

# **Natural Area Access: Strategies for Tour Operators**

**Melinda J Shepherdson**

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About the author:

Melinda Shepherdson  
Graduate Diploma of Tourism  
Bachelor of Science (Occupational Therapy)  
melindashep@yahoo.com.au

For further information regarding this report contact:

Jim Macbeth  
Tourism Program  
School of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Murdoch University  
South Street, MURDOCH, Western Australia, 6150  
Tel: (08) 9360 2185  
Email: [j.macbeth@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:j.macbeth@murdoch.edu.au)  
Web: [www.tourism.murdoch.edu.au](http://www.tourism.murdoch.edu.au)

*Front cover photograph Jeremy Shepherdson - Mitchell Falls*

*In memory of my dad Raymond Shepherdson 22.7.1945 - 9.7.2004*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Enabling people with disabilities to access travel and tourism products in natural areas is a little researched area and poses major challenges to the individual and the tourism industry. This qualitative literature based study reviewed the current academic and non-academic literature surrounding disability, and travel and tourism issues, with a focus on natural areas. Additional data was gathered utilising subjects who were relevant to the research topic.

### **Disability in context**

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A disability is defined as “any continuing condition that restricts everyday activity” and may be due to an “intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments” (Disability Services Commission, 2004, p.1). In Western Australia 15% of the total population (272,900) have a core activity restriction. These numbers are rising due to factors such as an aging population and advancements in medical technology.

### **Nature based tourism**

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In regards to natural areas, people with and without disabilities have been shown to value access to nature for similar reasons. General health benefits of accessing nature have been shown to include physical, psychological and spiritual well being. Neither people with or without disabilities feel that the pristine condition or challenge of the wilderness should be altered significantly to facilitate access, despite the barriers for people with disabilities to access natural areas being significantly greater than built areas.

### **Barriers to travel for people with disabilities**

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When addressing barriers for people with disabilities, the whole travel experience surrounding an activity must be considered. Barriers to tourism participation consist of both internal and external, two of the most significant being: attitudes of tourism providers towards people with disabilities; and inaccuracy, or lack of, information regarding accessibility. Specific barriers to accessing natural areas were: overprotection of care givers; few role models; and limited adaptive equipment that was suitable for use in natural environments.

## **Barriers to provision of accessible travel for tourism operators**

Barriers existed for the small sample of tour operators used in this report including: high financial costs; difficulties accessing amenities in remote areas; inaccessible transport; and limited time to adequately meet the needs of people with disabilities.

## **Why should tour operators provide accessible tourism products?**

Three major reasons have been identified as to why operators should provide accessible tourism products.

### **1. Social conscience and sustainability**

Enjoyment of travel and tourism is a key component of living a full life in developed countries, and where possible, organisations providing services to the public should ensure their services can be enjoyed by all. One of the key foundation principles for sustainable development in Western Australia is equity and human rights.

### **2. Good business**

The number of people with disabilities is increasing globally, and therefore demand for tourism products that are accessible to all will continue to grow. People with disabilities have been found to be very loyal to providers that are sensitive to their needs and the economic benefits of attracting the market are greater than previously thought.

### **3. Legislation**

As society increases the acceptance of equal opportunities for all, the threat of litigation is likely to increase due to stronger enforcement of the Disability Discrimination Act (1993).

## **Strategies for tour operators**

In response to the information gained from the literature regarding accessibility and travel and tourism, six key strategies for tour operators were identified, focusing on nature based tourism.

Each strategy featured a number of practical recommendations to assist tour operators in enhancing the accessibility of their products.

- 1. To improve tour operator and staff knowledge of disability issues**
- 2. To improve the accuracy and accessibility of promotional information for people with disabilities**

- 3. To effectively market and promote accessible tourism products**
- 4. To have an increased awareness of equipment that may improve access in natural areas**
- 5. To consider pricing alternatives for tourism products for people with disabilities**
- 6. To ensure effective interpretation techniques for all customers**

### **Further recommendations**

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To enable an integrated approach to tourism accessibility, strong partnerships are required between all stakeholders, including the tourism industry and health and disability organisations. Proactive strategies are needed, including assistance programs and grant schemes for both people with disabilities and tourism operators. The need for further academic research is strongly indicated, particularly regarding tour operator perspectives of disability access and the effectiveness of implemented strategies for people with disabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

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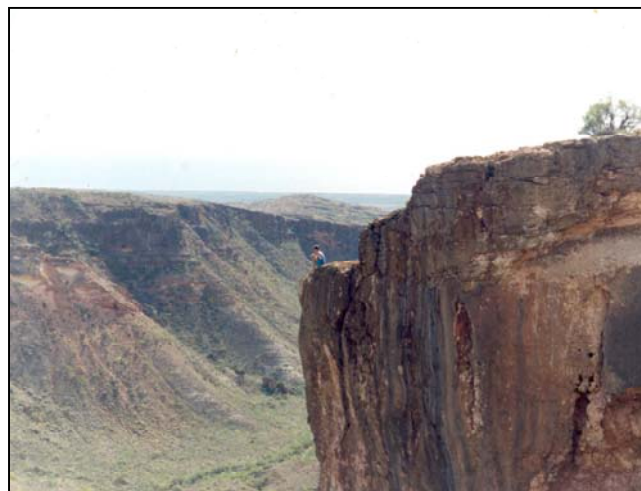
*People with disabilities have the same right as other citizens to participate in their community and to live a full and valued life. (Disability Services Commission, 2004, p.2).*

For many Western Australians, a full life includes the enjoyment of nature based travel and tourism activities. Despite significant advances in legislation and accessibility in the past decade, people with disabilities still experience significant barriers to participation in travel and tourism (Darcy, 2002; McKercher et al., 2003). Enabling people with disabilities to access nature based tourism activities is a little researched area and poses major challenges to the individual and the tourism industry.

This report will explore the literature relating to travel and tourism for people with disabilities, with an emphasis on access to natural areas. Specific topics include: disability in the context of today's society; the motivations and benefits of accessing nature based tourism products; barriers to travel and tourism for people with disabilities; barriers to provision of accessible tourism products for tour operators; myths and misconceptions surrounding travel and tourism for people with disabilities; and recommended strategies for tour operators to enhance access for people with disabilities to natural areas.

*There are places you cannot go...so I must go to the big cities where the cars are convenient and there are ramped buildings and facilities for people with disabilities. But that's not meaningful. Every developed city is the same...In the past, I travelled on my own and liked to go hiking alone too.*

(McKercher et al., 2002, p. 379).



Source: J.Lunn



## METHODOLOGY

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This qualitative literature based study reviewed the current academic and non-academic literature surrounding disability, and travel and tourism issues, with a focus on natural areas. Additional data was gathered using purposive sampling, utilising subjects who were relevant to the research topic, as identified by the researcher. Various methods of data collection were utilised.

A web based search was conducted, utilising the key terms and variations as shown in Table 1. The most relevant website, Wilderness Inquiry, formed a basis for further searching, using the extensive web links within the site.

Table 1. Key words used in world wide web search

Diabilit*	Wilderness	Access*
Disable*	Natur*	Inclus*
Handicap*	Park*	Integrat*
Impair*	National Park*	Strateg*
<u>Variations</u>	<u>Variations</u>	<u>Variations</u>
Blind*	Travel*	Aid*
Deaf*	Touri*	Adapt*
Hearing	Recreation*	Equipment
Vision	Leisure	Device*
Mental	Camp*	
Intellectual	Safari*	

One formal interview was conducted, with two follow up sessions to clarify and expand on the data collected. An informal interview occurred with a tour operator as the researcher participated in a tour. A written account regarding tourism and disability, from the perspective of an anonymous tour operator, was obtained. Informal discussions occurred with at least 20 individual specialists in the fields of tourism, disability, and conservation and land management.

The researcher attended two relevant conferences: a three day NICAN conference for tourism and disability, “Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism”; and a two day FACET conference for cultural and eco tourism, “A Sense of Place”.

Limitations of the study were due to time and resource constraints. The web based search was unable to comprehensively cover the wealth of information listed. Further subjects, both national and international, were contacted and requested to contribute to the research via email, however there was no response. Due to time and financial constraints, no follow up emails or phone calls were utilised. More consultation with consumers, tourism operators and specialists in the field would contribute to the richness of the data collected.

## **DISABILITY IN CONTEXT**

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A disability is defined as “any continuing condition that restricts everyday activity” and may be due to an “intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments” (Disability Services Commission, 2004, p.1). Sensory impairments relate to issues such as vision and hearing loss. People with disabilities are not a homogeneous group - the degree of disability varies greatly (Darcy, 1998) and some people may have a disability that has minimal impact on their core activities of communication, mobility or self care (Disability Services Commission, 2004).

In Western Australia 15% of the total population (272,900) have a core activity restriction (Disability Services Commission, 2004). Global estimates of the numbers of people with disabilities range between 5% and 15% of the population (Smith, 1987; Murray & Sproats, 1990; Darcy, 2003; McKercher et al, 2003). These numbers are rising due to factors such as an aging population and advancements in medical technology (Burnett and Baker, 2001; McKercher et al., 2002).

The way in which people with disabilities have been perceived, has changed over time. The current social model identifies disability as being produced by social attitudes and resulting barriers to participation, rather than traditional views of disability as the “abnormal body” (Darcy, 2002). In reference to “access”, Laws (1995) stated “special needs are only “special” if the environment makes them so” (p. 45). People frequently interpret “access” as relating to physical access only, however it is much more than architectural design – it includes customer service, ways of communicating and design of equipment (Harrop & O’Brien, 2004). The term Universal Access “is based on fundamental principles of equal opportunity and equity” (Sands, Slavin & Schmidt, 1999, p. 2) and provides guidelines to ensure all people, irrespective of differences, are able to equally access public services and facilities.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1993) has ensured legislative control against disability discrimination and that people with a disability can optimise their participation in society (Darcy,1998). People with disabilities are increasingly utilising the DDA when unlawful discrimination occurs. One aspect of current government policy that reinforces equal rights is sustainable development. The current focus of development, including tourism development, is ensuring sustainability - a term defined as “meeting the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement, and economic prosperity” (Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, 2003, p. 12).

One of the key foundation principles for the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy is Equity and Human Rights, which applies to people with disabilities.

*Sustainability recognises that an environment needs to be created where all people can express their full potential and lead productive lives and that significant gaps in sufficiency, safety and opportunity endanger the earth.*

Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy (2003, p.29)

As the acceptance of equal rights increases, there will be a greater demand for equal access to goods and services in all sectors, including the tourism industry (McKercher et al., 2002).

## MOTIVATIONS AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

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Travel is a part of living the fullest life possible (Laws, 1995). The motivations for travel are numerous, however a common motivation is to use travel as an “escape” from everyday problems (Smith, 1987). For people with disabilities there may be a wish of escaping environmental and interactive barriers (Smith, 1987; Laws, 1995). Flexibility of travel options, diverse experiences and sharing fun and excitement with a travel partner have been identified as key components of a satisfying holiday by people with disabilities (Vignuda, 2000; Yau et al., 2002). People with disabilities may adapt and develop other “senses” to experience and explore their travel destination, therefore gaining the same satisfaction as anyone else (Yau et al., 2002). Burnett & Baker (2001) reported that many people with disabilities want to feel “normal” and that research suggests people may resent completely “specialised” destinations or transport modes. In relation to natural areas, people with disabilities want the wilderness to be “every bit as challenging and pristine as it is for others” (McAvoy et al., 1995, p.37).

## NATURE BASED TOURISM

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People with and without disabilities have been shown to be “more similar than different in their usage and preferences for outdoor recreation” (Moore, et al., 1996). Experiencing scenery, natural beauty, a connection to nature, a connection to self and spirituality, and personal challenge, have been identified as some of the reasons why people with and without disabilities enjoy nature (McAvoy et al., 1995).

*...You know, when you're out there in the wilderness you just have the stars, the streams, and the sky, you realise that the little things you worry about here, this kind of stuff you realise doesn't mean anything in the grand scheme of things...(male, 35 years old)*

Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, & Lais (1997, p. 9)

The health benefits of accessing natural areas are numerous, however they have been understated (C. Gazey, personal communication, 22/10/04). Improvements in physical, psychological, and spiritual well being have all been reported from people utilising natural areas. Initiatives such as “Healthy Parks, Healthy People”, (conducted by CALM, Western Australia), promote public access to natural areas, and are becoming more common world wide.

Outdoor adventure and wilderness programs are an increasingly popular recreational activity. Organisations such as Wilderness Inquiry, a non-profit

organisation in America, provide wilderness travel and activities for all people, including those with a disability. They promote integrated trips, involving both people with and without disabilities. Integrated programs have demonstrated equally positive benefits for people with and without disabilities, such as: leisure skill development; positive changes in attitudes towards others with disabilities; and changes in roles from “helper” of a person with a disability or “dependent” on others, to an equal “peer” (Anderson et al., 1997).

*...Being in the wilderness, having it accessible for people with disabilities, brings about a powerful connection; the renewal of the human spirit and empowerment of the soul.*

SPLORE (2004)

People with disabilities do not find unique benefits from accessing natural areas, but they may have held the perception that they would not be able, or be allowed, to receive the benefits of wilderness access (McAvoy et al., 1995).



Source: J. Lunn

## BARRIERS TO TRAVEL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Several authors have investigated barriers to participation in travel for people with disabilities (Smith, 1987; Murray & Sproats, 1990; Cavinato et al, 1992; Muloin & Weiler, 1993; Moore et al, 1996; McKercher et al, 2002; McKercher et al, 2003; Darcy, 1998). All travellers experience barriers or constraints to travel to some degree, however people with disabilities are disproportionately affected (Smith, 1987), resulting in limited choice of tourism products (Darcy, 2002). When addressing issues of access, the whole travel experience surrounding an activity must be considered (Henderson, 1999). McKercher et al. (2003) summarised available literature on barriers to tourism for people with disabilities outlining the internal and exogenous barriers, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Barriers to tourism participation faced by persons with a disability

<b>Internal</b>		<b>Exogenous</b>	
Intrinsic barriers	Economic barriers	Environmental barriers	Interactive barriers
Lack of knowledge	Affordability	Architectural/ accessibility of accommodation etc	Skills challenges and incongruities
Ineffective social skills	Income disparities	Ecological, paths, trails, hills, etc.	Communication challenges
Health related barriers	Need for travel companions/ special facilities	Transport	Lack of encouragement to participate
Physical or Psychological- related barriers		Rules and regulations	Attitudes of travel and hospitality industry workers
Is travel seen as a right?		Safety	Availability and accuracy of information

Source: McKercher et al. (2003, p.468)

Internal barriers are those that the individual has most control over. These include: self belief in one's capabilities; lack of knowledge of available travel destinations; and the economic burden of additional costs for an accompanying carer. These barriers must be addressed before a person becomes travel active (McKercher et al., 2003). Exogenous barriers are those external to the individual, and are more difficult to control. Environmental barriers have traditionally been the primary focus of accessibility, most commonly architectural modifications and construction, however it is now widely reported that attitudes of others' towards people with disabilities are the most effective barrier (McKercher et al., 2002).

Moore et al. (1996) reported that tourism managers' attitudes have a more significant impact than physical barriers. Negative experiences, and resulting fear of discrimination or embarrassment, may contribute to people with disabilities not disclosing to a tour operator that they have a disability, which could potentially affect the quality and enjoyment of the travel experience (Yau

et al., 2002). Changing negative or paternalistic attitudes of workers within the tourism industry and the general public regarding disability will lead to breaking down of other barriers (Murray & Sproats, 1990; Muloin & Weiler, 1993; Moore et al., 1996). Information availability and accuracy regarding accessibility is another major barrier to accessing tourism products (Cavinato et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1996; McKercher et al., 2003).

In natural areas, physical barriers are significantly greater. Many areas that are attractive to visitors, and as a result have a high visitation, are in rugged landscapes (Sands et al, 1999). Natural area managers have to balance development of accessible places against resource protection, and facilitated access should be avoided when the nature of the experience is altered (Sands et al, 1999). Natural area planners often recommend a spectrum of natural area experiences, with a spectrum of access levels – ranging from remote areas with no facilitated access, to highly accessible areas (McAvoy et al., 1995, Sands et al., 1999).

The primary reasons for reduced opportunities for people with disabilities to access wilderness areas in the United States were identified as being due to: attitudes of service providers; overprotection of care givers; few role models; and limited adaptive equipment that was suitable for use in the wilderness (McAvoy et al., 1995).

An interview with Justin Lunn (personal communication, 11/10/04) explored common experiences of barriers to travel in natural areas for people with disabilities. Lunn has worked extensively with people with disabilities, is currently establishing a tourism business in Western Australia, and has a spinal injury himself. Table 3 summarises some of the information provided by Lunn utilising McKercher's (2003) categorisation of barriers.

Table 3 Barriers to tourism participation in natural areas (Lunn, personal communication, 11/10/04)

<b>Internal</b>		<b>Exogenous</b>	
Intrinsic barriers	Economic barriers	Environmental barriers	Interactive barriers
<i>"A persons attitudes about their own capabilities...they were never allowed to think they could get out there"</i>	The need to purchase bulk personal care products in advance. Current disability financial assistance may not cover this.  <i>"Lack of specialised transport to remote areas – such as modified four wheel drives. Often the only alternative is to fly and this costs a lot of money"</i>	Limited public amenities that are accessible in remote areas.  <i>"Lack of suitable assistive equipment that can handle the extreme environment"</i>	The impact of travel in harsh environments on people with particular disabilities.  <i>"4WD and bumpy boat rides can cause a lot of damage to someone if they have no feeling – pressure sores, bruising, bony injuries"</i>

## BARRIERS TO PROVISION OF ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL FOR TOUR OPERATORS

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Some tourism businesses do wish to provide services for people with disabilities due to a genuine sensitivity regarding the values of equal opportunities or an acknowledgement of the economic value of the market (Ray & Ryder, 2003). Others may be forced to provide accessible facilities due to legislative requirements and as a result, could have negative perceptions of people with disabilities (Burnett & Baker, 2001). Tour operators have stated that there are difficulties in provision of accessible tourism products.

Information was obtained from three tour operators in Western Australia, identifying perceived barriers to provision of accessible nature based tours for people with disabilities. Table 4 summarises the data gathered.

Table 4. Barriers to providing accessible tours for tour operators

<b>Justin Lunn All Wheel Adventures</b>	<b>Anonymous Australian Tour Company</b>	<b>Anonymous Australian Outdoor Adventure Company</b>
High insurance costs	Costs and difficulties adapting 4x4 buses to accommodate wheelchair users:	Lack of time and desire, to market to, or adequately meet the needs of people with disabilities.
Difficulty obtaining government licenses	<i>“Because our vehicles work off road, the coach and body builders are not able...to guarantee the existing structure, body and chasis will be strong enough ...once the structure is altered”</i>	<i>“We have enough trouble meeting the demand of our current client base. I wouldn’t want to attract another market if it was going to [negatively] affect our current client experiences”</i>
Transport difficulties		
Ensuring safety in specialised off road vehicles		
Provision of accessible toileting facilities in remote areas <i>“how will we provide facilities that meet the needs of the women [with particular toileting issues] when we are on the other side of the island fishing”?</i>	If the coach was able to be modified: <i>“We would lose the front 10 passenger seats, reducing our vehicles to operating below costs”.</i>	
Education and information distribution for potential clients	Individuals not alerting the tour company that they have a disability <i>“...a number of people arrive to travel with us and [have not informed us] of any disabilities and require full time care by the Coach Captain – it is a real problem that we must address somehow...”</i>	
Limited empirical knowledge of what potential clients “want”		



## MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

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Research has highlighted that tourism managers may have misconceptions regarding the number and type of people with disabilities, and financial benefits of providing accessible tourism products (Murray & Sproats, 1990; Darcy, 1998; Burnett & Baker, 2001). Four common myths will be discussed.

### ***Myth 1. The number of people with disabilities is limited***

The number of people with disabilities is increasing globally, and this rise is predicted to continue. They have been identified by some as “the next market niche” (Ray & Ryder, 2003). Others argue that people with disabilities are not a “market niche” but a significant part of all markets (P. Rice, personal communication, 20/9/04).

### ***Myth 2. People with disabilities do not have the financial resources to travel***

Many people with disabilities do have the resources to travel (Burnett & Baker, 2001; Ray & Ryder, 2003) and have access to a disposable income. Deacon University estimated that 100 million people with disabilities world wide are earning an average weekly wage. In Australia, the figure is estimated at 1 million people (Bagshaw, personal communication, 21/9/04).

### ***Myth 3. Tourists with disabilities are an homogeneous group***

Burnett & Baker (2001) highlight the need for distinct market segmentation, as many people with disabilities have different needs and different desires. They are not an homogeneous group.

### ***Myth 4. Providing accessible tourism products will not be financially beneficial and people will not use them.***

Tourism operators have reported that accessible facilities are under utilised as the following quote highlights:

*We have built into our Motel...a completely functional room for people with disabilities. We sought advice from the disabled association at the time ...[1984]...and to this day, we have never had anyone use the room who was disabled, so [we] have removed some of the chains and supports from the ceilings etc to make it a bit more attractive for regular motel users.*

Anonymous Australian Tour Company (2004)

Despite the above claim, 2.15 million Australians do require easy access facilities, and the value attributed to this figure is \$1.5 billion (B. Cameron, personal communication, 22/9/04). People with disabilities want to travel, but their options are limited due to access issues (Darcy, 2002). As mentioned previously, a commonly reported barrier to travel is lack of, or inaccurate,

information regarding accessible facilities, including accommodation. If people with significant mobility impairments are travelling to areas with a limited choice of accommodation and amenities, they must be positive that their chosen accommodation will be accessible when they arrive, as consequences of inaccessible accommodation in remote areas can be disastrous.

People with disabilities will often travel with friends and relatives to a greater extent, expanding this market to include them also (Smith, 1987). One estimation is that people with disabilities, on average, travel with 3.4 other people (G. Innes, personal communication, 20/9/04). An additional benefit of attracting this market, is that many people with disabilities are very loyal to providers that are sensitive to their needs, ensuring return visitation (Darcy, 1998; Turco et al., 1998; Burnett & Baker, 2001; McKercher et al, 2003). There is strong evidence that word of mouth is prevalent amongst consumers and can be a powerful low cost marketing strategy (McKercher et al, 2003).



Source: J. Lunn

## **STRATEGIES FOR TOUR OPERATORS**

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In response to the information gained from the literature regarding accessibility and travel and tourism, six key strategies for tourism operators were identified, focusing on nature based tourism.

Each strategy features a number of practical recommendations to assist tour operators in enhancing the accessibility of their products. The strategies are:

- 1. To improve tour operator and staff knowledge of disability issues**
- 2. To improve the accuracy and accessibility of promotional information for people with disabilities**
- 3. To effectively market and promote accessible tourism products**
- 4. To have an increased awareness of equipment that may improve access in natural areas**
- 5. To consider pricing alternatives for tourism products for people with disabilities**
- 6. To ensure effective interpretation techniques for all customers**

# STRATEGY 1

## TO IMPROVE TOUR OPERATOR AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE OF DISABILITY ISSUES

### EDUCATION

1. Educational programs to be conducted by consultants with experience in disability and tourism, targeted at all levels of service (managers through to junior staff)<sup>1</sup>. Information to be included:
  - i. Types of disabilities
  - ii. Value of the market
  - iii. Myths and misconceptions surrounding disability
  - iv. Common barriers to access
  - v. Strategies to overcome barriers
2. Simulation exercises<sup>2</sup>. For example, staff to experience what is it like to be blind by wearing a blindfold as the guide conducts part of the tour.
3. Encourage tour guides to be sensitive to individual people's needs, and if applicable, the needs of the carer. Staff need to balance over estimating a persons handicap versus giving too little consideration to the difficulties they may face<sup>3</sup>.

*I had a very narrow perspective of what people with disabilities are like...I [now] know that people with the most severe disabilities have preferences, likes and dislikes. It made me realise again, people are human and what people with or without disabilities can do if they really want to...if they have their heart set on something you can help them find a way to do it.  
(female, 26 years old)*

Anderson et al. (1997, p. 8)

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<sup>1</sup> Burnett & Baker (2001)

<sup>2</sup> Mckercher et al. (2003)

<sup>3</sup> Yau et al. (2002)

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

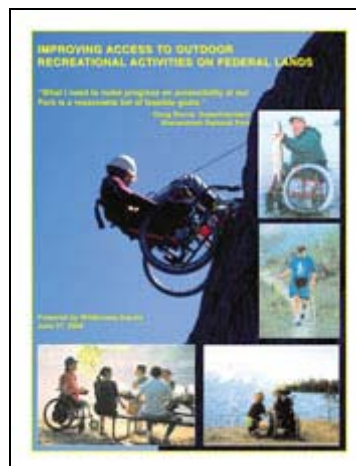
4. Direct contact and experience with people with disabilities in nature based areas.
  - a. Invite consumer representatives to participate in a tour or component of a tour
  - b. Ensure multiple staff members are involved with people with disabilities on trips, not just one “allocated” person

*...I have a much better grounding in interaction with disabled people than I did before. All the courses and workshops in a workplace for sensitivity training don't mean anything compared to actually developing a relationship with people . (male, 30 years old)*

Anderson et al. (1997, p. 8)

## MARKETING AND PROMOTION

5. Staff exposure to positive media promotion of people with disabilities. Perceptions and attitudes regarding people with disabilities have been found to be improved by this method<sup>4</sup>.



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<sup>4</sup> Vignuda (2000)

## STRATEGY 2

### TO IMPROVE THE ACCURACY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF PROMOTIONAL INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

#### ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

1. Complete an access audit of your tour and facilities
  - a. Utilise current access checklists and information from disability access resources and networks eg. DSC, NICAN (See Recommended Resources)
  - b. Request a local disability services representative assist with an access audit
  - c. Request consumers with disabilities give feedback on the accessibility of your product
2. Include detailed information regarding accessibility in promotional material (print and web based material)
  - a. Utilise disability access resources and networks to assist with recommended descriptions and language to use
  - b. Use photos and a virtual tour to display access throughout your tours. This will enable individuals to assess the situation themselves eg. steps onto bus, size of seats, tents (inside and out), showering/ toilet set up, access trails to natural attractions

*...I have experienced so called “accessible” rooms with bathrooms you can’t even turn a wheelchair in...steps into rooms, or non-accessible eating areas. I find that one can really only rely on one’s own personal experiences – brochures and hotel staff leave a lot to be desired. So much time can be wasted which is soul-destroying, exhausting and you are left with the feeling “why did I bother”.*

Darcy (2003, p. 8)

3. Invite potential customers to contact you via telephone or email to discuss individual requirements and whether you would be able to meet their needs
4. Include a section regarding access needs on your registration form to ensure you will adequately meet your customer’s needs

5. Utilise customer satisfaction forms and suggestions for improvement on the completion of each tour. Include questions regarding accessibility (eg. web site, staff attitudes and assistance, transport, accommodation, attractions)

## ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION

6. Ensure promotional material is accessible and available in different formats<sup>5</sup>
  - a. Print material
    - Increase font size
    - Increase colour contrast
    - Use matt paper rather than gloss
  - b. Web based material
    - Same principles as for print
    - Utilise resources to help make your website accessible (See Recommended Resources)

*web sites can be made accessible to people with vision impairment through their own voice output software*

### Wheelchair tourists miss out on whales

■ By Eloise Dortch

WHEELCHAIR users say they have been discriminated against because of poor access to boats belonging to a major South-West whale-watching tour operation.

Tour operator Steve Mitchell is also angry that local and State governments have failed to improve access since he first raised it as a problem nearly a decade ago.

Mr Mitchell, of Naturaliste Charters, said that in the past two years he had replaced an old boat with two new boats which had bigger toilets and flat access to the cabin area so people in wheelchairs or elderly people could enjoy the tour.

But he said his staff still had to perform risky manoeuvres to get disabled people on board because of a lack of usable jetties.

Mr Mitchell, who operates out of Augusta for the first part of the South-West whale-watching season from June to September and with some overlap, from Dunsborough from September to mid-December, said there were access problems at both towns.

He said either of two plans being considered by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure at Augusta — to either permanently open the mouth of the Blackwood River or to build a marina in Flinders Bay — would improve disabled access and should go ahead as a priority.


At Augusta his customers boarded his boat from a dinghy but this was impossible for wheelchair users on rough days.

The only jetty at Dunsborough was narrow and unrailed. Mr Mitchell said he could incur a \$500 fine for using it because it was designated for recreational use.

Wheelchair user Justin Lunn said jetty access was a common problem. A national wheelchair rugby team reserve, Mr Lunn hoped to soon take members of the WA team to the South-West for an end-of-season wind-up. But he feared weather or safety concerns might stop the team from whale-watching.

Last month, Mr Mitchell sent letters expressing concern about disability access at Augusta and Dunsborough to local politicians and State ministers, including Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan.

Ms MacTiernan said she was aware of the problems with marine facilities at Augusta and had asked the Department for Planning and Infrastructure to re-examine the situation.



**Angry:** Justin Lunn is furious over the lack of access to whale-watching charter operator Steve Mitchell's boat in Dunsborough. PICTURE: JOHN EVANS

Source: J. Lunn

<sup>5</sup> Harrop & O'Brien (2004)

## **STRATEGY 3**

### **TO EFFECTIVELY MARKET AND PROMOTE ACCESSIBLE TOURISM PRODUCTS**

#### **PROMOTION**

1. Ensure accessibility information is included in all promotional material (see Strategy 2). Ensure a reference is made to accessibility on your home page. See Appendix 1 for examples.
2. Promote your ability to meet individual needs
3. Utilise photographic promotional material
  - a. A detailed photo gallery on your website, including pictures of customers with disabilities enjoying your tour.
  - b. Photos of a diverse spectrum of customers on your brochures to promote your tour being accessible to a wide range of people
4. Establish web links with other accessible tour operators, facilities and information databases (eg. NICAN)

#### **CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

5. Feature customer comments on your website
6. Establish a working relationship with a previous customer with a disability who is willing to answer questions from potential customers eg. set up an email link for that person to reply, as given in the example below from Wilderness Inquiry.

*Hi, I'm Janet Peterson and I have been on over 25 WI trips since 1978, from kayaking in the Apostle Islands to horsepacking in the Colorado Rockies. If you've got questions about a trip--equipment needs, disability issues in the outdoors, the kind of food you'll be eating, the weather to expect, or the kind of wildlife you'll see--complete and submit the form below. I'll get back to you with an answer quickly!*

Wilderness Inquiry (2004)

#### **EXTERNAL MARKETING**

7. Choose your market segment – if unable to direct marketing at all people, promote your tour to a particular market eg. people with vision impairments



8. Support specific programs or events where potential consumers may be (eg conferences)<sup>6</sup>

*Did you know?  
People with and without disabilities exhibit stronger brand loyalty toward products that are affiliated with disabled causes.*

Ray & Ryder (2003)

9. Establish partnerships with, or send promotional material to, consumer organisations eg. Recreation Network; Association for the Blind (See Recommended Resources)
10. Gain exposure through travel media eg. Getaway, travel magazines, local newspapers



Source: J. Lunn

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<sup>6</sup> Ray & Ryder (2003)

## **STRATEGY 4**

### **TO HAVE AN INCREASED AWARENESS OF EQUIPMENT THAT MAY IMPROVE ACCESS IN NATURAL AREAS**

Design and production of specialised equipment to enhance access to outdoor recreation is a rapidly growing area, particularly in the United States and Canada. The examples provided in this report are samples only, as it is beyond the scope of this project to explore the multitude of equipment available.

#### **STANDARD EQUIPMENT**

**1. Old conveyer belts or carpet**

To put on sandy areas to enable a good surface for people with mobility impairments

**2. Bean bag in a boat**

To enable someone with balance problems or poor trunk control to be seated safely in a boat

**3. Adaptations to Kayaks/canoes/rafts**

Various changes to seating systems, paddle grips, and leg position can create a more efficient and safe paddling environment. Foam, duct tape, plastic chairs, camping seats, old bike tubes, boat buoys etc can be used to make countless adaptations<sup>7</sup>. See Appendix 2 for further information.



**4. Sturdy camp beds**

Ensure that they are firm and high enough for easy transferring.

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<sup>7</sup> Adaptive Adventures (2004)

## 5. Portable ramps

## 6. Bathing and toileting equipment

- a. Folding over toilet frame with handles
- b. Folding bedside commode with swing away arm rests
- c. Shower chair with back and arm rests

Folding over toilet frame



Shower chair



## SPECIALISED EQUIPMENT

### 7. The TrailRider

The TrailRider, developed by BCMOS, is a lightweight aluminium vehicle, resembling a wheelbarrow with two handles at the front and two at the back. A large pneumatic tyre enables it to roll over rocky, rough terrain, tree roots and through streams. Two people push/ pull the TrailRider<sup>8</sup>

The TrailRider



### 8. Wilderness Inquiry “Rickshaw”

A device developed by Wilderness Inquiry, called the “Rickshaw” which quickly converts a wheel chair into a two-wheeled cart that dramatically increases mobility on rough terrain<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> BCMOS (2004)

<sup>9</sup> Wilderness Inquiry (2004)

## 9. The Freedom Tent

BlueSky Designs, an American company, has developed an accessible tent that can be set up by a person seated in a wheelchair. The door is zipperless and can be opened with minimal dexterity<sup>10</sup>. See Appendix 3 for further information.

The Freedom Tent



## 10. Beach wheelchairs

Lightweight chairs which enable access to the sandy shore and water

Beach Chairs



## 11. Adapted hand cycles or tandem bicycles

See Appendix 4 for further information.

Hand Cycles



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<sup>10</sup> BlueSky Designs (2004)

## 12. Universal Canoe Seat

Beneficial Designs, a Nevada-based company that develops assistive and adaptive technology, is working with Wilderness Inquiry to design a new universal canoe seat for their fleet of boats.

## 13. Specialised off road vehicles

The ARGO is an amphibious vehicle that enables people with mobility impairments to access 4x4 terrain. It is reported to be a low impact vehicle.

The ARGO



Source: J. Lunn

## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Many individuals requiring specialised equipment will have their own, and will need to bring essential items with them. They may include:

- a. Wheelchair
- b. Pressure relieving seat cushion
- c. Bathing/ toileting equipment
- d. Personal hygiene items

14. Staff must treat personalised equipment carefully as damage to specialised equipment can cause significant difficulties, particularly in remote areas.

15. Request information about equipment needs and likely items that will be brought on the tour, prior to departure. Extra storage space on the tour vehicle may be required.

## GUIDE DOGS

Some people with vision impairments are accompanied by specially trained guide dogs. A customer may bring their guide dog with them on your tour. Special permits may be required in advance to ensure access of the guide dog into natural areas.

## STRATEGY 5

### TO CONSIDER PRICING ALTERNATIVES FOR TOURISM PRODUCTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

#### REDUCE TOURISM COSTS

1. Reduce the tour price, or offer alternatives, for the individual if they are physically unable to access certain attractions, or components of your tour.
2. Give a discounted price for an accompanying carer (some people with disabilities require the assistance of a carer to complete core activities of daily living such as bathing and dressing).

*Probably the most difficult barrier for me to go away is finding a carer...Family and friends are not [always] suitable. If a friend does come away with us, we feel like we have to pay for their trip as well as finding some way of giving them wages! It is so expensive to pay double price...*

Darcy (2003, p. 7)

#### INCENTIVES

3. To encourage repeat business, offer a discount or bonus activity for future bookings.
4. Offer incentives for previous customers to introduce new customers to your trips.



## **STRATEGY 6**

### **TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUES FOR ALL CUSTOMERS**

Nature based interpretation aims to:

- make people aware of the natural world
- enhance a sense of wonder and the capacity to enjoy
- stimulate interest in environmental protection<sup>11</sup>

The key principles of interpretation are to:

- have active involvement and the engagement of first hand experiences
- facilitate the maximum use of the senses
- foster self discovered insights
- be relevant and useful to the visitor
  - target visitors interests and motivations
  - layering (ensure the information can reach many different levels at the same time. For example, children and adults with different knowledge levels)<sup>11</sup>.

### **MAXIMUM USE OF THE SENSES**

1. Ensure your interpretation techniques facilitate each of the senses equally. This will ensure your customers gain a satisfying interpretive experience. It will also ensure that customers who have specific disabilities are catered for (eg. vision or hearing impairment). Table 5 includes examples of the different senses.

Table 5. Examples of the senses

<b>Sense</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Sound	A bird call; the power of a waterfall; the wind rushing through a gorge
Smell	Crushed leaves from a bush; scent of an animal
Taste	Bush tucker; bitterness of leaves
Sight	Colour differences in foliage; a camouflaged animal
Texture	The different textures of bark on trees; the shape of particular leaves

<sup>11</sup> Newsome, Moore & Dowling (2002)

## TECHNIQUES FOR PEOPLE WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT

2. Provide a written copy of the information verbally spoken throughout the tour, including interesting and funny stories
3. Consider utilising an interpreter who is proficient in sign language for the tour, if you have a group of interested customers

*...It was a very good tour because we also had a guide who used sign language – so we didn't miss anything. (female, 11 years old)*

Flamingo Tours (2004)

4. Utilise specialist and consumer knowledge eg. the WA Deafness Council to recommend effective techniques to enhance your tours

## TECHNIQUES FOR PEOPLE WITH A VISION IMPAIRMENT

5. Change how you alert customers to certain sights and attractions. Rather than saying “see over there” and using a hand gesture, “explain” what you are seeing.
6. Explore places through descriptive words, smells, touch and sound<sup>12</sup>. This will enhance the experience for all customers, those with and without disabilities.

*...They...told me how deep the water was [and] took me walking over the “Seven Star Bridge” and I could feel every brick under my feet. There are bends on the bridge...We walked across the ponds under the falls...we all got wet. We also walked into the caves behind the falls. What a memorable experience for my entire life.*

Yau (2002, p.640)

7. If a self paced tour is included in the trip, utilising written information, have it read onto audio, or alternatively encourage another group member to accompany the person, reading out the brochure.
8. Utilise specialist and consumer knowledge eg. the Association for the Blind to recommend effective techniques to enhance your tours.

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<sup>12</sup> Yau (2002)



## **FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This report has discussed potential strategies for tour operators in natural areas to enhance access for people with disabilities. To enable an integrated approach to tourism accessibility at a state and national level, further strategies will need to be developed.

1. Facilitate the involvement of people with disabilities in the tourism industry, including policy and planning, as well as operations.
2. Encourage tourism educational institutions to include disability access issues in the core units of training.
3. Employ disability access consultants in major tourism organisations, ensuring they also have a thorough understanding of the tourism industry eg. Tourism WA and The Department of Conservation and Land Management.
4. Develop an accreditation section on disability access that could be added to existing accreditation programs for tour operators.
5. Develop access criteria for licensing tour operators within The Department of Conservation and Land Management
6. Produce a pamphlet, in collaboration with Disability Services Commission, outlining strategies to improve access, for tour operators.
7. Develop strong partnerships between the tourism and disability sectors.
8. Develop a centralised information data base regarding accessible tourism products for consumers, that is linked to similar national and international web sites.
9. Establish assistance programs, grant schemes and incentives to encourage tourism operators to improve the accessibility of their tourism products.
10. Provide assistance to tourism operators and the transport industry to facilitate purchase of accessible and affordable transport vehicles.
11. Encourage the tourism industry to conduct careful planning and management to ensure wilderness values are not compromised when enhancing access for people with disabilities.

12. Develop financial assistance programs for people with disabilities to utilise travel and tourism products. This may include subsidised payment for essential personal care items that may not be considered “standard” under the regular health care schemes. For example, more expensive continence aids may be required to ensure effectiveness in remote/ harsh conditions. Subsidies for personal care attendants are also recommended.
13. Incorporate different market segments of people with disabilities into the Healthy Parks, Healthy People program being conducted by CALM.
14. Conduct further academic research into travel and tourism accessibility for people with disabilities. This could be steered by the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre, in addition to disability and health research organisations. Future directions of research should include: customer needs and wants; customer spending patterns; the benefits of accessing nature based tourism products for people with disabilities; effectiveness of recommended strategies to enhance accessibility for people with disabilities; types of equipment available and its effectiveness in facilitating outdoor recreation and tourism; and tourism operator perspectives regarding disability access issues.

## CONCLUSION

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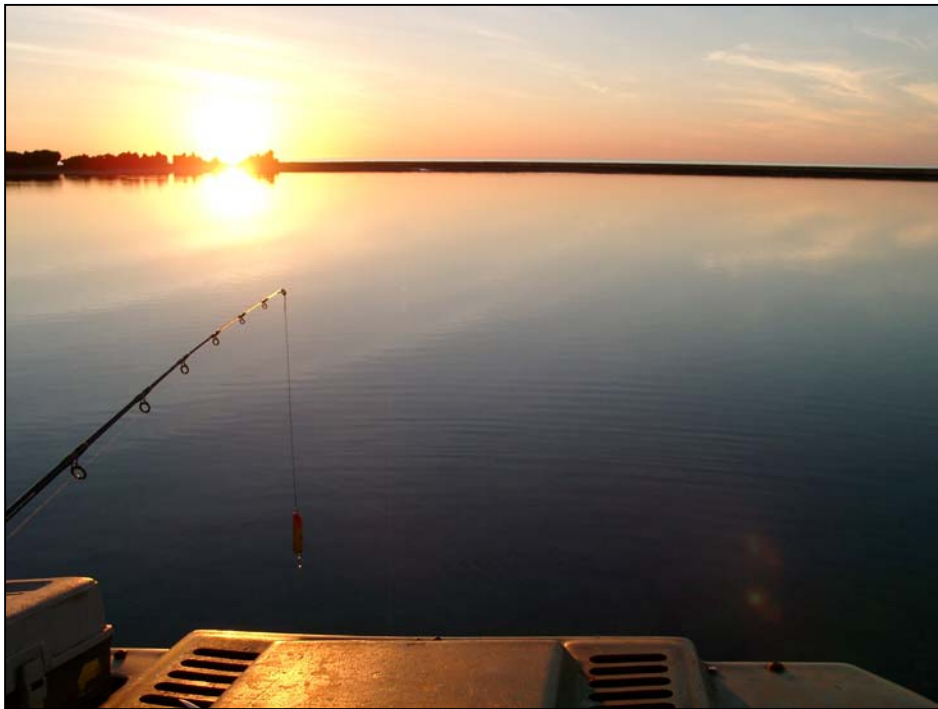
This report has demonstrated that there are three key reasons why tourism operators should provide accessible tourism products: social conscience and sustainability; good business; and legislation. Enjoyment of travel and tourism is often a key component of living a full life in developed countries, and where possible, organisations providing services to the public should ensure their services can be enjoyed by all. The number of people with disabilities is increasing globally, and therefore demand for tourism products that are accessible to all will continue to expand. People with disabilities have been found to be very loyal to providers that are sensitive to their needs and the economic benefits of attracting the market are greater than previously thought. As society increases the acceptance of equal opportunities for all, the threat of litigation is likely to increase due to stronger enforcement of the Disability Discrimination Act (1993).

In regards to natural areas, people with and without disabilities have been shown to value access to nature for similar reasons. General health benefits of accessing nature have been shown to include physical, psychological and spiritual well being. Neither people with or without disabilities feel that the pristine condition or challenge of the wilderness should be altered significantly to facilitate access, despite the barriers for people with disabilities to access natural areas being significantly greater than built areas.

Barriers to tourism participation for people with disabilities consist of both internal and exogenous, two of the most significant being attitudes of tourism providers towards people with disabilities; and inaccuracy, or lack of, information regarding accessibility. Barriers to provision of accessible tourism products existed for the sample of tour operators used in this report. They reported high financial costs; difficulties accessing amenities in remote areas; inaccessible transport; and limited time to adequately meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Six strategies to enhance access to natural areas for people with disabilities were outlined. These were: increasing tour operator knowledge of disability access issues; ensuring information accuracy and accessibility; marketing and promotion techniques; equipment to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities; pricing considerations; and effective interpretation techniques to enable tourism products to be enjoyed by all.

To enable an integrated approach to tourism accessibility, strong partnerships are required between all stakeholders, including the tourism industry and health and disability organisations. Proactive strategies are needed, including assistance programs and grant schemes for both people with disabilities and tourism operators are needed. The need for further academic research is strongly indicated, particularly regarding tour operator perspectives of disability access and the effectiveness of implemented strategies for people with disabilities.



*Source: J. Lunn*

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## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

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### Accessible websites

The following websites have been recommended by access consultants to assist with making websites accessible to all<sup>13</sup>.

<http://trace.wisc.edu/>

<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

<http://www.e-bility.com/index.php>

<http://www.w3.org>

### Association for the Blind

Association for the Blind is able to provide comprehensive information about blindness and low vision. They are able to produce material in alternative formats such as audio tape and Braille.

Phone: (08) 9311 8202

Freecall 1800 658 388

Email: [mailbox@abwa.asn.au](mailto:mailbox@abwa.asn.au)

Web: [www.abwa.asn.au](http://www.abwa.asn.au)

### Deafness Forum Limited

Deafness Forum represents the deaf and hearing impaired in Australia.

Phone: (02) 6262 7808

Email: [info@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:info@deafnessforum.org.au)

Web: [www.deafnessforum.org.au](http://www.deafnessforum.org.au)

### Disability Services Commission (DSC)

DSC provides extensive information through their comprehensive website regarding issues of access and universal design, including the "Access Resource Kit".

Phone: (08) 9426 9200

Email: [dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au)

Web: [www.dsc.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au)

### GuestAbility publication.

A free publication to assist managers of accommodation facilities to better understand and meet the requirements of guests of all ages and abilities. A sample self assessment checklist of the accessibility of accommodation is included.

For copies: Independent Living Centre of WA (Inc)

Phone: (08) 9381 0600

Web: [www.ilc.com.au](http://www.ilc.com.au)

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<sup>13</sup> Harrop & O'Brien (2004)



**Independent Living Centre of WA (Inc.)**

The ILC provides impartial advice on equipment and resources for people with disabilities. Specialised equipment is available for hire.



Phone: (08) 9381 0600  
Email: [enquiry1@ilc.com.au](mailto:enquiry1@ilc.com.au)  
Web: [www.ilc.com.au](http://www.ilc.com.au)

**NICAN**

NICAN is an Australia wide information provider on recreation, tourism, sport and the arts for people with disabilities. Accessible accommodation can be listed on the NICAN website after completing a self assessment checklist.

Freecall: 1800 806 769  
Email: [info@nican.com.au](mailto:info@nican.com.au)  
Web: [www.nican.com.au](http://www.nican.com.au)

## **APPENDIX 1**

<p> Photographing Kruger National Park Elephant</p>	<p></p>
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[Home](#)   [Trip Info](#)   [Register](#)   [About Us](#)   [Get Involved](#)   [News](#)   [Contact Us](#)

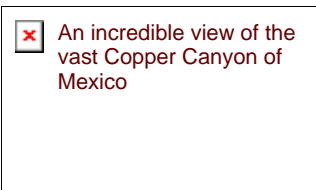
## Bringing People Together in the Wilderness

Sharing outdoor adventure with everyone is our mission – and our passion. WI offers a wide variety of canoe, sea kayak, dogsled, raft, horse pack and hiking trips throughout North America and the World.

These trips are fun, interesting, and, we think, a great value, but they are only part of our story. The unique thing about Wilderness Inquiry is that we make the outdoors accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities. We hope to see you on the trail!

**FEATURED DESTINATION:**

### Mexico's Copper Canyon

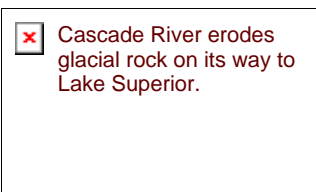


An incredible view of the vast Copper Canyon of Mexico

From the world renowned Chihuahua-Pacific Railroad, explore Mexico's Copper Canyon wilderness, a series of six massive canyons four times larger than our own Grand Canyon.

**FEATURED DESTINATION:**

### Superior Hiking Trail Women's Fall Escape

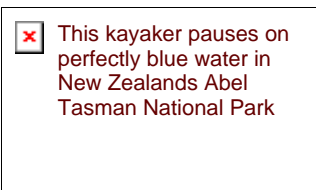


Cascade River erodes glacial rock on its way to Lake Superior.

Experience the serenity and amazing beauty of Minnesota's North Shore.

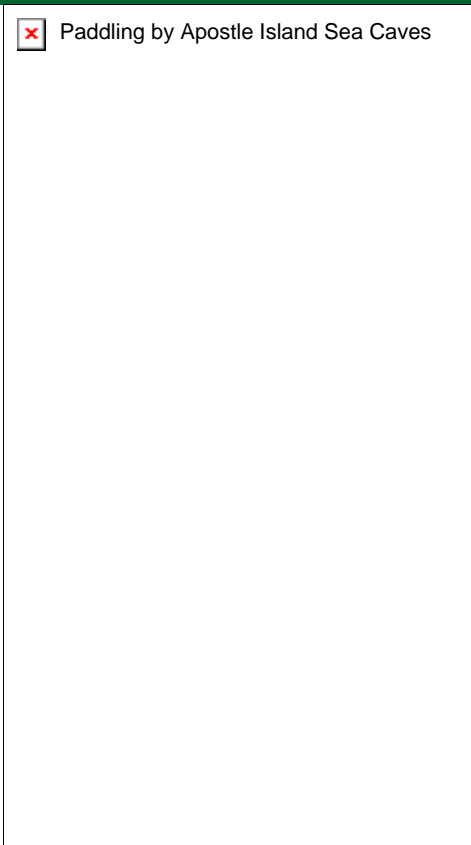
**FEATURED DESTINATION:**

### New Zealand - South Island Trekking



This kayaker pauses on perfectly blue water in New Zealand's Abel Tasman National Park

The national parks of New Zealand's South Island offer the best trekking in the world.



Paddling by Apostle Island Sea Caves

## Find a trip by:

**Destination**

**Activity**

**Group Type**

**Date**

**Interested in a Fall Internship with Wilderness Inquiry?**

**Enter your WI trip shots in our 2005 photo contest!**



[Click Here for All 42 Destinations!](#)

## **APPENDIX 2**



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## Adaptive Canoeing, Kayaking and Rafting A level paddling field

As people with disabilities continue to explore beyond the parking lot and into the great outdoors, the varied paths they take often lead to the water. Flowing freely across the surface, exercising, socializing, developing new skills, experiencing nature, testing personal limitations, and fun are just some of the great reasons for canoeing and kayaking. The relative affordability and ease of getting into paddle sports make them especially attractive activities for people of all abilities. Paddling emphasizes ability with water acting as the great equalizer. T-10 para Jack Wade has recently taken up kayaking says "Kayaking puts you close to the water...at one with your surroundings. Often the feeling of being disabled is left on the shore."

With the reduction of friction, gravity, and wind, water sports have begun to flourish in the adaptive sports arena. Often using standard equipment water sports offer a world of opportunity for individuals of all ages and abilities. Activities such as kayaking, canoeing, whitewater rafting, water-skiing, wakeboarding, jet skiing, sailing, swimming, and fishing are just some of the many recreation opportunities available to the entire community. Often little or no adaptations are necessary to make water sports accessible to disabled individuals.

Kayaking continues to grow in popularity in all areas of the country. Kayaks come in different lengths, widths, and hull shapes designed for various types of water conditions. They are usually made from lightweight, modern materials such as Kevlar, fiberglass, and polyethylene plastic. The basic design and concept of the kayak is ageless. Its beauty lies in its simplicity and opportunity in its adaptability.

As is the case with all kayakers, the disabled individual must choose the type of kayak that meets their specific needs. The four primary kayaks styles offered are 1) sit-on-top or "open decked," 2) sea or "touring," 3) white-water, and 4) inflatable. Kayaks also come in individual or tandem designs. The tandem works especially



well for beginners, children, people with visual impairments, and individuals who can only generate limited paddling power.

The world of paddling continues to expand to individuals of all abilities through a growing number of programs developing around the country. A common trend is the integration of paddlers of all abilities in all areas of paddling. The American Canoe Association (ACA) promotes the benefits of canoeing and kayaking for everyone, and has published a book on "Canoeing and Kayaking for Persons with Physical Disabilities." Even more importantly, paddling programs around the country have taken the time and made the adaptations to level the paddling field for the disabled. From California to Connecticut, Minnesota to Florida, the opportunity to paddle exists.

Although standard kayaks are used for the disabled, some adaptations and modifications can be used to make the experience more enjoyable. The rule of thumb with adaptations is: use as much standard equipment as possible. Once adaptations have been made, using common sense and creative problem solving, instruction is basically the same for all individuals. Various changes to seating systems, paddle grips, and leg position can create a more efficient and safe paddling environment for an individual with a physical disability. Often common materials such as foam, duck tape, plastic chairs, camping seats, old bike tubes, boat buoys, and other storage shed type items can be used to make countless adaptations.

Safety considerations are important with all water sports. Some issues to consider include: proper clothing, approved personal flotation devices, sun protection, temperature regulation, ease of exit from the cockpit, and always paddle with a partner. All participants on the water should be evaluated for their degree of water safety.

The freedom offered by paddling overcomes the barriers presented by disabilities. Emphasis is always on the ability of the paddler, within the limits of the individual's disability. A recent young paddler summed it up best, "One of the things I love is being able to go out with all my friends and enjoy the water together. I can move around, explore, and exercise the same as everyone else." It's nice to be the same as everyone else.

Here are a few resources for additional information:

"Canoeing and Kayaking for Persons with Physical Disabilities" by the American Canoe Association: [www.acapaddler.org](http://www.acapaddler.org) or 703.451.0141

Professional Paddlesports Association: [www.propaddle.com](http://www.propaddle.com) or 616.472.2205

More information on paddling and other adaptive recreation activities can be obtained by contacting Adaptive Adventures at [Info@adaptive.org](mailto:Info@adaptive.org) or 303.679.2770



"Sea kayaking is like backpacking to me, except everything is stored in the boat and paddling replaces walking. I can explore unique environments and challenges independently."

## **History of Adaptive Paddling**

Paddling is a sport that emphasizes ability. Skill is determined by ability and attitude, whether the paddler is able-bodied or disabled. The freedom offered by paddling pushes aside the barriers presented by disabilities. Water is the ultimate equalizer.

The emphasis is always on the ability of the paddler within the limits of the individual's disability. Some of the benefits of paddling include:

Emphasis on Ability; Provides good exercise; Challenging; Independence; Can participate with family and friends; Readily available in many places; Safe and Affordable; Combines with other activities (camping, fishing, etc.); Fun!

## **Adaptive Paddling Equipment**

### **Sit-on Top Kayaks**

Sit-on-top or "open-decked" kayaks work well in warm climates and for individuals that need little seating adaptation. The biggest advantage is ease of entry and exit. The negative aspects of sit-on-tops include a higher center of gravity and the fact that individuals must have enough upper-body strength or use of their feet to perform in-water rescues. Seat modifications can be made to add lateral stability to this kayak.

### **Inflatable Kayaks - "Duckies"**

Inflatables or "duckies" work well for people with higher injury levels or who have some balance issues. These kayaks are easy to adapt with seating systems, and provide more stability in whitewater. One of the drawbacks is that inflatables can catch wind easily and become difficult to maneuver.

### **Sea Kayaks**

Sea kayaks are well-suited for most people. They track well and come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. For some individuals with balance problems, a sea kayak will not work without additional support. Outriggers can be added to one or both sides, which adds a tremendous amount of stability.

### **Tandem Kayaks**

Tandem kayaks enable beginners, individuals with visual impairments and individuals who have little paddling power to participate. The paddling partner or instructor in the stern seat provides assistance with paddling, steering and safety issues.

### **Canoe Adaptations**

### **Paddle Adaptations**

Standard paddles can be easily adapted for paddlers with single-arm amputation or for the individuals with weaker grip in one or both hands. Using gripping materials on the paddle can assist paddlers with visual impairments in learning the proper grip and hand placement on the paddle. Another helpful adaptation uses old pieces of bike tubing. For individuals with impaired grip, four pieces of bike tubing can be assembled with pull-ties and electrical tape to create an adapted hand grip.

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[Adaptive Adventures](#) | P.O. Box 2245 Evergreen, CO 80437  
303 / 877.679.2770 | Fax: 303.670.8290 | email: [info@edaptive.org](mailto:info@edaptive.org)  
**Chicago Office -230 Greenleaf Ave. Wilmette, IL 60091**  
**847.251.8445 or 866.679.2770**



## **APPENDIX 3**

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- [Accessible Tents](#)

- Freedom Tent

- [Garden Rocker](#)

- [TV/VCR Remote](#)

- [Spinner](#)

- [Specs Switch](#)

- [The Drawing Board](#)



The **Freedom Tent** is available now!

### The Combination of Tent and Vestibule

[Eureka!](#) has licensed one of the resulting designs of the accessible tents project. The Freedom tent's key elements which improve accessibility are the door, which is zipperless, and can be opened with minimal dexterity, and the vestibule, which offers a protected area in which to store equipment.

**Buy the Freedom Tent, \$329 plus shipping, directly from BlueSky Designs. [Order online now.](#)**

You can also view or print an [order form](#) with Acrobat Reader.



### Freedom Tent Features and Benefits

- » patent-pending zipperless door
- » easy access door requires minimal dexterity and reach
- » 36" door opening with flush entry
- » can be set up from seated position
- » can roll in bikes, strollers, wheelchairs
- » large usable vestibule area
- » mesh roof with removable fly
- » flexibility for multiple uses
- » window/side entry doors in sleeping area

[>>Spec Sheet](#)

[>>Video clips are available on the Accessible Tents page](#)



Editor's Choice in Camping Life magazine.



Dianne Goodwin, director of research and development for BlueSky Designs, who does not use a wheelchair, demonstrates a tent for the physically disabled, developed by her company and produced commercially by the outdoor company Eureka..

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## **APPENDIX 4**



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**Cycling**

Paddle Sports

Water-ski & Wakeboard

Sailing

**March 2005:** For Details about the 2005 Cycling Season & beyond...

**[VISIT OUR NEW CYCLING WEBSITE EXPANSION](#)**

This page will not be updated after March 1, 2005.

[History](#) | [Equipment](#) | [Articles](#) | [Events](#) | [Resources](#)

## The Adaptive Cycling Experience

The Adaptive Cycling Experience 2004 is looking better than ever following a new partnership with **Wells Fargo** and added support from American Furniture Warehouse, Frontier Airlines, and Hollister International. With expanded recreational programs, kids camps, clinics, and group rides, Adaptive will put more people on bikes than ever before. In addition to growing our grass roots programs, we will once again present the **Rocky Mountain Cycling Omnium and USHF National Criterium Championships**. Under the guidance of Ian Lawless, the Omnium, now in its 5th year, is like a whole NEW event.



Page  
Sponsored by:



## NEW PROGRAMS FOR 2004...

**Well Fargo Handcycling Demos and Clinics - Front Range, CO**  
**Group & Family Recreational Rides - Denver Metro & Northern IL**

**National Adaptive Cycling Festival - Park City, UT**  
**Adaptive Cycling Team / Bicycle Tour of Colorado**  
**Stars of Tomorrow / TREK Youth Sports Camp - Lake Bluff, IL**  
**Tournament of Champions - Greeley, CO**

Our focus on increasing opportunities for children in cycling will also feature an expanded schedule at the **Colorado Jr. Wheelchair Sports camp** and a new Stars of Tomorrow Youth Sports Camp in Lake Bluff, IL.

## NEW Partnership with Great Lakes Adaptive Sports

Also new for 2004 is our expanded partnership in programing and fundraising with GLASA. We have worked together for the past three years on a few well received water-ski and cycling events. So, with a new office in Wilmette, it only seemed natural to join forces in the cycling arena.

In an effort to offer expanded adaptive cycling opportunities in the Chicago / Milwaukee area, our organizations have developed a more formal partnership. The initial focus for 2004 will be on group and family rides throughout the summer and fall. Our eventual goal is to duplicate the successful *Adaptive Cycling Experience* trailer in the



Midwest.

Additionally, we will co-sponsor the New Stars of Tomorrow / TREK Youth Sports camp to be held June 21-23 in Lake Bluff, IL. In order to help fund this exciting collaboration, we are doing a joint venture fundraiser. The Adaptive Sports Charity Golf Outing will be held August 9, 2004 at the exclusive Glen Flora Country Club in Waukegan, IL.

### Youth Cycling Programs

2003 marked a major expansion in the youth elements of The Adaptive Cycling Experience. Our goal is to be considered the national leader in youth handcycling opportunities. This season alone, expanded programming put more than 100 different disabled children on adaptive cycling equipment and produced nearly 250 program lessons! Over a dozen families attending different camps and clinics were able to purchase their own kids handcycles this season. For those that could not purchase their own equipment, we provided family rides and individual rentals to help get kids in bikes.

Our primary focus is on handcycling. Through a new, significant partnership agreement with the US Handcycling Federation, we hope to continue to grow and improve our youth handcycling programs next season.

For details, contact **Ian Lawless**, Cycling Director:  
[ian@adaptiveadventures.org](mailto:ian@adaptiveadventures.org) or call 303.679.2770.

Our goal is to enhance and further the "Adaptive Cycling Experience." This program encompasses a fully equipped mobile trailer and expert instructors capable of providing all the elements necessary for single or multi-day demos, camps, and clinics over a wide geographic range. We continue our work with individuals and groups of all sizes, both public and private, to help them understand and embrace the sport of cycling.



In 2003, for the 4th consecutive year, Adaptive Adventures presented an elite, national handcycling event in Colorado. The 2003 **Wells Fargo Rocky Mountain Handcycle Omnium** was the biggest USHF event this year. We added an instructional development camp for the first-time, and the racing was more exciting than ever! To read more about the June event [CLICK HERE](#).

We continue to sponsor athletes and work with people throughout the state and across the U.S. We sponsored and sent staff to officiate the **Midnight Sun Ultra Challenge** (presented by Challenge Alaska) handcycle/wheelchair race from Fairbanks to Anchorage, AK this year, and even sponsored an athlete -- Monica Bascio -- who won the women's division. Check out Monica's Diary [HERE](#).

**Need for this service in the community:** Cycling is popular form of physical exercise and social interaction practiced around the world. Adaptive cycling equipment (i.e. handcycles) offers a unique



opportunity for individuals with lower-mobility or other impairments to experience the joys and benefits of cycling. Spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, amputation, multiple sclerosis, you name it, adaptive cycling (and Adaptive Adventures) enables outdoor recreation -- for everyone. Because adaptive cycling is so new, it lacks exposure and availability around the country. In Chicago, were Mayor Daly is considered "the biking Mayor," there is not a handcycle available for use in any of the city programs! This is the case in countless cities and towns around the country The freedom and physical benefits of cycling should be available to all individuals regardless of Ability or disAbility. Creating cycling opportunities for individuals from all abilities and walks of life is what Adaptive Adventures is all about, and your partnership with us will insure that we succeed in reaching our goal.

**Reaching members of the community:** Adaptive cycling must be accessible. With so few programs in the U.S. that own handcycles, and that have the expertise to present it to their constituents, it can be difficult for an individual to find a demo, camp, or clinic. Adaptive Adventures overcomes this obstacle by partnering with leaders in the disability sports, and adaptive cycling community. As an official chapter of Disabled Sports, USA, we have the unique ability to promote our events to thousands across the country. We also have an official partnership with the United States Handcycling Federation (<http://www.ushf.org>), with whom we co-promote handcycle races and showcase the sport for newcomers who come to our clinics (which are run in conjunction with national-level races). In addition, we have an elite group of staff and volunteers who are adaptive cycling experts. This group includes Ian Lawless, a National Team Coach and world renowned handcycle expert; Matt Feeney - a former neo-professional offroad "chariot" racer and 8-time handcycle participant in the grueling Ride the Rockies tour; and Monica Bascio, an 8-time National Handcycling Champion and Occupational Therapist.



## History of Handcycling

Definition: Hand cycling is an alternative cycling sport for individuals who are interested in biking and have limited use of their lower extremities. Most hand cycles are designed with three wheels instead of the normal two-wheeled bicycles and allow the user to peddle and steer the vehicle using only their upper body. This three-wheel bike limits the need for balancing that a normal two-wheeled bicycle would require.

Hand cycling as been around for over 15 years and has dramatically grown in popularity during the past 5 years. Today, hundreds of individuals enjoy this sport throughout the world from elite Paralympic athletes to the individuals who just enjoy hand cycling for just for recreational purposes.

The United States Hand cycling Federation (USHF) is the official governing body for the development of hand cycling in America in both recreational and competitive natures and conducts several clinics and competitions throughout the year.

## Adaptive Cycling Equipment

## Recumbent vs. Upright Handcycles

You sit in an upright model in a manner similar to a wheelchair. In a recumbent model, your torso may be reclined somewhat, and your legs are out in front of you. Each has advantages.

Uprights are easier to transfer to and balance on, and their higher profile makes them more visible in traffic.

Leaners or recumbants are faster, have more gearing, are lighter, and are pretty much the choice for distance or competition riding.

## Lean vs. pivot steering

All uprights pivot steer, that is the front wheel turns, while the rest of the bike remains upright. Lean-to-steer handcycles are turned in part by leaning the cycle, which pivots at hinge points. The most popular lean-to-steer handcycle is manufactured by Freedom Ryder.

Some lean steer cycles can be problematic if you have concerns with trunk stability. At least one manufacturer, Invacare's Top End cycle, has a traditional pivot steering mechanism in a recumbent bike.

## Freedom Concepts Bike

Freedom Concepts, Inc. makes three-wheeled mobility devices (cycles) for a variety of disabilities and all ages. To explore the world of Freedom to to [www.freedomconcepts.com](http://www.freedomconcepts.com) Freedom Concepts has been creating a cycle of mobility for over 10 years. The goal is to allow every individual to experience the thrill of riding a bicycle with friends and family.

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