric mopeds and assistive canes. In addition, there is a wide range of equipment available for rent and purchase to enable outdoor activities and to improve the accessibility of nature travel destinations (Tauria, Tero & Tulasalo 2019). They cover different types of disabilities,

different age groups from children to seniors, different seasons and different outdoor sports. Electric mobility aids help disabled people move on more demanding trails and travel longer distances. They also allow people of different abilities and levels of fitness to be active together, even beyond accessible trails.

A regionally shared stock of mobility aids and rental services can make sense if the demand for equipment is not constant. Basic winter equipment is a good place to start, as the equipment is simple, easy to use and suitable for more than one people. For example, small skis that are attached to a wheelchair make it easier to move around in snow or slush. A ski sled can be towed just like a normal ahkio sledge. Equipment for winter use is often much more affordable than summertime equipment with wheels.

WHERE TO RENT ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- [Respecta](#) rents electric adjustable beds, personal lifts and wheelchairs for both indoor and outdoor activities, among other things.
- [Fystek Oy](#) (only in Finnish) is one of the few companies that recycle assistive technology. They sell new as well as refurbished aids.
- Inclusion Finland KVTL's [Malike](#) (only in Finnish) service offers an extensive range of mobility aids for both winter and summer.
- The [SOLIA](#) (only in Finnish) applied exercise aid service rents bikes, wheelchairs and aids for winter and outdoor exercise among other things.
- [Välineet.fi](#) (only in Finnish) is an online service for Finnish providers of mobility aids and equipment for sports and recreation for people with disabilities. In addition to Malike and SOLIA, the service includes cities and other organisations.

Both Malike and SOLIA can provide advice and training for using the equipment.

3 TIPS FOR USING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

1. Find out what kind of assistance technology is available for rent.
2. Add the information to your website. It's equally important to notify users if mobility aids are not available.
3. See if cooperation and joint purchases are possible in your region.

Ancillary and program services

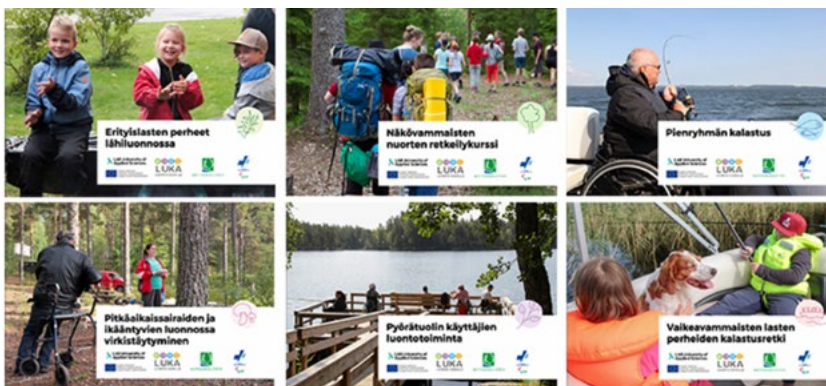
There are very few ancillary and program services for people with disabilities. However, potential customers want equally various services as anyone else, from aurora hunting to photography safaris, cycling, fishing and winter outings. Your imagination is the limit. There is demand for both short trips and multi-day packages as well as independent and guided tours.

Service providers can start with one group and make it

their specialty. When planning excursions, it is important to consider how much distance the customers can cover, how many breaks are needed, what kind of assistance is needed and what kinds of ancillary and program services are possible in the environment. You need to learn as much as you can about the target group. You can and should learn from people who are experts by experience.

Wheelchairtravel.org has conducted their Accessible Travel Survey (<https://wheelchairtravel.org/accessible-travel-study-2020-lessons-for-destinations-travel-providers/>) in 2020. It contains a wealth of tips on serving various groups with disabilities.

PRODUCT CARD TEMPLATES FOR VARIOUS TARGET GROUPS



The Paralympia website has a selection of product card templates in Finnish for various target groups. The cards provide information about essential requirements, things to ask from the customers and considerations with mobility, for example. Safety and pricing are also addressed.

[Erytyslasten perheet lähiluonnossa](#)
[Näkövammaisten nuorten retkeilykurssi](#)
[Pienryhmän kalastus](#)
[Pitkäkaissairaiden ja ikääntyvien luonnossa virkistyttyminen](#)

[Pyörätuolin käyttäjien luontotoiminta](#)
[Vaikeavammaisten lasten perheiden kalastusretki](#)
[Kävelevien aktiiviliikkujien retkeily](#)
[Hyvinvointiviikonloppu talvimaisemissa](#)

If a disabled person needs an assistant, they will arrange for one themselves. You have the right to bill the assistant as one customer, but be willing to negotiate if necessary. You can utilise pricing templates created for families with children, for instance.

In principle, the service provider cannot perform the duties of a personal assistant, as it requires sufficient

experience with the disability in question. The most important thing with customer service is that the target group is addressed according to their needs. This can mean using plain language, showing images or describing the environment. You can use wireless audio sources to mark the location of an outdoor toilet, wood shed or tent.

Creating products for special groups

Your product information should be illustrated and explained so that everyone knows who they are suitable for. If your product card addresses suitability or target groups, you can describe how the product is adapted for different categories of disability – or more simply, how persons with reduced mobility can enjoy it, for example. Catering to all special groups can seem challenging, especially at the beginning. You might not have enough experience to describe your products' suitability for

every possible type of disability. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day! You can do things in stages. You can also specialise in serving a specific customer group.

- **Suitability: All**
- **Accessibility: No**

Do not define your products as "suitable for all" if they are not accessible. People who need accessible services will inevitably feel left out.

ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL PACKAGE TO ICELAND

Introduction	The Holiday	Itinerary	Dates & Prices	The Hotel	Transport	Enquire
--------------	-------------	-----------	----------------	-----------	-----------	---------



Iceland is a place of stark beauty and remote tranquility with its vast landscapes, towering mountains, roaring waterfalls and bright green valleys. You will be surrounded by unique and distinctive natural wonder for a holiday to remember.

Enter a timeless world of warmth, well-being and wonder in the heart of a volcanic frontier. Indulge in Icelandic culture and be in awe of everything Iceland has to offer. Our expert Limitless team has pre-vetted all excursions and the surrounding area for a perfect holiday package without the worry of accessibility. From thrilling excursions to glaciers and volcanoes, to relaxing breaks taking in wondrous waterfalls and soothing hot springs. Let Limitless create your ideal Iceland holiday, with professional carers always on hand.

With vehicles suitable for wheelchairs to be secured into place, and a fully wheelchair accessible hotel with wet room bathrooms, our Iceland tour is truly an incredible holiday that you won't want to miss. Mobility equipment can be hired, and care to suit your individual needs is also available. This time of year is prime time to see the unbelievable northern lights for an unforgettable experience to tell the family. However, please note that Iceland is very cold so remember to wrap up!

The Holiday

- 3* accommodation
- Breakfast each day
- Accessible airport Transfers
- Limitless Travel Tour Manager
- Group Support as standard
- Northern lights tour
- Private tour of The Golden Circle
- Entry to the Blue Lagoon
- Guide to the famous golden waterfall and Kerio volcano
- Accessible airport Transfers
- Greet and meet at the airport
- For the whole journey a private accessible transportation with electric lift and Certified English speaking guide provided



The Limitless Travel agency offers an accessible version of their [Northern Lights of Iceland](#) travel package. The description focuses on experiences first and then moves on to more detail about accessibility.

Success with accessible travel requires cooperation. While individual companies can develop their own services and operating environment, it's difficult to gain wider attention with potential customers alone. For example, if your region has plenty of accessible

services, customers have an easier time choosing it as their destination. Collaboration is also needed with municipalities and the Finnish Forest and Park Service, for instance, as accessible nature and scenic areas are of interest to many travellers.

When developing products, a number of things should be considered about the destination:

- Does the region have
 - Accessible trails, structures and information?
 - Accessible ancillary and program services?
 - Accessible places to visit?
 - Accessible transport services?
- What equipment can you rent locally?
- What can businesses do together?
- What has the regional travel organisation done for inclusive travel?

Additionally, you should examine the accessibility of your own services. Some good questions include:

- How accessible are my premises and equipment?
- What are the values and attitudes of my company? What about the staff?
- Is your staff able to meet people from different special groups and identify their basic needs?
- How have I communicated about my accessible services?
- Which special groups could I serve better at the moment?

These issues help determine what kind of accessible service packages your company can implement immediately, what investments and resources are needed to achieve greater accessibility and what opportunities there are for cooperation. If your region has no accessible nature trails, but there are accessible

cultural destinations, it's a good idea to start with cultural services. Accessible products can be designed and tested with people who have different disabilities. This way, you can discover who your services are suitable for at the moment and how they can be developed to suit everyone.

Tip: Group financing (yritysryhmärahoitus) from the Rural Development Program is a suitable financial instrument for developing accessible travel. It allows you to acquire customer understanding, develop services and products and take your business to international marketplaces. It also enables cooperation regionally and beyond.

5. Developing services and products for LGBTQ+ customers

Most people in the LGBTQ+ community want services that are above all free from judgement, discrimination or inappropriate treatment. When developing services, it's important to be critical of your current standards, stereotypes and assumptions. Aim to provide ancillary and program services for all. For example, the heteronormative family concept does not apply to LGBTQ+ families. Their parents can be of the same sex or there can be more than two parents. You should consider this with your pricing for families, for instance. Additionally, LGBTQ+-friendly services must use inclusive language that does not discriminate against sexual or gender minorities (see section **Inclusive communications on page 28**).

As a service provider, you must ensure the safety of your premises and attitudes. It's important, for example, to plan in advance how to deal with inappropriate behaviour or threatening situations and to train your staff to act accordingly. Gendered toilets and dressing rooms for women and men can create feelings of insecurity: which room should you use if you don't unambiguously identify as a woman or a man? Toilets can be made unisex by

simply changing the signs to say only "WC" or "Unisex toilet". If this cannot be done, you can think of other solutions to ensure that your facilities are suitable for all genders.

Categorising your services and products according to gender may also unintentionally exclude some customer groups, but sometimes gender-specific solutions may be very necessary indeed. For instance, Muslims often require that the services and facilities for women and men are separated (see **Developing services and products for different religious groups on page 24**). Sometimes you can also justify targeting your product exclusively to the LGBTQ+ community, for instance, which makes it easier for some to try new services or experiences. This can all help you reach new audiences. But in these cases, also remember that the LGBTQ+ community includes a diverse range of people whose needs, wishes and interests vary. You could, for example, consider more specific targeting for transgender and intersex travellers, children of LGBTQ+ families, different age groups or for people from sexual and gender minorities who have disabilities.

The Rainbow Rights project, organised by the Ministry of Justice, has published the **Tilaa moninaisuudelle!** guide which includes a checklist for developing user-friendly services and products for the LGBTQ+ community:

1. You know the basic facts and terms
2. You acquire and update in-depth information specific to your field
3. Your facilities have gender-neutral toilets and other necessary facilities
4. Your forms and data systems embrace diversity
5. You have an Equality Plan that is enforced and evaluated
6. Your guidelines for preventing and tackling discrimination are known to all
7. LGBTQ+ people are included in product development
8. Your internal and external communication about LGBTQ+ sensitivity is comprehensive
9. Your services are customer-driven and respectful of personal autonomy and privacy
10. Any problems related to inequality are reported

(Karvinen & Venesmäki 2019, 34.)

6. Developing services and products for different religious groups

Developing services and products for different religious groups mostly deals with food and food-related restrictions, facilities for prayer and targeting your marketing and communications. You have to make an informed decision on the extent to which you want to facilitate the needs of different religious groups. Whatever you decide, you should provide information about the range of your services on your website. It's a good idea to also tell if you cannot provide a certain service.

Accommodation

Both Muslims and Hindus have a broad understanding of family: in addition to the nuclear family, grandparents, aunts, and cousins are included as well. Family groups can go up to 20 or 30 people, and they often want to stay on the same floor or in rooms that can be connected. You can designate a space for prayer, religious practice, yoga and meditation. A tranquil space in nature can also work.

For Muslim travellers, you should mark the direction of prayer, or qibla, since Muslims should always pray facing towards the Kaaba in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca. You can also provide prayer mats for your customers. It is recommended that women and children have their own separate space from men in your lobby. The minibar must be alcohol-free. Your facilities, especially bathrooms and toilets, must be very clean, as cleanliness is of the highest priority to Muslims. Muslims cannot enter the bathroom barefoot, so providing slippers they can use instead of shoes is a good idea. Information about nearby mosques and halal restaurants can also be valuable. For more information about the special needs of Muslim travellers, CrescentRating's *Faith-Based Service Needs 1.0 and 2.0*, which covers accommodation, food and activities.

Food and restaurants

Different religions have specific diets, habits and restrictions. For instance, Hindus consider the cow a holy animal, so do not offer beef to them. The majority of Indians are either vegetarian or vegan. This also applies to Buddhists. Vegan and vegetarian diets are increasingly popular with other customer groups as well, making the availability of vegan and vegetarian options a major consideration when choosing restaurants. However, don't make assumptions, as sometimes people change their habits when they travel, including their diet. Therefore it's worth asking about diets in advance, especially with groups, and checking once more when the group arrives.

Followers of the Hindu sect of Jainism may travel with their own chef, but according to Finnish law, they cannot be admitted into your kitchen facilities without a Finnish Hygiene Passport. In these cases, the best option can be renting an apartment with a kitchen. This way, the chef can stay with the group and prepare their food. If you want to develop your food and restaurant services to better suit your Indian guests, we recommend researching Indian cooking and customs – The Culture Trip is a good place to start (<https://theculturetrip.com/asia/india/articles/india-dining-etiquette-the-dos-and-donts/>).

The Muslim diet follows the religious doctrines of Islam which dictate that some foods – alcohol, pork and non-halal meat, for example – are banned, or haram. The food allowed for Muslims is halal. The key to their diet is cleanliness and avoiding contamination, so halal food must not even come into contact with prohibited ingredients. The following foods are all allowed: fruit, vegetables, cereals, dairy, fish and halal meat, of which mutton is the most popular. Although all Muslim

travellers need halal food, their preferences vary: most people want to try and experience local dishes, others prefer sticking to the rules.

Ramadan affects Muslims’ mealtimes. During Ramadan, food, drink, tobacco or other stimulants should not be consumed between sunrise and sunset. If Ramadan falls in the middle of the summer, Muslims can agree to follow the times of sunrise and sunset in Mecca or in their country of origin, for example.

Jewish food traditions are very similar in that they are based on foods that are allowed, kosher. This requires that the food’s origin and handling comply with Jewish traditions. Certain foods, most notably pork and shellfish, are prohibited. There are rituals involving slaughter, and all blood must be carefully removed. Meat and dairy cannot be mixed or served during the same meal. Not all Jewish communities follow these rules strictly, but Orthodox Jews, for example, only eat certified kosher products.

Organising program and activities

In general, all travellers want to experience the local culture, but you can also plan and target your ancillary and program services for different religious groups. For example, Muslim travellers often want separate services for men and women. Sometimes religious practices can affect timetables and prayer times need to be considered.

Ideas for different programs and activities can also be drawn from foreign cultures. Hinduism is closely associated with yoga, and it is an important part of their traditions. Its significance for Hindu identity has been emphasised in recent years. Finnish yoga specialities, such as forest yoga, manly yoga, SUP yoga, sauna yoga and reindeer yoga, can be marketed to Hindu groups.

SINGAPORE HAS PRODUCED PROGRAM TEMPLATES FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF MUSLIM TRAVELLERS



The Halaltrip.com website, which is hosted by CrescentRating, offers Muslim-friendly destinations, program services and other information. Singapore has created a Halal travel guide, [Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore](#), in collaboration with CrescentRating. The above illustration shows a program targeted at modern millennials. (Singapore Tourism Board 2020, 40–41.)

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR NEW PRODUCTS

- Which of the customer groups discussed so far can you already serve? What changes do you need to make to reach the target groups you want?
- What additional information do you need about the customer groups that you would like to serve? Use the links and references in this guide to find additional information and contacts.
- Do you have access to experts by experience? Can you work with them on product development and testing?

It's also a good idea to think about your long-term plans for your services as well as who you want to provide your services to.

Image: Saša Dolinšek, Finnish Forest and Park Service



7. Communication and marketing

Your company may unknowingly communicate in ways that emphasize uniformity over diversity. This can affect the company image for your customers and employees and, at worst, damage the company brand. Inclusive travel communication and marketing must reflect human diversity: all travellers want to have unforgettable experiences. When your images, for example, show people from all walks of life, viewers from various backgrounds can also feel inspired by them.

The target groups in this guide often have difficulties finding the information they need, so they may simply head for a destination that provides comprehensive information about their services. In Finland, for example, customers have to check the accessibility and suitability of each property, destination, nature trail or service from a variety of sources.

A MUSLIM-FRIENDLY DESTINATION



Interlaken for Arabs

“ Information guide for tourists in Interlaken”

انترلاكن، سويسرا - بالعربي

أفضل دليل سياحي عربي للأنترلاكن



Information on hotels, activities, family trips, halal restaurants and more!

معلومات عن الفنادق، مأكولات حلال، أنشطة، رحلات عائلية، جولات مسائية، رحلات، مطاعم حلال، مقاهي للشيشة

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Adventures / Activities

أنشطة/المغامرات

Experience everything from paragliding, to rafting to bungee jumping and more!

جرب كل شيء من التحليق بالمظلات والتجديف في النهر الي القفز بالجبل الممطاط، والمزيد

Interlaken in Switzerland has developed their services, from accommodation to activities and restaurants, to meet the requirements of Muslim travellers. This includes a website for Arab travellers, [Interlaken for Arabs](#). The response has been positive – and productive. In 2017, Arab tourists brought in some €95 million to Interlaken (Atmani 2017).

Inclusive language for communication

When communicating about inclusive tourism, you need to pay special attention to the terms you use for your target groups and whether your language excludes people from your audience. This doesn't mean that your entire communication strategy needs to be revamped at once, but even small actions, such as adopting broadly accepted, non-offensive terms, can have a major impact. It's only good manners to address all people as equals and not make assumptions based on their appearances.

Some people shy away from the word disabled, as it's thought to be an offensive term. However, it means that the person in question has functional limitations. It's perfectly fine to use the terms disabled person / people – or more broadly, people with health conditions or impairments. However, do not use the word as a noun for people, i.e. the disabled – the same goes for the blind and the deaf. Note also that the word handicapped should no longer be used to describe people. Facilities and services that are universally suitable for special groups should be described as accessible. For instance, use accessible toilet instead of handicap toilet.

Do not address disabilities through negation. Words such as victim and suffer have a negative connotation. The word invalid also stems from negation (not valid), so avoid it when talking about people with disabilities. Similarly, medical terms such as patient should be avoided, as they diminish individuality and reinforce the idea that disabled people are first and foremost seen as patients. A disability is not a disease, nor is it the opposite of healthy or normal.

Gender-neutral language is used to enable safe interactions and individual self-determination. It considers both equality and gender diversity. Although there is no grammatical gender in the Finnish language, many words are gender-specific, i.e. they express a gender that isn't necessarily valid or even essential information in the given context. It's best to avoid using suffixes such as -mies or -tar. And with all languages, choose neutral words such as parent and child instead of mother and daughter.

Gendered language only includes certain people; using gender-neutral language allows you to address everyone. Using gender-neutral language doesn't mean that you cannot talk about women or men, the point is avoiding exclusion when it's not necessary. When it comes to services for women or men only, for instance, talking about gender is allowed and even necessary. Remember, however, that your customers can also be non-binary, intersexual or transgender.

The vocabulary of sexuality and gender is as diverse as the LGBTQ+ community. You can look up safe Finnish terms from Seta's [Sateenkaarisanasto](#). For English, see <https://thesafezoneproject.com/resources/vocabulary/>. Listen to what terms or expressions your customers use themselves and try to use these as well. If in doubt, ask politely.

Visual communication

You should focus on inspiring, inclusive content in your marketing communications, such as websites, social media and brochures. Emphasise experiences. Images, captions and text can help create the impression that everyone is welcome and that your services are suitable for different target groups.

PROMOTE ACCESSIBILITY WITH ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS

A frequent mistake with the marketing of accessible travel is highlighting accessible spaces or buildings, such as accessible toilets or signs. It's not very appealing or inspiring content, merely useful information. A striking landscape or activity with a visibly disabled person is a much better lead image. With images, you can include different types of disabilities by including people who use mobility aids in various travel scenarios. In addition to people with restricted mobility, your images can include senior citizens with mobility aids or visually impaired customers as well.



<https://theotherdanishguy.eu/>



<https://www.sachsen-tourismus.de/en/travel-topics/accessible-tourism-in-saxony/>

Many businesses and travel destinations highlight special groups in their communications. The Other Danish Guy make it very clear that their underwear is meant for all people. The German state of Saxony has given accessibility its own section on their official travel website. The pages provide information on accessible destinations, routes and services. They also have plenty of images that include disabled people taking part in various activities. The images help show what people with disabilities can expect from their destination.

INCLUDE EXPERIENCES AND REAL ACTIVITIES WITH LGBTQ+ PARTICIPANTS

The LGBTQ+ community is often presented with images of pride events, but a better solution is to show genuine moments where human diversity is at display. Use images that show people of diverse genders or same-sex couples with their families, for instance.

Try to include different age groups, genders and cultures from the LGBTQ+ community as well. You can also show your LGBTQ+ friendliness by adding a rainbow symbol or rainbow flag to your website or premises.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN IMAGES



The Official Gran Canaria
Tourist Website

SEARCH



What to see What to do Accommodation Beaches Agenda Download Blog

ES EN DE IT SE FR NL PT PL RU



<https://www.grancanaria.com/turismo/en/gay-friendly/gay-friendly/>



<https://www.aarp.org/travel/vacation-ideas/family/info-2019/lgbtq-friendly-trips.html>



<https://www.exploreasheville.com/stories/post/lgbtq-asheville-gay-friendly-travel/>

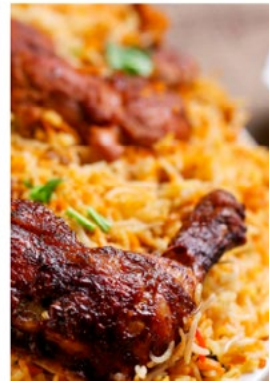
Images are very important for promoting inclusive services. Above are some examples of travel destinations targeting their communication to the LGBTQ+ community. Different types of couples are shown enjoying activities outdoors. The experience comes first, but the images also show that everyone can take part.

USE IMAGES TO PROMOTE MULTICULTURALISM AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

As with the target groups mentioned above, followers of different religions also respond well to visual communication where multiculturalism is at display in active scenarios. You can show a woman wearing a hijab, for example. In addition to inspiring customers, images

can be used to provide useful information about services such as prayer facilities and food services. This way, your customers can get a better understanding of what to expect while also learning that their religion is taken into account in your services.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION TRULY CONSIDER THE TARGET GROUP



Muslim-friendly Destination

Singapore has a vibrant and diverse multi-cultural community with

Muslim Friendly Service



Prayer Room

We offer Muslim prayer room has prayer mat and Qibla compass available 24/7 to make your visit more comfortable.

Guest Room (Mark Qibla direction)

5 twin rooms on 14th floor have Qibla direction sign in the ceiling. We are pleased to arrange a prayer mat and Qibla compass upon request.



Muslim Friendly Menu

Muslim friendly menu is served under the strict oversight of Posh Mark II. No alcohol, pork or pork related seasoning products are used in the menu. Vegetarian menu is also available.

■ For further inquiries or reservations, please contact
TEL 086-233-3138 (10:00am. ~ 10:00pm.)

Hotel Granvia Okayama is certified in Muslim Friendly Hotel (Posh Mark II).

The Posh Mark is the Muslim Friendly Mark used in Okayama city, Minami city and Kibichan. Times to provide information on products and services that refrain from using pork by products and dishes. These products and services also have features that are helpful for some Japanese such as English ingredient lists, English menus, and English language services.

<https://www.okayamahealthtourism.com/jp/>

Inclusive communication can highlight different target groups very clearly. Even your website menu can have sections such as "LGBTQ+", "Muslim-friendly" and "Accessible services". All of your services and products for these target groups can then be compiled in one place.

<https://okayamahealthtourism.com/hotel-granvia-okayama-muslim-friendly-service/>

Digital accessibility

Digital accessibility is the most important element of accessible communication. It is estimated that there are over one million people in Finland who need accessible digital services (Saavutettavuusdirektiivi.fi 1 n.d.). Globally, up to 15% of the population cannot equally access online services (Saavutettavuusdirektiivi.fi 2 n.d.). Online services should also be available to those who can't see, hear or use two hands and ten fingers with dexterity.

[The Web Accessibility Directive](#) is intended to make sure that online services are accessible to all, especially to those who are excluded from the existing services. At the moment, it only applies to public services and services with public funding. Digital accessibility benefits everyone online – service providers, content creators and anyone looking for information online:

accessible websites are simple to use, manage, update and understand.

ACCESSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND SERVICES









Accessibility in communication, information and services means that users can choose different ways of communicating and receiving information and services. Information should be available through different channels, such as electronic and printed formats. The language must be clear and legible and content must be readable with various tools. Page navigation must also be easy and smooth. Web accessibility involves technical compliance, clarity of content and layout accessibility.

MARITIME CENTER VELLAMO'S ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE

Accessibility

Vivid experiences for all senses.

Maritime Centre Vellamo offers information and enjoyable experiences to everyone. The exhibitions in the conveniently designed building can be experienced by viewing, reading, listening and touching. Admission to the exhibitions is always free for under 18-year-olds and for everyone on Wednesdays from 5pm to 8pm.

 <p>Plain language brochure and communication aids in Finnish</p> <p>You can print these for the main exhibition of the Maritime Museum of Finland.</p> <p>Download here:</p> <p>Brochure in plain language</p> <p>Communication aids</p>	 <p>Accessible parking</p> <p>Accessible parking spaces are located near the main entrance of the centre and they are marked with the international symbol of access.</p>	 <p>Accessible toilets</p> <p>An accessible toilet/UNO care room is located in the coat rack area of the entrance lobby.</p>	 <p>Lifts and automatic door</p> <p>The entrance features an automatic door and a lift, provides access to the ticket sales lobby on the second floor.</p>
 <p>Induction loop</p> <p>The ticket sales area features a movable induction loop while the auditorium and class rooms are equipped with fixed loops.</p>	 <p>Assistive devices</p> <p>A wheelchair, walker and adjustable walking sticks are available to borrow.</p>	 <p>Guide dogs</p> <p>Guide dogs and assistance dogs are always welcome to Vellamo!</p>	 <p>Assistants</p> <p>Admission for assistants is free.</p>

[Maritime Center Vellamo's](#) website provides clear and comprehensive information on the accessibility of their facilities. Assistants are given free entry and various aids are available.

Various assistive technologies are available for browsing the website. People with vision impairment can use a screen reader that renders the page content as speech. Many visually impaired users use screen magnification software to enlarge the content on the screen and make it easier to read. You can also adjust the size of the text as well as the contrast between the text and background. Some find it easier to read text when they reverse the colours on the screen.

Plain language promotes understanding and access to information by making the structures, phrases and speech more simple and easy to understand. You can check your Finnish plain language with [Selkokieli](#) (in Finnish), a free tool developed by the Finnish Centre for Easy Language and The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The Finnish Centre for Easy Language has also published extensive instructions for creating videos that are easy to understand.

The accessibility of visual communication can be improved with audio description, alt texts and subtitles.

Audio description means interpreting visual information as speech, i.e. describing visual content through speech for visually impaired customers.

It can be used to convey the beauty of nature seen in a video, for example, to provide a better understanding of the subject. Audio description isn't limited to digital environments only, as it can also be used at art exhibitions, for instance.

Alt text (alternative text) is hidden text attached to a digital image. Screen readers can render the text into audio, which gives visually impaired users access to the image content. It's not the same thing as captions, which are shown to all users, typically below or next to the image. Screen readers will read the caption as well as the alt text, and therefore the alt text should not repeat information from the caption, but rather describe the image itself. The essential content of an image can be given quite succinctly. Alt text can be added to images on websites as well as services such as [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) (see div. instruction videos on YouTube). Alt text also enhances search engine performance.

EXAMPLE OF ALT TEXT ON INSTAGRAM



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiPlQeW3qll> (0:55)

The Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired has produced videos that show you how to add alt text to your content. You can turn on subtitles from the gear menu. The videos will give you a better idea of how alt text works in practice. The above illustration shows you how images should be described: by putting to words visual elements and writing up any text that appears in the image.

Closed captioning (CC) is essential for people who have hearing impairments, but useful for other people as well. In addition to speech, closed captioning also includes audio that is relevant to the situation or comes from outside the frame. For example, if a film portrays natural beauty in a setting where background noises are essential for the experience, it should be included in the captions (e.g. [roaring from rapid and water clashing on

rocks]). Closed captioning should be informative, evocative and clear. Audio recordings, such as podcasts, should also be provided in written format. The text can be published on its own page, a superior solution to publishing as a PDF file. The text version should be easy to find in conjunction with the audio file.

3 TIPS FOR PROMOTING ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

- 1) promote experiences, not accessibility
- 2) compile your accessibility information on the front page under one heading
- 3) make your digital services accessible

The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities has published a comprehensive list of tips for improving web accessibility. The list will help you get started:

- Use a clear and large font. Sans-serif fonts are usually the easiest to read.
- Make sure there is enough contrast between the text and background. Don't use grey text on a grey background, for instance.
- Use clear and coherent language. Use simple structures. Avoid long sentences and paragraphs.
- Publish all website content in HTML. Don't publish content as downloads only.
- Use text formatting and colours to convey meaning (for external links, for example). Don't rely only on colour to convey meaning.
- Include a text version or other alternative form for image and video content. Don't use pictures or videos exclusively to communicate information: provide alternative texts or audio description.
- Use correct HTML that shows the semantic meaning of elements (formatting such as <H1>, <button>, <nav>, <main> etc.). Don't just change the font size for titles, for example.
- Make sure that your page structure is clear and logical. Use the same order of content in the HTML source code and its visual presentation.
- Make sure that the site can be accessed using a simple keyboard without a mouse. All actions on the site must be available via the keyboard.
- Name links and titles clearly and cohesively. Make sure that your link names indicate where they will lead. Avoid link names such as "Click here" or "Learn more".

Source: Papunet 2 (n.d.)

How can I create an accessible online service?

1. CONSIDER ACCESSIBILITY AT THE DESIGN STAGE

At the design stage, allocate both money and time for planning and assessing accessibility. There are many online guides, tutorials and training on digital accessibility – some are also listed in this guide. You can also ask for advice on Facebook in the Accessibility Advocates group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/accessibilityad>).

2. INCLUDE ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN YOUR REQUEST FOR BIDS

When getting offers for the technical and graphic design of your website, include a requirement that the technical accessibility of the site must comply at least with WCAG 2.1 levels A and AA. Adding accessibility requirements to your request is easy – you can refer to the WCAG guidelines (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>) or Papunetti's guide to web accessibility (in Finnish). Include the requirements in your contract with the service provider to avoid any disputes.

3. TEST YOUR SITE AND GET FEEDBACK

Review and testing can start with draft versions. In any case, don't leave it till the very end, just before publication. Accessibility reviews are carried out by an expert who will assess how the site complies with the WCAG 2.1 criteria. You can also run user tests, but they cannot replace an expert review. Instructions for conducting accessibility testing can be found from various sources online – you can start with w3.org (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/>). Think of ways to collect feedback from site users in the future and develop your site accordingly.

4. INCLUDE ACCESSIBILITY IN YOUR SITE MAINTENANCE

Whenever content is added or updated, check accessibility as well. The people updating the site must have the know-how necessary to maintain accessibility at all times. If an external tech advisor or advertising agency performs search engine optimisation or updates, for instance, they must be sure to do so in accordance with your accessibility requirements.

Source: Regional State Administrative Agency (n.d.)

Image: Markus Aurelius, Pexels



8. Attitudes and values

In addition to customer understanding, the company's values and the attitudes of each employee have an impact on the customer experience. The accessibility of attitudes requires a dedication to serving everyone equally. Your core values must cover the entire company, its staff and each stage of the service chain.

Respecting the individual starts with refusing assumptions. If in doubt, you can ask the customer

how you can best serve them. Mistakes are inevitable in all human interactions, so you must be able to acknowledge your mistake, apologize and explain that it was unintentional. Attitudes and prejudices will always come to surface in customer relationships as well as non-verbal communication. It's therefore important to train your staff so that no one is treated inappropriately, even unintentionally.

Tip: [Visit Finland Academy](#) provides comprehensive training on inclusive travel services.

Clear discrimination is easy to recognize, but spotting unintentional microaggressions, i.e. abusive treatment of minorities and stereotyping in everyday communication, requires awareness. Microaggressions can even seem like compliments while discriminating attitudes are at play. It should go without saying, but it isn't polite to harp on about a person's disabilities, to praise how natural a transgender person looks or to ask someone's home country based on the colour of their skin.

People with disabilities are often treated with unwanted curiosity or pity. Try to approach disabilities naturally and openly. For instance, talk directly to the disabled person, not through their assistant or companion. With the right attitude, every travel destination, company

and person has the capacity to provide accessible services.

In countries with high power distances, it's normal for a paying customer to bark orders at the staff. With expensive services, the customers can also expect to be greeted by senior representatives, such as the manager. As said before, Islam has very clear-cut gender roles, and traditionally men and women remain apart from each other. As a result, Muslim travellers often feel more comfortable with service staff of the same gender. Note also that while the sauna is part of Finnish culture, nudity is a taboo to Muslims. Hinduism also has a very strict view of men and women. These gender roles change very slowly.

Tip: The Smithsonian has published numerous resources for accessibility, including their [Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](https://www.sifacilities.si.edu/sites/default/files/Files/Accessibility/accessible-exhibition-design1.pdf) (<https://www.sifacilities.si.edu/sites/default/files/Files/Accessibility/accessible-exhibition-design1.pdf>). They are suitable for travel companies as well and provide a wide range of concrete instructions for a number of aspects.

Promote diversity and inclusivity in your company

1. PREJUDICES AND ATTITUDES.

All people have unconscious prejudices that affect our perception of senior citizens or young people, of people from different cultures or genders and of people from different religions. It's a good idea to discuss them in-house and define what diversity and inclusivity mean in your company. By doing so, diversity and inclusivity will be better integrated into all aspects of your company.

2. SAFE WORK CULTURE.

Make sure that people from different backgrounds feel comfortable in your company. If most of the people leaving your company are from minorities, whether by gender or culture, the alarm bells in your head should be

very loud. It's a good idea to consider whether everyone is comfortable and safe in your company – and what you can do for the wellbeing of your employees.

3. DIVERSITY IN HIRING.

Corporations compete for the best talent by emphasising their commitment to diversity and inclusivity. One way of mitigating prejudices and attitudes is eliminating non-relevant personal information from the hiring process – things such as name, age and gender.

4. INCLUSIVE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION.

Without realising it, your company might be broadcasting a narrow view of the people you want to serve and the people who work for you. A one-sided image affects the company brand and can exclude both customers and potential employees.

Source: Katja Toropainen, founder of Inklusiiv



Image: LUKA project

9. Epilogue

In the past years, people with various disabilities and impairments, people from different religions and people from various sexual and gender minorities have become more prominent in travel. This guide attempts to address diversity and inclusivity from their perspective. We aimed to cover the customer journey, which includes accessibility, travel to destination and transport at the destination, use of services, experiences and their subsequent sharing. The guide contains a wealth of tips, links to information and a comprehensive list of sources. This practical guide only attempts to discuss the most pressing issues, and there is always room for learning.

Diversity is an asset

Businesses and destinations the world over have realised that diversity and inclusivity can help target services and marketing better than before – and reach new target groups, improving their footing in a competitive market. Visit Finland strives to include diversity in their marketing respectfully while still challenging stereotypes. By integrating inclusivity in their operations, businesses and destinations can gain

more visibility with joint marketing as well. Destinations are more likely to receive positive attention and traveller recommendations when people are treated equally and accessibility is considered comprehensively.

Inclusivity is a journey

While we have come a long way, there is still much left to do. Too many people still face challenges with travel – there are obstacles to finding information, reaching destinations and even using their services. Concerns over safety and feelings of exclusion are part of everyday life for many potential travellers. The travel industry should focus even more on the diversity of their customers, promote equality and develop concrete actions that can help everyone feel welcome and accounted for. This guide aims to give you concrete advice that can help you improve your inclusivity and embrace diversity. By doing our part, we can keep up with a world in change!



Image: Satu Mali/lifeof2men/LGBTQ

Useful guides and information

GUIDES AND INFORMATION ON DISABILITIES AND ACCESSIBILITY

[Opas esteettömien ja saavutettavien luontomatkailupalvelujen suunnitteluun](#) (pdf) (LAB University of Applied Sciences 2020)

[Saavutettavien verkkosivustojen tekemiseen ja arviointiin yleisimmin käytetty ohjeistus](#), Verkkosisällön saavutettavuusohjeet (W3C 2019)

[A visual guide to including various types of disability in the design process.](#) (Pun 2016)

[Yleisradion ohjeita tekstitysten tekemiseen \(videojulkaisu\)](#) (Celia Kirjasto 2020)

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLISTS AND QUICK GUIDES

[Autismiliiton tarkistuslista, jonka avulla voit tarkistaa tilojen esteettömyyden aistien näkökulmasta](#) (pdf) (SAMK, Autismi- ja Aspergerliitto ry & Suomen Erityisherkät ry 2014)

[Lyhyt tarkistuslista viestinnän saavutettavuudesta](#) (pdf) (Kulttuuria kaikille 2012)

[Näkövammaisten liiton tarkistuslista verkkosivujen tekijöille](#) (Näkövammaisten liitto ry n. d.)

[Papunetin pikaopas sisällöntuottajille](#) (Papunet 1 n. d.)

[Selkomittari, jonka avulla voi tarkastella, toteutuuko selkokieliyksityy teksteissä](#) (pdf) (Selkokeskus & Kehitysvamma liitto 2018)

The Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired has produced YouTube videos on [describing images on social media](#) as well as creating alt text on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)

(The Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2019d).

GUIDES AND INFORMATION ON INCLUDING SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES

[Tilaa moninaisuudelle! Opas seksuaali- ja sukupuoliyhteisöiden yhdenvertaisuuden edistämiseen](#) (pdf) (Karvinen & Venesmäki 2019)

[THL:n ohjeita sukupuolittietoiseen kieleen ja kuvaviestintään](#) (THL 1 n. d.)

[Käytännön vinkkejä palveluntarjoajille LGBTQ+-asiakkaiden huomioimisesta](#) (pdf) (Leppänen et al. 2019)

[Seksuaali- ja sukupuoliyhteisöiden palvelujen kehittämissuosituksia kulttuuritarjonnan näkökulmasta](#) (pdf) (Lahtinen & Paqvalén 2014, 9–11)

GUIDES AND INFORMATION ON DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

[Katse islamiin – opas matkailuyrityksille Suomessa](#) (Ahlström 2018)

UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Kuurojen liitto <https://kuurojenliitto.fi/>

The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities <https://www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi/in-english/>

The Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities <https://www.invalidiliitto.fi/en/>

[finnish-association-people-physical-disabilities](#)

Autism Finland https://www.autismiliitto.fi/in_english

Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired <https://https://www.nkl.fi/en>
SETA <https://en.seta.fi/>

TRAVEL AGENTS AND TOUR OPERATORS

There is a wide range of travel agencies, OTA channels and websites specialised in various target groups around the world. Here are a few examples.

People with disabilities as a target group

Hammer Travel	https://hammertravel.org/
Accessible Holiday Escapes	https://accessibleholidayescapes.co.uk/
Disabled Accessible Travel	https://disabledaccessibletravel.com/
Sage Traveling	https://www.sagetraveling.com/

The LGBTQ+ Community

IGLTA	https://www.iglta.org/
Olivia	https://www.olivia.com/
Out Adventures	https://www.outadventures.com/
RainBowTravel	https://www.rainbowtravel.at/

Religions

Collette Tours	https://www.gocollette.com/en
Myths & Mountains	https://mythsandmountains.com/
Pilgrim Tours	https://www.pilgrimtours.com/
Toiviomatkat	http://www.toiviomatkat.fi/
Halaltrip	www.halaltrip.com
Tripfez	https://www.tripfez.com/
Halalbooking	www.halalbooking.com
Luxury Halal Travel	www.luxuryhalaltravel.com
Have Halal, Will Travel	www.havehalalwilltravel.com

Termbase

Vocabulary of disability

Functioning refers to a person's physical, psychological and social capacity to cope with the day-to-day activities they find meaningful and necessary in the environment where they live.

A person with reduced mobility has some disability that prevents them from moving without assistance or aids.

A person with visual impairment has difficulty coping with daily life as a result of reduced vision. Both blind and partially sighted people are considered visually impaired. A person whose vision can be corrected with glasses or who has normal vision in one eye is not classified as visually impaired.

People who cannot use their vision to navigate in unfamiliar surroundings are considered **blind**. However, total blindness is rare; many blind people can see light and even shapes.

People with vision loss have varying levels of sight. For example, they may not be able to read, but can move about without aids or a stick. They may also have enough clarity in their central vision to read, but they cannot see their surroundings.

A person with hearing impairment has some level or type of hearing loss, ranging from slight hearing loss to complete deafness.

People who are **hard of hearing** have some hearing loss: they can hear speech and are able to communicate with the help of hearing aids and lip reading.

Acquired hearing loss starts after language has been already learned. A person who has gone deaf usually communicates with speech and assistive methods, such as Computer Assisted Real-time Translation or sign-supported speech, where the signed words can also be read from lips. Hearing aids cannot help them hear properly.

The Deaf have lived without hearing either from birth or from early childhood. They cannot hear even with a

hearing aid and communicate mainly with sign language, their mother tongue. Other people with hearing impairment use sign language to communicate as well.

People with learning disabilities have difficulties with learning and understanding, leading them to require more time with anything new. There are many reasons for learning disabilities, such as oxygen deficiency at the time of birth, severe childhood illness and heavy substance use during pregnancy.

LGBTQ+ VOCABULARY

Gender diversity is the idea that gender has more expressions than the binary male-female model suggests.

Sexual minorities include people whose sexual orientation is other than heterosexual, such as homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals.

Gender minorities include transgender, androgynous and intersex people.

Gay or homosexual people feel attracted to people of their own sex or gender. The word gay is most often used about men who are attracted to men. Lesbians are women who feel attracted to other women.

Bisexuals feel attracted to their own sex well as others.

Trans person is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-binary and transgender people are considered trans, for instance. **A trans man** has been defined as a girl at birth, but identifies as a man.

A trans woman has been defined as a boy at birth, but identifies as a woman. The word transsexual is outdated and considered offensive.

Intersex means that a person's bodily characteristics, such as chromosomes, genitalia or hormonal activity, are not unambiguously male or female.

Non-binary people do not comply with traditional

gender identities. They can be both man and woman, something in between or completely beyond this dichotomy.

LGBTQ+ families have one or more parent from a sexual and/or gender minority. Children are part of the family or are expected. These families come in many forms, including families where two sets of parents have shared biological children.

Gender neutrality is an approach where gender isn't stated in connection to objects, spaces or language, for instance.

For a more complete LGBTQ+ glossary in Finnish, see the [Seta website](#). For English, see <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>.

RELIGIOUS VOCABULARY

Islam is a monotheist religion from the Middle East. It is the second-largest religion in the world. **A Muslim** is a person who follows Islam.

The term **halal** describes everything that is permitted and authorized under the laws of Islam (also known as **Sharia**). Halal is usually related to food, its ingredients and the way it is produced, but halal also applies to acts and activities. The opposite of halal is **haram**, "prohibited".

Muslims always pray toward the city of Mecca. The direction of prayer is called **qibla**.

The **Hijab** is a scarf covering the hair and neck that Muslim women wear for religious reasons. In some parts of the world, Muslim women wear a **burka** or **niqab**. The burka covers the whole body and face. The niqab is a veil that covers the face almost completely, save for an opening for the eyes.

Ramadan is the month of fasting in the Islamic calendar. Food, drink and other stimulants are prohibited during daylight hours.

Hinduism is a group of very diverse religions and sects. It is the third-largest religion in the world after Christianity and Islam. Practicing Hinduism revolves around various

daily rituals, meditation and yoga. Hinduism originates from India and is the nation's main religion.

Yoga was originally a collection of practices from Indian religions. Today, it consists of various body postures and meditation. Yoga is a central part of Hindu identity.

The caste system is a primarily Indian ideology where origin determines social status.

Judaism is also a monotheist religion from the Middle East. It is the ethnic religion of the Jews.

Buddhism is a philosophy and religion where suffering is eliminated through meditation and enlightenment. Buddhism is most prevalent in China and Thailand.

Confucianism is not really a religion, but a social and moral doctrine. The most important virtues of Confucianism are humanity, justice, good manners, sincerity and wisdom. The philosophy is most prevalent in China, but also popular in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

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