

The Accessibility Opportunity

Reaching Travelers with Evolving Needs

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PARTNERSHIP

wheel
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With You Today



August Erickson

*Director of Development Services,
Miles Partnership*



Alvaro Silberstein

*CEO & Co-Founder,
Wheel the World*



Agenda

1. What an Aging Demographic Means for DMOs
2. Making Owned Channels Accessible
3. Conveying Accessibility Across Digital Channels
4. Telling Your Accessibility Story Authentically
5. Q&A



Travel Is Life



Webinar Resources

Slides and other resources will be available at:

www.milespartnership.com/theaccessibilityopportunity

www.accessibility-verified.com/



The Accessibility Opportunity

What an Aging Demographic Means for DMOs



Boomer+ Traveler Segment

- 'Boomer+' is defined as any individuals born **before 1964**
- The 'Boomer+' demographic makes up **23.5% of the US population.**
- **11.4% of the 'Boomer+' Traveler Segment** reports having accessibility needs
 - With Mobility and Physical Impairments being the most common need



Boomer+ Traveler Segment

- Are planning taking an average of **3.8 leisure trips** over the next 12 months
- Are anticipating to spend an **average of \$6,379** on leisure travel over the next 12 months
- More likely to **stay in a hotel** (versus all other travelers)



Boomer+ Traveler Segment

- Are **LESS** likely to utilize travel agents (they conduct their own research)
- **45.2%** utilize official DMO resources to plan their travel
- **50.7%** list visiting historical sites as top travel passion



The Accessibility Opportunity

Making Owned Channels Accessible





INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE

What is Digital Accessibility?

The process of ensuring digital products (primarily websites) are accessible to those with disabilities.

At a very high level, this entails continuous analysis of digital products, to remove any digital barriers detected.



Important Acronyms:

ally » (Digital) Accessibility

UX » User Experience

ADA » Americans with Disabilities Act

WCAG » Web Content Accessibility Guidelines



What Are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?

- Internationally recognized **guidelines**, published and maintained by W3C.
- WCAG outlines specific success criteria which are designed to remove digital barriers for individuals with disabilities, and ensure digital content can be analyzed by **assistive technologies**.
- In short, they're the '**Gold Standard**' of digital accessibility.



What Are Assistive Technologies?

- Any technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.
- Some examples include:
 - Screen readers
 - Screen magnifiers
 - Speech input devices



Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Versions

- The current version of WCAG is **2.2** – which was finalized by W3C on October 5th 2023.
- Each version of WCAG is built “on top” or previous versions.
- As an example, WCAG **2.2** introduced 9 NEW success criteria, which were not outlined in WCAG **2.1**



Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Conformance Levels

- **Level A** is the minimum level of conformance.
- **Level AA** includes all Level A and AA success criteria and is the most widely used conformance level.
- **Level AAA** is the highest possible level and includes all Level A, AA, and AAA success criteria.
 - It is **not** recommended that Level AAA conformance be required as a general policy, as it is not possible to satisfy all Level AAA success criteria for some content.



Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility **has substantial SEO benefits**

- Example: Alternative (alt) text for images
 - Allows search engines to properly index images



» **Alt text:** Man laughs with friends while working on his laptop at a coffee shop.



The Curb-Cut Effect

By prioritizing digital accessibility, you're creating a better user experience for ALL





Alt Text

Best Practices

- Aim for less than 125 characters
- You don't need to include "photo" or "image"
- If an image includes text, provide that text within the alt text
- Be specific with locations and names
- AI generated alt text should always be manually reviewed



Alt Text

Best Practices

Alt text **extends beyond websites**

- You should provide alt text for photo content across social media platforms.
- Facebook and Instagram automatically generate alt text.
 - Which should be manually reviewed and modified if needed.



Digital
Accessibility

Add captions to video-based content used on your website

- YouTube and Vimeo support **automatic captioning** (powered by AI)
- Edit the automatic captions provided to ensure there's **proper punctuation**





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Accessibility Menu (CTRL+U)



US English (USA) ▾

Accessibility Profiles ▾

XL Oversized Widget



Screen Reader



Contrast +



Smart Contrast



Highlight Links



Bigger Text



Text Spacing



Pause Animations



Hide Images



Df

Dyslexia Friendly

Report a Problem

Manage





Digital
Accessibility

Work with your web provider, internal digital team, and/or a 3rd party provider:

- Analyze your website to detect accessibility issues (WCAG 2.2 AA violations).
- Then conduct prioritized remediations to resolve these issues.



Digital Accessibility should be viewed as a process, not a project

- Digital accessibility is an ongoing initiative
 - Modern websites are incredibly dynamic
 - Accessibility guidelines change over time
- It's best to address new accessibility issues as they arise, to **continue** to facilitate the best user experience possible for those with disabilities.





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Conveying Accessibility Across Digital Channels



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Our Mission:

Make travel accessible for people with disabilities and older adults — so everyone can explore the world without limits.

How we do it:

We help destinations and hospitality businesses verify, market, and improve their accessibility — **turning it into a competitive advantage.**



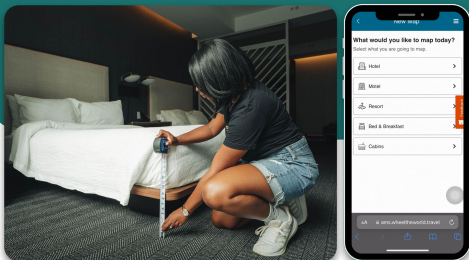
A Flywheel Model to Become the Gold Standard in Accessibility

Connecting traveler demand with accredited, verified supply

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Accessibility Verified

All in one solution for destinations and hospitality businesses to verify, improve, and market their accessibility

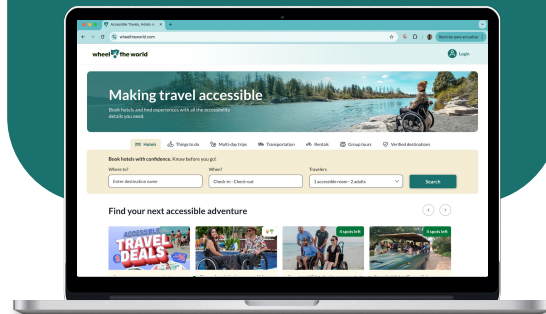


Make the World
Accessible



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Book hotels and experiences with all the accessibility details you need





In the U.S.

13 M

US travelers with disabilities take at least one trip a year

38 M

Trips annually, with one companion on average

\$25 B

Annual Travel Spent only considering their individual costs

74%

Encountered **obstacles** during trips

\$120B+ Global Accessible Travel Market

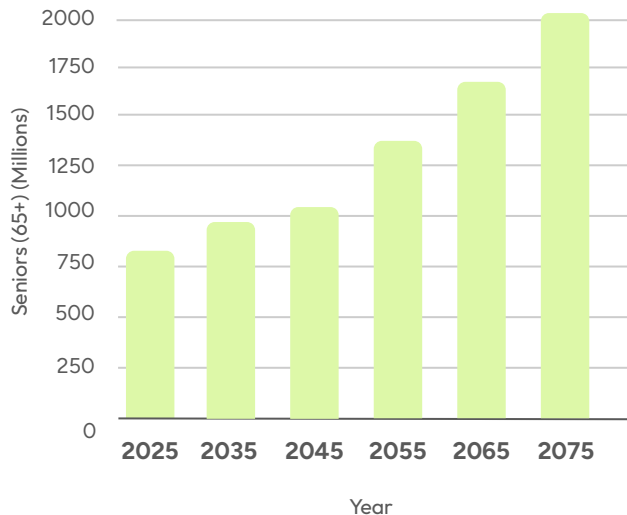
"Estimate includes US market (\$50B with travel companions) + global markets (US = ~20% of global leisure travel)"



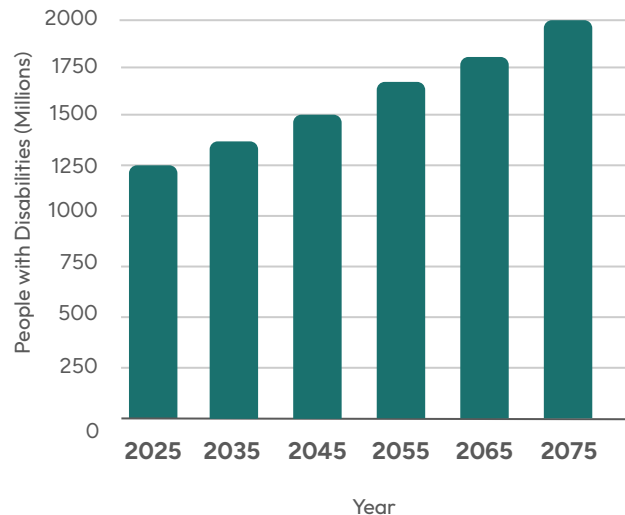
The accessible travel market is growing

The aging population is projected to increase the number of people living with disabilities globally from 1.3 billion today to 2 billion by 2075.

Global Population Aged 65+ Over Time



Global Population With Disabilities Over Time



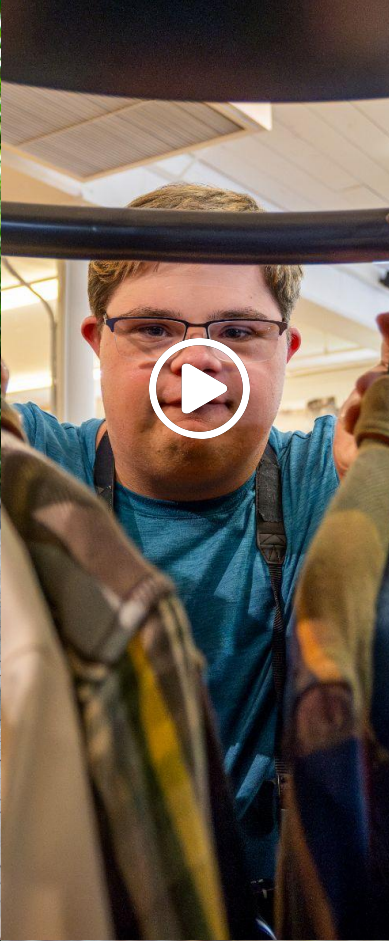
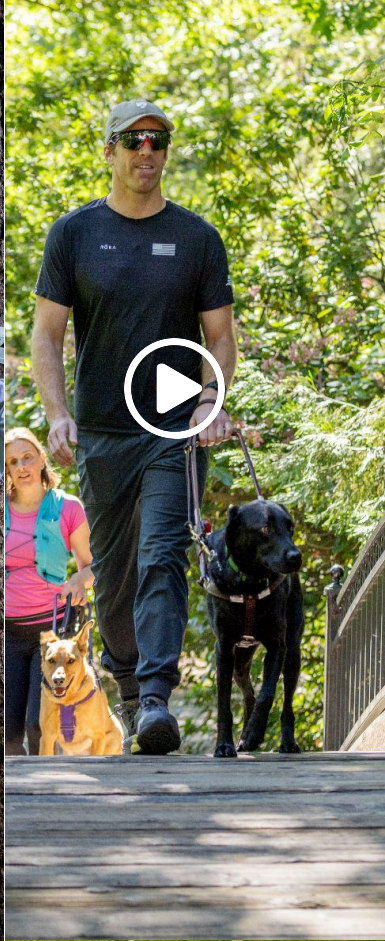


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27% of our community are people 65 years old and older...

... and they represent **37%** of our bookings

Oregon, Accessibility Happens here



Audience Insights



65%

Of views were over 60+ years old, 70% female.



3x

Higher conversion rate vs younger age groups.



The accessible travel market is no longer a niche market



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40% of sign ups are
companions

Airports evidence

Airlines reported **30%** annual growth in disability assistance requests (IATA 2025)



**How Destinations and
their partners should
take action?**



We All Want the Same Thing:
~~Uncertainty~~ → **Peace of Mind**



Avoid Generic Statements

Checking the box **VS.** Opening possibilities

ADA Compliant

Basic. Vague. Legally required.



ADA makes you compliant.

VS



ACCESSIBILITY VERIFIED

200+ data points travelers actually need



Verified information makes you trustworthy.



46% of Wheel the World users consider bed height when deciding to book a room

Min Bed Height (in)	Max Bed height (in)	%
17	20	6.80%
20	23	78.09%
23	26	12.47%
> 26	-	2.36%





Type of bathing facility

Strict Requirements

Type of bathing facility	% of properties
Roll-In Shower only	72.93%
Bathtub only	0.97%
Transfer shower only	0.77%

Combinations

Type of bathing facility	% of properties
Roll-In Shower	98.15%
Bathtub	25.00%
Transfer shower	2.64%



ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

- Detailed
- Precise (measurements)
- Contextualised (photos)
- End to end
- Trusted

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Build Knowledge & Education for accurate Customer Service

- Train your staff and partners' staff on accessibility best practices
- Appoint an accessibility advocate within your organization
- Build processes



Make Information Discoverable across Digital Channels

- Travelers with accessibility needs are digitally savvy and research-oriented
- Communicate detailed and structured information in your direct channels
- Visual confirmation: photos, measurements, floor plans.
- 40% of travel research starts with ChatGPT, Google AI.
- AI-powered travel assistants become more common.

This contact was created from AI Referrals from Chatgpt.com





Telling Your Accessibility Story Authentically

**Every destination can have
their accessibility story**





Only 2.2%
of media features
people with disabilities





Generate Real Accessibility Marketing Content

- Accessibility Guides, Video Content, Photos →
Make sure they are showcasing real experiences!
- Being transparent is better than being perfect
- Share real people, real experiences
- Avoid AI-generated photos or videos



curbfreecorylee  ...
Cory Lee | Wheelchair Travel Expert he/him
3,495 posts 59.6K followers 971 following

- ◆ I help wheelchair users travel
- ◆ 7 continents/56 countries via 
- ◆ 5x Webby / 9x Lowell Thomas Award winner
- ◆ ... more

 [a.co/d/05Bp4KC5](#) and 3 more

Prioritize acquisition channels with higher engagement

- Social: Baby Boomers are on Facebook for travel planning
- Travelers use Facebook communities to research accessible destinations — tap into them
- Search (SEM/SEO) remains #1—accessible travel keywords grew 22%

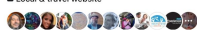


Curb Free with Cory Lee 

111K followers · 11 following

A travel blog devoted to sharing the world from a wheelchair user's perspective.

Local & travel website



 Message  Following  Search



Build Trust Through Partnerships, and be Consistent

- Partner with accessibility-focused companies and content creators.
- Feature real traveler reviews prominently on your site or guides
- Be consistent always allocating resources to generate new resources of accessibility information and content

Wheel the World source: The keyword “Accessible” has grown 22% YoY in 2025



Conveying Accessibility Across Digital Channels

1. Peace of mind comes from reliable, detailed, and trusted accessibility information
2. Build Knowledge & Education for accurate Customer Service
3. Make Information Discoverable across Digital Channels

Telling Your Accessibility Story Authentically

1. Every destination can have an accessibility story
2. Generate Real Accessibility Marketing Content
3. Prioritize acquisition channels with higher engagement
4. Build Trust Through Community, Partnerships, and Consistency





What an Aging Demographic Means for DMOs

1. This is a demographic that should be prioritized, given their frequency of travel and travel spend
2. It's important to provide information and content geared towards this demographic within your official DMO resources

Making Owned Channels Accessible

1. WCAG is the blueprint for digital accessibility efforts
2. Digital accessibility extends beyond just websites, and also applies to social media platforms
3. Digital accessibility should always be viewed as an ongoing initiative



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Q&A

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