

## **THE ACCESSIBLE TOURISM IN ANDALUSIA. AN EMERGING TOURIST PRODUCT**

***José Manuel Jurado Almonte***

*Universidad de Huelva*

*jurado@uhu.es*

### **1. INTRODUCTION.**

In front of an extensive literature research on tourism issues, we found a limited bibliography and statistical knowledge about what is named accessible tourism (TA), perhaps because of the uncertainty still existing tourist of this model is very transversal with other issues.

The term "Accessible Tourism" (or "Tourism for Everybody") is relatively recent. It refers to the issue of accessibility by removing barriers urban, architectural and the social integration through the tourism for people with disabilities. Certainly, we should also study the accessible tourism considering the accessibility and disability or dependency. So here come into play knowledge and experience from other fields of knowledge: architecture, urbanism, sociology, economics, etc. Therefore, it is not enough to consult geographic works and researchers, but many other investigations, private or institutional authorship. Indeed, we can find more researches on this subject in other disciplines than in the field of the geography.

Soaking in the study of tourism accessible, irrespective of territorial limits and branch of knowledge, first entails a great effort, given the large transversely and know all the social, economic and techniques that have accessibility and disability. This requires handling a bibliography on these topics as well as statistics, laws, regulations and strategic plans and action. To this is added a necessary fieldwork to know accessible tourism experiences and, finally, consider the many administrations, associations, foundations and companies involved in this complex and transversal theme.

Starting from the assumption that the accessible tourism, as well as it has a social dimension, it is also an economic activity that can become into a training and work opportunities for people (with and without disabilities) who carry out their activity in the tourism sector (hotel, hotels, etc.). At the same time, it represents an opportunity for the public and private facilities, subject to the visit of travellers and tourists improve and obtain universal accessibility, precisely in accordance with legislation, from various scales, which requiring equality and social integration in the provision of services.

## **2. ACCESSIBLE TOURISM. CONCEPT AND BENEFITS.**

There is a segment of population with movement and sensory capacity reduced, but with rights and needs of leisure and tourism which are improving; therefore this needs require greater public and private care. In addition, this population and, at the same time, tourism potential plaintiff is increasing in developed societies, as a result of aging populations varying from elderly people (over 64 years, more likely to have disabilities) to people from other ages with disabilities or chronic circumstantial.

A fair form of social inclusion is also the leisure and tourism, as well as others. In this way, the business sector related to tourism is increasingly aware of the economic importance of this group, in addition to the obligations and recommendations of the laws in terms of full accessibility and social inclusion.

In recent years, and usual interest in the population group of senior and people with disabilities has been experienced, especially from the developed countries of the European Union. However, and despite the EU legal framework, there are different sensitivities and levels of development in terms of accessibility. In this sense, in eminently tourist areas such as Spain and, within the same, Andalusia, there are still many things to do and tourist market niches to promote, as is the case of accessible tourism, especially designed for this type of demand .

Accessible Tourism + Social Tourism = Social Tourism for Everybody
--

Competition is almost inherent to offer business and tourism areas. All tout its goodness in a very competitive market, with very changing demands, exigent tourist and a totality and immediacy of information and tourist bookings. It is no longer valid to sell only the natural attractions and patrimonies of a territory and the excellence in comfort of a hotel or restaurant, but it is also important to sell the concept of integrating accessibility applied, in this case, to tourism. In a general sense, it refers not only to the elimination of architectural barriers in some accommodation centres and / or restoration, but an entire large and varied process since a tourist, with or without disabilities, chooses to do tourism, chooses a territory, accommodation, places of interest to visit, recreate, eat and then make the return trip.

The concept of accessibility must be inherent in all these circumstances. First for reasons related to social rights, in order to achieve an independent and a quality life to achieve equal opportunities; and second for the economic impact of tourism.

In an attempt to conceptualize, it is not the same to talk about Accessibility in tourism than to do it about accessible tourism itself. The concept of tourism accessibility refers to the quality of a service or facility that would enable their use and enjoyment by any person, regardless of physical, sensory, mental or cognitive faculties.

With the concept of accessible tourism, we should refer strictly to the activities of a group of establishments and tourism businesses which sell and promote full accessibility and, especially, are geared towards a clientele of people (and their families) with disabilities. They represent a very small percentage even in comparison to the set of conventional tourism.

However, the concept of accessible tourism tends to be generalized and confused with tourist accessibility when we try to define the type of tourism that aims to remove barriers to people with disabilities. In this sense, it goes beyond the business-oriented tourist facilities (hotels and restaurants, mainly), and also extends to public facilities (museums and reception departments), natural elements (beaches and protected areas and recreational areas) and destinations (historic centres).

There is no doubt that, apart from the attractions that tourist destinations and equipments may have, it is crucial to increasingly integrating accessibility: one consistent advantage which can allow potential customers to make up their minds when booking from home, taking advantage of new information and communication technologies.

In fact, this type of accessible tourism would not exist as such if there was full accessibility in all public and private spaces, as well as in the different models and tourism types (sun, beach, rural tourism, cultural tourism, nature, etc..). All these models can and should carry an "accessible" label. If so, we would be talking about accessible sun and beach tourism, accessible rural tourism, etc.. But the reality is that it has not yet reached the desired situation (hence the accessible tourism).

Given its nature, this phenomenon or a tourism model is difficult to measure, because there are no specific statistics that compute accurately in this field. However, accessible tourism has reached significant importance in developed countries, as shown:

- The proliferation of policies and law in favor of accessibility and social integration at different levels.
- The increase of management telematic services designed especially for offering this tourist segment.
- The emergence of networks, platforms and partnerships that combine public and social intentions and business goals for accessible tourism.
- The proliferation of business experience.
- The multiplication of forums, meetings and seminars on this topic.

### **3. ANALYSIS OF SOME ACCESSIBLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES.**

As a result of the economic interest arising from the disable population when it comes to potential tourism, together with the enforcement of all regulations and law at different levels, the activity within accessible tourism has grown in recent years.

While improvement of tourism accessibility increases in terms of supply and conventional destinations, they are still not that numerous when we talk about accessible tourism experiences themselves, referring firstly to public and private facilities that provide extra attention above the minimum legislation and, secondly, those aimed especially at the group of people with disabilities and their families.

An analysis of the experiences of the various fields of action is needed, although there are always opposing initiatives, which are difficult to classify:

- Projects in favour of the promotion of accessibility and AT
- Projects in favour of the accessibility in tourist environments and destinations.
- Projects in favour of the awareness and training in AT
- Projects for entrepreneurship: accommodation, travel agencies and other tourist services.
- Accessibility and new technologies.

Bringing together each and every one of the accessible tourism experience is an overwhelming task. Therefore, following the previous classification, we have collected valuable experiences, making a very brief description and evaluation. At the same time, the priority area is Andalusia. However, some of them originally came from other areas, but they are also applicable in these territories.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS.**

The significance of the number of people with sensory disabilities in Andalusia, Spain and the European Union is around 10%. There is a growing population as a result of aging, who want to enjoy the leisure and tourism services available. Therefore, in addition to the necessary legislative changes to be imposed on these facilities, it should also be added the economic potential of tourism demand, and this also justifies the action in terms of accessibility and training by companies and organizations linked to tourism.

The tourist areas of Spain and, within it, Andalusia, undoubtedly provide heritage and natural resources that make them very attractive for tourism in its various models or types. In fact, many of their economies, and especially some of their territory, are influenced directly or indirectly by tourism, a sector with enormous importance in itself: infrastructure, transport, environment, economy, natural heritage and culture. Within its broad and diverse tourism demand, a growing group is the elderly and

people with different sensory and motor disabilities, who require, among other attractions, accessibility. Therefore, this becomes an increasingly essential element that can justify the final choice of these potential tourists and has an impact on the profitability of facilities and destinations.

As a result, a tourism model called “accessible tourism” is growing, but the reality is that it shouldn’t just be a model to achieve accessibility in all facilities and public spaces and tourist attractions. Thus, it becomes, somehow, a new model or type given its greater commitment to accessibility and disability compared to other models offering conventional tourism (sun and sand, rural, etc.).

Although there is still a lot to be done, accessible tourism is a growing phenomenon with enormous potential. However, interestingly, it has not been studied deeply, especially in the field of geography. In any territorial or tourism model there could be multiple studies and research. Therefore, this essay could be used to publicize the special nature of this model or tourist typology, as aforementioned, which is challenging, but can be encouraged in any territory at the same time.