



UNITED STATES KEY FINDINGS 2022

Exploring barriers to travel
among disabled people





BOOKING AND PLANNING TRIPS

Three in ten say they shouldn't have to book their trip with a specialist travel agency or provider.

Half (51%) of disabled people in the US tend to book their holidays directly with the travel provider, making this more common than through a travel agent (19%) or a mixture of both (11%).

Nearly a quarter (24%) say they use travel agents or providers that specialise in holidays for disabled people when booking their holiday. Two in five (38%) say they solely use travel agents or providers that do not specialise in holidays for disabled people, and the same proportion (38%) use both.



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of disabled people in the US tend to book their holidays directly with the travel provider, making this more common than through a travel agent.



Booking and Planning Trips

The reasons for not using disabled specialist agents or providers are more likely to be due to not feeling like they should have to, or not knowing that they exist, rather than anything to do with the service they offer.

Of those who don't use specialist agents or providers, almost two-fifths (39%) say this is because they don't need to.

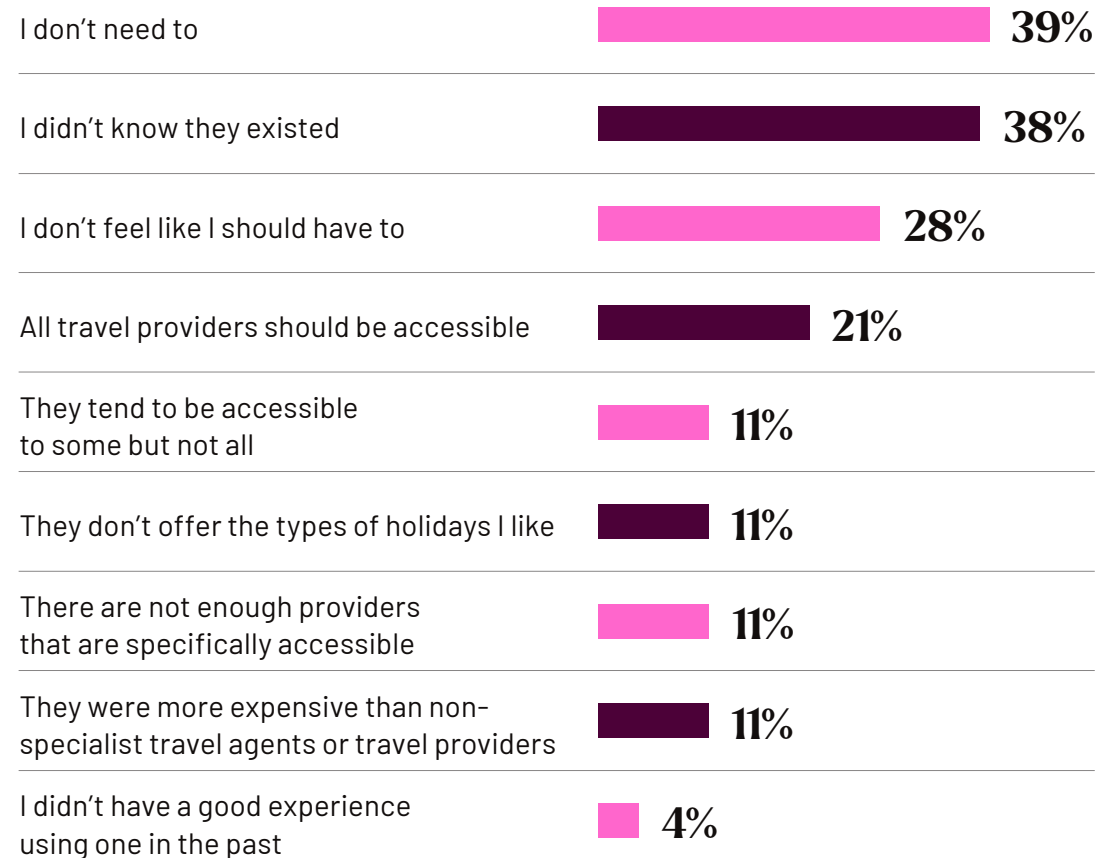
However, three in ten (28%) say they don't feel like they should have to and a fifth (21%) say they don't use them because all travel providers should be accessible to disabled people or people with long-term health conditions or impairments.

Only 11% said it's because they don't offer the types of holidays they like and just 4% said they've had a bad experience using them in the past.

Interestingly, nearly two-fifths (38%) of those who don't use specialists say this is because they didn't know they existed.

The reasons for not using disabled specialist agents or providers are more likely to be due to not feeling like they should have to.

Reasons for not using travel agents or providers that specialise in holidays for disabled people, among those who don't use them.



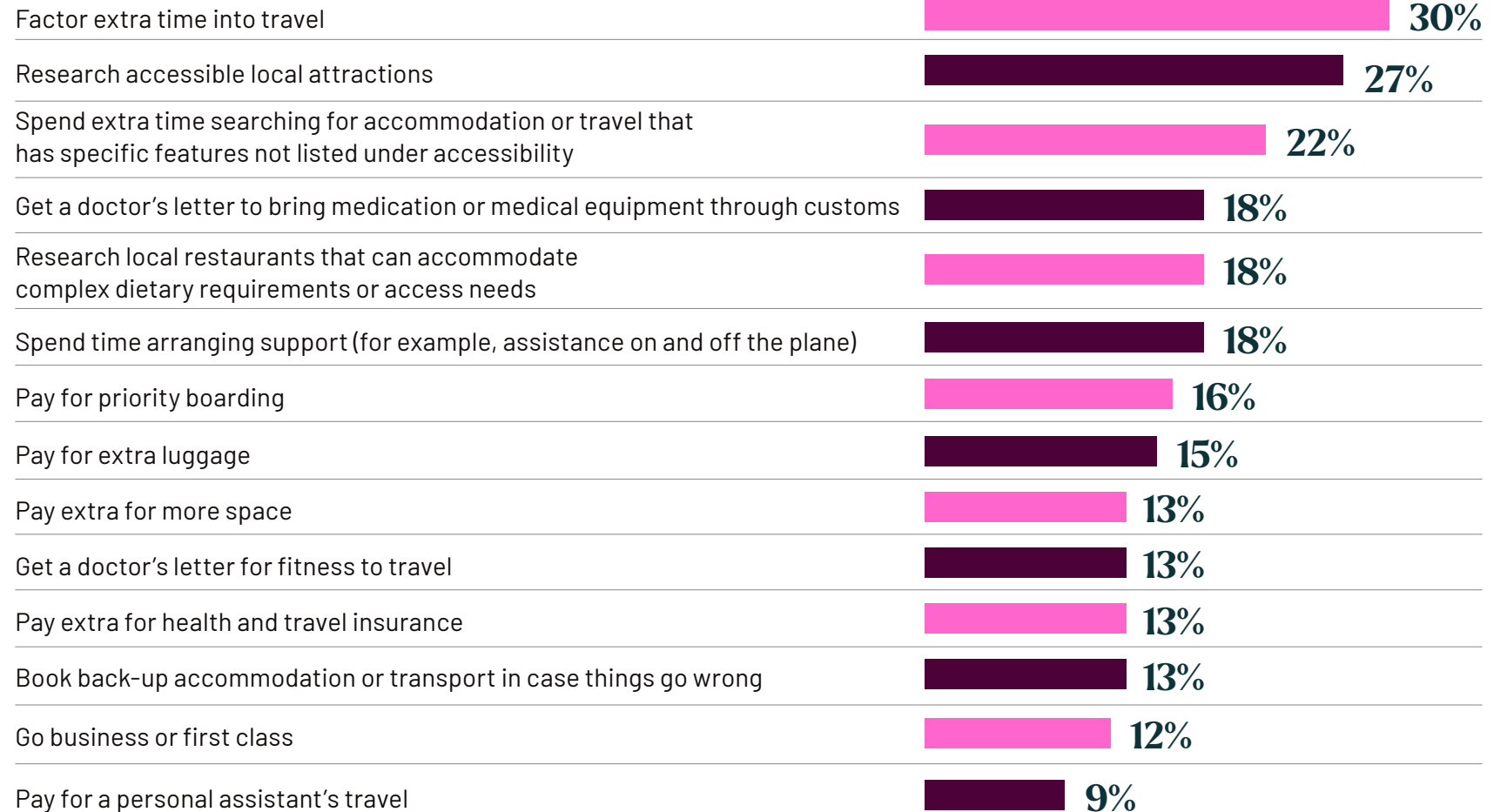


Booking and Planning Trips

A fifth say booking a holiday on a smartphone is difficult.

Booking a holiday online via a smartphone is reported to be the most difficult way to book a holiday among disabled people with 21% reporting this. This is compared to booking online using a computer (12% said this was difficult), booking over the phone (19% said this was difficult) and booking in person (19% said this was difficult).

Extra steps taken to ensure trips are as accessible.





Booking and Planning Trips

Three-quarters of disabled people have to take extra steps to make sure their holiday is accessible.

More than three-quarters (77%) of disabled people in the US said they have to do extra planning before a holiday to make sure it is accessible for them.

For disabled people, this most commonly involves having to factor extra time into their trip.



Think like you were disabled. How far is the room from parking? What happens if transport doesn't show up? Is there a back-up plan?

"If flying they definitely should think about the time between layovers. People with chronic problems are not going to be able to run or walk fast to get to the next flight. Maybe arrange help in that area."

One in eight (13%) said they have to pay extra for health and travel insurance, paying on average \$460 to ensure they're covered. One in eight (13%) also have to book back-up accommodation or transport in case things go wrong.



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The need for a back-up plan provided by travel providers was echoed in the advice disabled people gave to providers.

"Think like you were disabled. How far is the room from parking? What happens if transport doesn't show up? Is there a back-up plan?"

Three in ten (30%) said they have to factor extra time into travel and 18% spend time arranging support (for example, assistance on and off the plane) before their trip.

"Make sure that most of the people with disabilities have a chair waiting for them at the door as they get off the plane."



Booking and Planning Trips

Orlando, Florida, is considered the most accessible city.

Of those who have visited the most travelled cities in the world, disabled people in the US said that Orlando was the most accessible.

Of those who selected Orlando, 48% said this is because it has a wide variety of accessible accommodation, and 46% said it has accommodation that is close to cultural attractions, shops, and restaurants. Two in five (39%) said information is easily accessible, and three in ten (29%) said it's because museums and other cultural attractions have good accessibility support and facilities.

Interestingly, four out of the five most accessible cities are in the US according to US disabled people who have travelled to them.

The lack of cultural differences or language barriers in accessing information (39%) and clearly displayed signage (23%), as well as an inclusive attitude toward disabled people (26%) could be supported by the feeling of familiarity with the arrangements disabled travellers can expect.

The top five accessible cities, as voted by the survey participants of the USA are listed below.

- Orlando, FL (USA) - 25%
- Las Vegas, NV (USA) - 23%
- New York City, NY (USA) - 15%
- Los Angeles, CA (USA) - 10%
- London (UK) - 3%

Cities voted the most accessible:

Orlando, FL
(USA)

25%

Las Vegas, NV
(USA)

23%

New York City, NY
(USA)

15%

Los Angeles, CA
(USA)

10%

London
(UK)

3%



Booking and Planning Trips

Nearly two in three have been left in a difficult situation while travelling, causing stress and discomfort.

Nearly two in three (63%) listed at least one challenge they faced while travelling due to the agent or provider they were using not being accessible to disabled people.

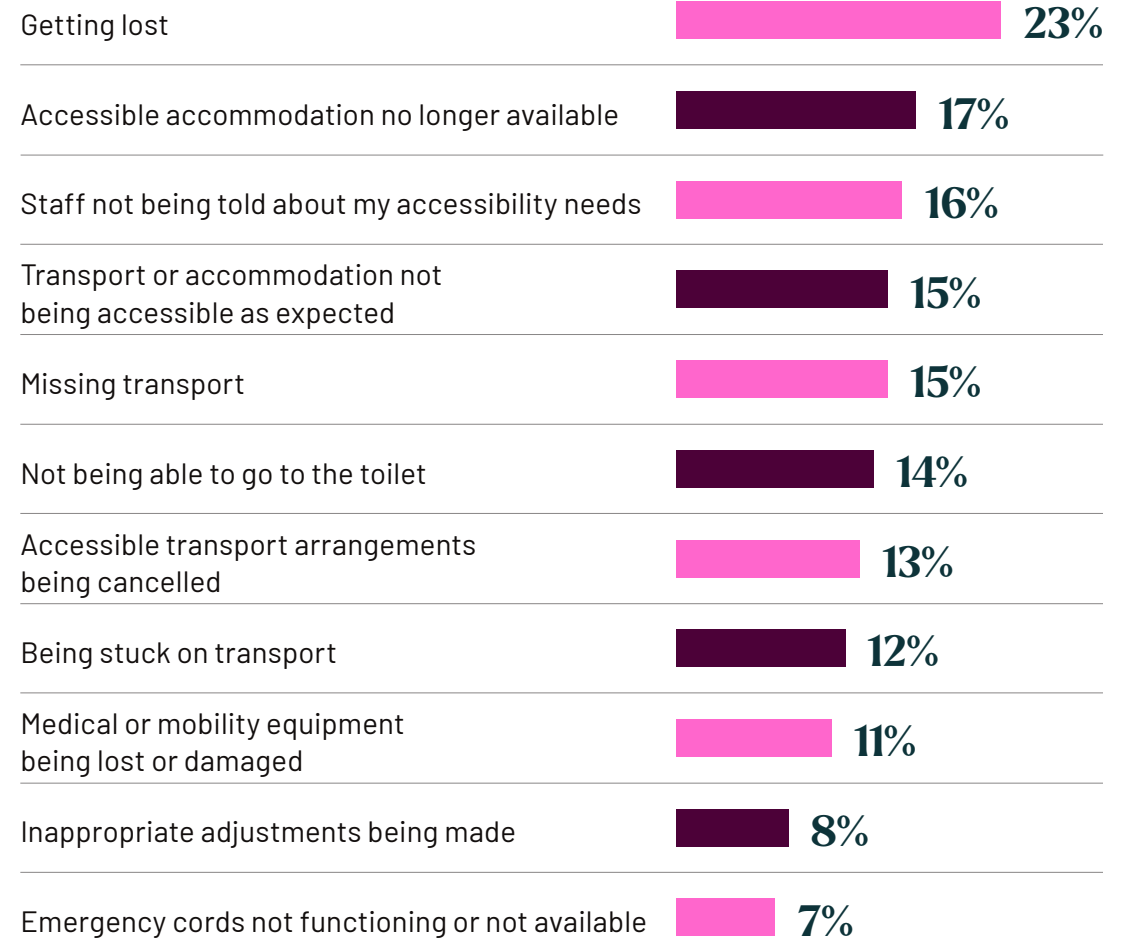
Nearly a quarter (23%) recall getting lost when travelling. One in six (17%) found out that accessible accommodation was no longer available, and a similar proportion (16%) found themselves in a situation where the staff were not told about their accessibility needs.

Almost half (47%) of those who experienced something happening to them due to the travel agent or provider not being accessible, said this caused them stress. More than a third (36%) said it made them uncomfortable. Feelings of embarrassment (25%), being ignored (21%) and disregarded (21%) were also common.

Concerningly, a fifth (19%) reported feeling scared and 18% unsafe.

Only one in eight felt safe, relaxed or comfortable (12%), while just one in ten felt satisfied or supported throughout the experience (both 10%).

Situations that have occurred due to travel agents or providers not being accessible to disabled people.





Booking and Planning Trips

Nearly a quarter said a stranger helped them out of a difficult situation.

Over a third (36%) of those who had a bad experience had to get out of the situation on their own, while one in four (27%) had to call upon a friend or family member to help. A third said that someone travelling with them helped them out of the situation (33%). However, one in five (22%), said that a stranger helped them



Of those who said they experienced something due to a provider or agent not being accessible 23% said it was not resolved. Three in ten (29%) said it was resolved, albeit slowly, and a quarter (25%) said it was resolved quickly. Furthermore, while two-fifths (43%) were happy with the outcome, a quarter (26%) were unhappy with the outcome, including 8% who were very unhappy.

Two-fifths of those affected (37%) complained to the provider directly.

18%

said it's because they think providers are unlikely to change.

33%

said that someone travelling with them helped them out of the situation.

Of those that didn't, the main reasons were because they didn't feel comfortable (27%) and thought that it wasn't worth complaining about (28%). A fifth (18%) said it's because they think providers are unlikely to change.

These findings suggest a clear need for travel providers and agents to make improvements to not only resolve, but also prevent situations occurring that cause stress and discomfort to disabled people.

This is ever more important given that two-fifths (41%) of those who've had bad experiences with travel agents or providers have told other people about their experiences, and a third (33%) have stopped using the provider altogether.



MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

Being treated with respect is the most important consideration for disabled people, but they also expect travel agents and providers to improve accessibility.

While accessibility factors, such as having a range of accessible transport or accommodation, or an accessible website, are important to around a third of disabled people when choosing a travel agent or provider (39% and 34% respectively), the most important factors influencing choice are more centred around how they're treated.

“We are, despite our disability, a human being. I ask to be treated fairly like a regular person. I am not asking for pity because of my disability, just treat me with respect.”



Making Improvements

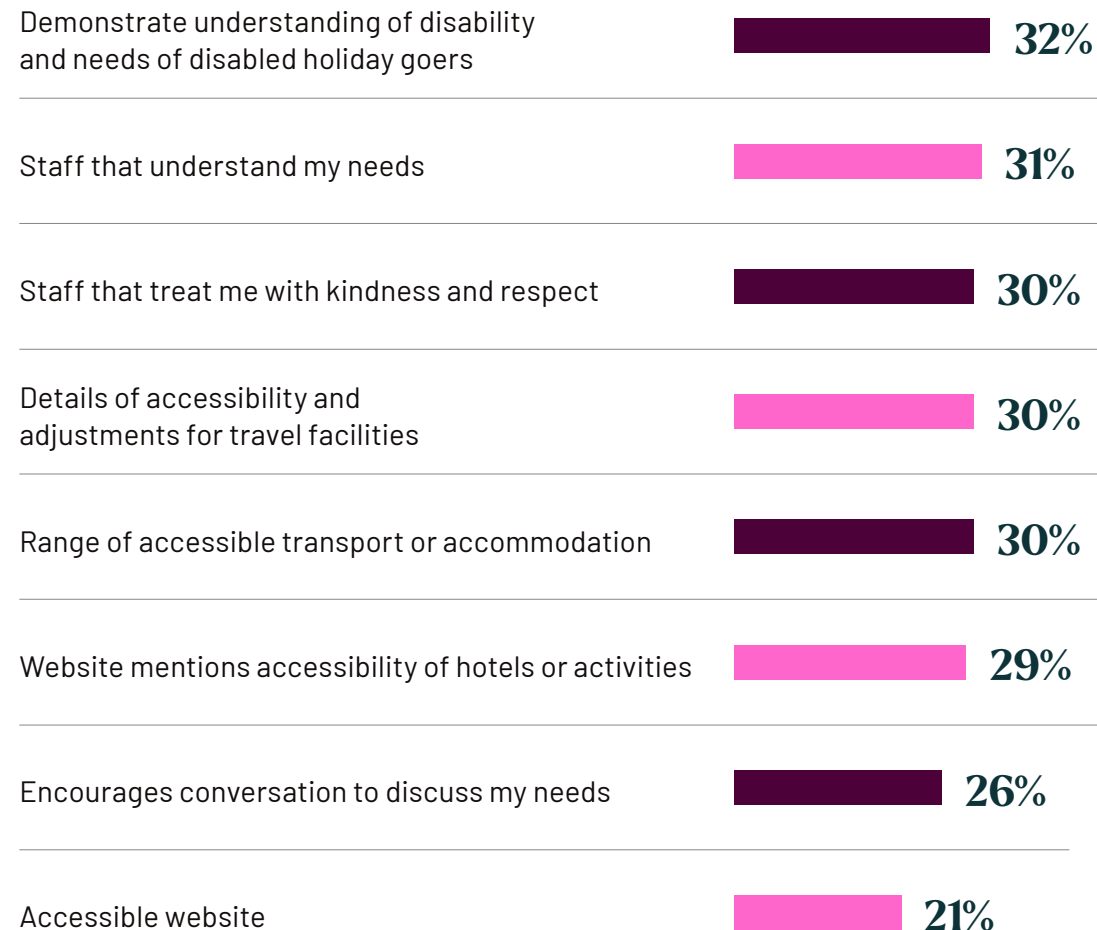
Over half (55%) of disabled people say they choose a travel agent or provider based on whether they treat disabled people with kindness and respect. Furthermore, nearly half (46%) of respondents say their choice is based on whether their needs are understood.

These findings echo the advice disabled people gave travel agents or brands to be more accessible. In their open text answers, many mentioned having an honest conversation about the need for staff to have a patient, empathetic attitude of the staff.

“I would advise them to listen to their clients and their specific needs. Don’t make assumptions because someone doesn’t look disabled. Be patient and accommodate them.”

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Factors travel agencies and providers need to improve on.





Making Improvements

However, while these factors are important when choosing a travel agent or provider, they're not necessarily the areas travel agents need to improve on the most. While 55% said they choose a provider based on whether the staff treat them with kindness and respect, only 30% said they need to improve on this.

Respondents were equally concerned with travel agents and providers showing a demonstrated understanding of the disability and needs of disabled holiday goers (32%) and having staff that understand their needs (31%).

A similar proportion also said they need to improve on having a range of accessible transport or accommodation and details of accessibility and adjustments for travel facilities (both 30%).

Travel providers need to provide better accessibility contact information on their websites.

While disabled people found accessing websites on their computer the easiest platform for booking a holiday (65% said it was easy) it is important that adjustments are made to ensure the process is accessible for all.

Of those who said it was difficult booking a holiday online, 43% said this was due to there being limited or no contact options to ask questions. Three in ten (28%) said there was a lack of accessibility information for the travel facilities.

A further two in five (41%) said there was a lack of clear instructions on how to book or reserve the trip, and a third (32%) said that the language used on information pages was complex or confusing. A fifth (21%) said they were being directed to accessibility helplines that are not in use.

“For me, just understanding that I can get overwhelmed with too much stimulation or a lack of information. I do best when I know what is expected and understand the process - for example, clearly knowing what documents I will need to have in hand to check in or knowing in advance where I need to go and what will happen next.”



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Making Improvements

Accommodation providers need to improve on making their ground floor facilities more accessible.

Over four in five (84%) disabled people think that accommodation providers need to improve on at least one feature to be more accessible to disabled people.

This most commonly included improving ground floor facilities (26%), which was closely followed by the need to improve on installing fixed grab rails (24%). One in five (18%) said that travel providers also need to improve the width of the doorways and the size of the space.

However, with disabled people's needs varying significantly, respondents called for travel providers to take a personalised approach to accessibility.

"Simply to be open at the moment and not jump to their preconceived ideas of what I need. Yes, they have helped many disabled people to get the accommodations, but my needs may be just a bit different, and they need to hear that."



84%

of disabled people think that accommodation providers need to improve on at least one feature to be more accessible to disabled people.

Respondents pointed out that real-life experience of disabilities might be just what the travel providers and agents need to understand what adjustments need to be made.

"Get in a wheelchair, and act as if you are entering the hotel, accessing the room, especially check the bathrooms. Can you really get a wheelchair in there? If the smoke alarm goes off, and you can't hear it, will there be another warning, such as a flashing light? If you can't hear the tour guide or bus driver, is there written info, or is there a sign with the info you need?"

Can you really get a wheelchair in there? If the smoke alarm goes off, and you can't hear it, will there be another warning, such as a flashing light?



Making Improvements

Features accommodation providers need to improve on to be more accessible to disabled people.

