ACCESSIBLE TOURISM – TOURISM FOR ALL IN CATALONIA

Since late 2007, the promotion of Catalonia’s Accessible Tourism products and services has constituted one of the main strategic lines of work of the Catalan Tourist Board (CTB).

The initiative Tourism for All in Catalonia run by CTB has become a motivating factor for the Catalan tourism industry to improve accessibility to its facilities, services and resources for individuals with some form of disability or reduced mobility.

For the Catalan Tourist Board, the concept of accessible tourism must be based on the principle that tourism is a fundamental social right for all, since for people with disabilities or reduced mobility and for everyone, the activities included under the categories of tourism and leisure are key to enjoying quality of life.

This initiative is underpinned by the fundamental principle that tourism accessibility must be conceived as a factor that is intrinsic to the “quality of tourism products”, promoted for many years by the Catalan Tourist Board and the Directorate General for Tourism. Accomplishing high-quality tourism is essential for achieving the full satisfaction of the tourism customer and to ensure the competitiveness of the Catalan tourism industry.

The differences in image between the tourism destinations do not lie in their products but rather in the emotional enjoyment derived therefrom, in the way tourism is experienced and enjoyed in a given destination. Thus, conveying an image aimed at all individuals without distinction or any form of exclusion fosters the development of tourism in the destination and the achievement of true tourism for all. Consequently, accessible tourism is a distinctive plus point and can help to transform the sector and increase revenue through the implementation of social responsibility policies.

Overall, the results have been very positive for the Catalan tourism industry that has taken part in the Accessible Tourism – Tourism for All initiative. The Club Nàutic L’Escala yacht club, for example, has seen a considerable increase in the number of people who have been through its sailing school since 2008, including not only beginners entering the world of yachting but others who have taken courses and entered competitions. The promotional campaigns have seen the club broaden its activity in geographical terms, firstly through the county and then into the province of Girona, and as far as organisations based in Barcelona. It has also attracted tourists from the rest of Spain and abroad, including from France and the Czech Republic, who have enjoyed the activities on offer at the club.

The various promotional campaigns aimed at this market segment run by the Catalan Tourist Board are rated as highly positive by the sector, as the volume of visitors and the number of activities have risen considerably since the project was launched.
The Catalan Tourist Board is making strenuous efforts to increase the number of accessible tourism destinations, the results of which can be seen in the rise from 16 in 2007 to the 26 that are promoting themselves today (2016), as well as the Way of Saint James for All, a flagship initiative at a national and international level on implementing solutions to make it easier for people with sensory disabilities (visual and hearing impairments) to enjoy this type of cultural route or itinerary.

These selected destinations are those which, thanks to the accessibility of their cultural and natural resources or leisure areas, offer a range of tourism amenities and services that everyone can access and everyone can use.

The destinations have been selected on the basis of criteria that ensure they cover the complete chain of the holistic Accessible Tourism – Tourism for All experience: transport, tourism resources (cultural and natural), accommodation, bars and restaurants, and care services (medical centres, specialist support, etc.). Consequently, it should be noted that the concept is not a mere list of tourist amenities and resources.

This methodology, developed and implemented by the CTB, is a model and a benchmark for other tourism destinations elsewhere in Spain and in Europe.
**2008: 19 Destinations**
1. Vall d’Aran
2. La Vall de Boí
3. Pallars Sobirà
4. La Seu d’Urgell
5. La Molina – La Cerdanya
6. La Garrotxa
7. The Dalí Route
8. Costa Brava – Alt Empordà
9. Costa Brava – Baix Empordà
10. Lleida
11. Vic – Osona
12. The Monastery Route on the Way of Saint James in Catalonia
13. Maresme
14. Barcelona
15. Delta de l’Ebre
16. The Cistercian Route
17. Costa Daurada
18. Garraf – Sitges

**2010: 20 Destinations**
19. Penedès Accessible Wine Tourism
20. Industrial Tourism

**2011: 23 Destinations**
21. Terra Alta and Sebes Nature Reserve
22. Tarragona, UNESCO World Heritage
23. Montseny Natural Park and Sant Llorenç del Munt i l’Obac Natural Park

**2012: 24 Destinations**
24. The Way of Saint James for All in Catalonia

**2013: 26 Destinations**
25. Lloret de Mar
26. Montsec – Starlight

**2015: 27 Destinations**
27. Terrassa

**ACCESSIBLE CULTURAL TOURISM IN CATALONIA**

Singled out below are some examples of best practice in Accessible Cultural Tourism, which are underpinned by a determination to overturn the exclusive vision of the past in the creation of spaces and products for certain segments of the public and by a commitment to an
inclusive vision, thereby making it possible for everyone, regardless of their circumstances, to benefit from a complete tourism experience.

**Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (National Art Museum of Catalonia, MNAC).** The MNAC offers sign guides (a multimedia mobile device) for the deaf and hearing impaired. These guides cover 35 masterpieces in the museum and are available free of charge in three sign languages (Catalan, Spanish and International Sign) with corresponding subtitles (in Catalan, Spanish and English). The MNAC was one of the first museums in Spain to offer this service in cultural mediation in three sign languages: Catalan Sign Language (CSL), Spanish Sign Language (SSL) and International Sign (IS).

**Besalú,** a tourist destination and one of the first in Spain to offer sign and audio guides, devices based on the principle of accessibility for all. They are available at the tourist office for all visitors to this beautiful spot, including people with sensory disabilities. The device contains an audio description for the visually impaired, and sign language and subtitles for the hearing impaired. In addition, they detail possible obstacles along the tourist route for the blind or visually impaired.

**400 km of routes with audio and sign guides on the Way of Saint James in Catalonia for All**
This initiative has been developed by the Catalan Tourist Board and has set the bar at a national and international level on implementing solutions to make it easier for everyone to access this type of cultural route or itinerary, including people with some kind of disability or reduced mobility, in particular people with sensory disabilities (the deaf and blind and the visually or hearing impaired).

A website has been mounted (www.thewayofsaintjamesforall.com), offering information on the Way of Saint James to all users in accessible format, meeting all the most stringent accessibility standards (WAI Triple-A conformance).

This was the first tourism promotion website in Spain to feature signs for the deaf and was also one of the first websites to use three sign languages (CSL, SSL and IS).

**Audio and sign guides**
A new feature recently introduced is the ability to download the various stages of the Way of Saint James, including information for everyone about its cultural and natural resources, its history, traditions, interesting facts and figures, etc., in the format of audio and sign guides that give an audio description for the blind and visually impaired (in Catalan, Spanish and English), interpretation in sign languages (CSL, SSL and IS) and subtitles (in Catalan, Spanish and English).

**Gran Teatre del Liceu and the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya.** Some performances at the Gran Teatre del Liceu opera house have an accompanying audio description service. All the seats have a screen in the front, making it possible to follow the work with subtitles in Catalan, Spanish and English. In addition, there is a large LED screen on the stage that gives subtitles.
Some performances put on at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya theatre include an audio description for the blind.

**Accessible World Heritage in Catalonia.** Many of the sites listed as World Heritage in Catalonia have made considerable effort to improve accessibility for people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

These include, among others:

- **La Pedrera**
  The use of plans in Braille and high relief, as well as audio descriptions and tactile models have positioned La Pedrera as one of the most accessible museums for the blind and visually impaired in the whole of Spain.
  The Accessible La Pedrera initiative features the following resources:
  - Tactile plans of parts of the building in Braille and high relief on the ground floor, in the La Pedrera Apartment, in the attic and on the rooftop.
  - A tactile space at the entrance to the Espai Gaudí that has three models, one of the building as a whole, one of the sculptural stairwells on the rooftop and one of a balcony.
  - A descriptive audio guide (currently in Catalan and Spanish) that enables visitors to tour the various spaces in the building that are open to the public.
  - A transcript of the audio guide in text format.

- **Palau Güell**
  Audio guides for touring the house are available in eight languages, as are audio descriptions in Spanish and Catalan and audio guides with subtitles. Video guides in CSL and SSL are also available. Magnetic loops suited to the audio guides and guided tour systems for people with cochlear implants have been installed.
  The house has plans in Braille and high relief, as well as two magnifying glasses, for the visually impaired.

- **Casa Batlló**
  The privately-owned Casa Batlló is extremely concerned about the issue of accessibility for people with disabilities, and was the first museum to make adaptations to ensure the blind are able to visit it.
  The tour of this tactile house is suitable for the blind, as it has forms, reliefs and textures that can be extensively touched. The script of the audio guide includes spatial information to enable the blind to locate their position. A 3D model of the façade, located inside, makes it possible to identify its forms and ornaments. In addition, the main floor of the building features plans in high relief and explanations in Braille. There are texts in Braille in a number of languages.
ACCESSIBLE ACTIVE AND SPORTS TOURISM IN CATALONIA

Accessible Tourism – Tourism for All has become a stimulus for the tourism sector in relation to ensuring accessibility to active and sports tourism activities. Since the project was launched, many companies have adapted their installations and equipment and have trained staff to provide services to people with disabilities or reduced mobility. Accessibility is now a factor accorded special importance from the very start of tourism projects.

Over the course of these seven years, Catalonia has positioned itself as one of the tourist destinations in Spain that offers the largest number and greatest diversity of sports and leisure activities accessible for people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

These activities for people with disabilities in Catalonia include: skiing, sailing, scuba diving, horse riding, trekking, cycling, canoeing, paragliding and flights in hot-air balloons.

Examples of best practice in Catalonia include the following:

• **More than 150 km of accessible greenways and paths (trekking and cycling)**
  The Greenways of Catalonia are working hard to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, while the Greenways of Girona have achieved a high degree of accessibility for people with physical disabilities or reduced mobility. As a result, these greenways can now be travelled by people using a handbike.

  The accessible stretch of the Greenways of La Terra Alta is the only one in Spain set up for people with impaired vision.

• **Three of the most important ski resorts in Catalonia are adapted for sportsmen and women with disabilities (skiing)**
  La Molina, Baqueira Beret and Boí Taüll have accessible ski lifts and offer adaptive equipment (mono-skis and bi-skis). The ski schools at these resorts also run adaptive skiing courses.

• **The Club Nàutic L’Escala (sailing)**
  This yacht club has indisputably set the standard in accessible sailing for the whole of Catalonia and Spain. It is the only club to have systems for transferring people with reduced mobility to vessels using hoists and has organised numerous national and international competitions in adaptive sailing.

• **Diving centre of the Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA) Spain, Torredembarra (Tarragona)**
  Ever since it was founded in 1981, the HSA has devoted itself to improving the physical and social wellbeing of people with disabilities through the sport of scuba diving. Its mission is to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to receive internationally recognised quality training and certification.
HSA Spain was set up in July 2011 thanks to the joint efforts of various public and private bodies that made it possible to hold the first HSA Instructor Training Course in Spain and later the first course in adaptive scuba diving in Catalonia, the Open Water Scuba Diver Disability HSA.

- **Flights in adapted hot-air balloons**
  Catalonia is home to the only three companies operating adapted hot-air balloons for people with disabilities in Spain. These companies, Vol de Coloms, (Olot-Girona), Camins de Vent, (Igualada-Barcelona) I Kon-Tiki are benchmarks for other countries in Europe.

**Supporting adaptive sports**

In addition, the Catalan Tourist board has contributed in recent years to the organisation of Catalan, Spanish and international sports championships for people with disabilities by actively supporting some of the federations of sports for people with disabilities (Cerebral Palsy Catalan Sports Federation, the Catalan and Spanish Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federations, the Catalan and Spanish Sailing Federations and the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation).

- Spanish Adaptive Sailing Championship, L’Escala (Girona), May 2013
- 2013 IPC Alpine Skiing World Championships, La Molina (La Cerdanya), February 2013
- Third Roser Pecanins International Boccia Trophy, June 2012
- International 7-a-Side Football Championship, June 2012
- Third L’Escala Accessible Open Spanish Cup, L’Escala (Girona), July 2011
- Second L’Escala Accessible Open Spanish Cup, L’Escala (Girona), May 2010 (Catalan and Spanish Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federations – Catalan and Spanish Sailing Federations)
- IPC Alpine Skiing World Cup, La Molina, January 2009 (Spanish Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation)
- First L’Escala Accessible Open – First Catalonia Adaptive Sailing Cup, L’Escala (Girona), October 2009
- Presentation of the first hot-air balloon adapted for people with disabilities in Spain, Olot (Girona), 2008