



**I TUR4all CONGRESS**  
ACCESSIBLE CRUISE DESTINATIONS

Accessibility, a strategic alliance  
between shipping companies,  
tour operators and destinations



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# Accessibility, a strategic alliance between shipping companies, tour operators and destinations

**The following contains the conclusions of the 1st TUR4all International Congress on Cruise Destinations, an international forum with more than 30 speakers from seven countries.**

(Madrid, 17 December 2019). – Acknowledging that **accessibility is both a right as well as a business opportunity**, tackling the issue of vocational training on accessibility and boosting public- private-sector collaboration. These are just some of the conclusions of the **1st TUR4all International Congress on Cruise Destinations**, held in Valencia, Spain on 2-3 December 2019, and organised by PREDIF, AISM- Italian Multiple Sclerosis Associations -, Accessible Portugal and ENAT -European Network for Accessible Tourism-, with the collaboration of the Spanish Secretary of State for Tourism, the Spanish Ports Authority, Valencia Region Tourist Board, Valencia City Hall, Turismo Valencia Foundation, Valenciaport, CruisesNews Media Group, B The Travel Brand and the German National Tourism Office for Spain and Portugal.

The Las Arenas Spa and Resort in Valencia played host to this pioneering international forum on the cruise sector and universal accessibility, which boasted more than thirty speakers from more than seven countries. Over the course of seven themed round-table sessions, panellists were able to share their experiences and expertise about the major issues of this field with the more than 200 delegates attending.

During the event, management issues were dealt with such as the need for partnerships between destinations and cruise companies to guarantee the future of the sector. And the findings indicate that destinations should work with the cruise sector, guided by accessibility experts to provide the necessary level of quality and service for people with disabilities or with accessibility needs, both during their stay aboard and when they disembark at a destination.



Furthermore, destinations should provide accurate information about the resources, so that any traveller with a disability can access them and can effectively plan their trip. Also needed are partners at destinations who are specially trained and aware of the issues concerning accessibility and tourism for all. It is the only way to provide a service that meets the expectations and needs of cruise passengers.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- 1.** We have to listen so that accessibility becomes a right, not only a duty.
- 2.** If we are accessible, we will be more competitive, and we will make the world a better place.
- 3.** If we want to be leaders in tourism, we must be leaders in accessibility.
- 4.** We must find a much friendlier way for cruises and destinations to collaborate. Accessibility could be one of the most rapid, professional and effective ways of achieving this.
- 5.** Nevertheless, we are all left with a doubt. Have shipping companies and destinations taken the time to sit around the table to tackle accessibility issues with all stakeholders in the sector, or are we simply using the “and me more” strategy to capture more business?
- 6.** We are not raised to be inclusive or to cater to the singularity of people.
- 7.** Accessibility means ensuring the possible future of any individual.
- 8.** One of the major challenges that urgently requires action is vocational training in accessibility for all employees who deal with people with disabilities.
- 9.** Destinations should work seriously, professionally and jointly with all stakeholders from the cruise sector, always guided by accessibility experts to provide the necessary quality and services required by anyone with a disability.



- 10.** All stakeholders agree that de facto public- private-sector collaboration is a determining factor in the development of coherent universal accessibility policies at destinations. Let's continue to keep the pressure on . Let's call for more investment.
- 11.** Ports have a social commitment to destinations, especially if we take into account that presently one in eight cruise passengers, like conventional tourists, repeat. It is clear that shipping companies choose their destinations based on the wishes of passengers, and as such, destinations must heavily exploit their communication strategies, promotional initiatives and design of services in order to have a prime position. Accessibility would definitely be of great benefit.
- 12.** It is essential that all destinations generate comprehensive, accurate, reliable and evidence-based information about each of their resources, and that it can all be comprehensively managed and accessible so that any traveller with a disability can access it to plan their trip.
- 13.** Is communication a decisive strategy to raise awareness and drive home the issue of accessibility to the private and public sectors? It is clear that places such as Valencia and the Valencia region, Madrid, Barcelona, Portugal, Holland and Germany are at the forefront thanks to the design and deployment of good communication strategies, comprehensively and professionally managed, that are able to reach all types of public directly through a variety of different channels. Because we want cities that can cater to everyone, we want cities that can cater to you.
- 14.** But as well as effective communication, we need to have partners in destinations who are specially trained and attentive to the issues of accessibility and tourism for all. It is the only way to provide a service that meets the expectations and needs of cruise passengers.
- 15.** The truth of the matter is that we are still far from the day to day reality of the people who need us the most. How do we resolve this? With a real commitment, working together and equipped with a coherent medium and long-term strategy designed through panel discussions involving the entire sector. Will this be possible in Spain?



**16.** For decades now, shipping companies have been earnestly working to improve accessibility and inclusive tourism on all ships, and although work still needs to be undertaken to respond to all the needs arising each day in the field of universal accessibility, they are an example for all those travellers with some type of disability.

**17.** Accessibility, sustainability and marketing are closely related. Not only is it important to provide an accessible experience but it is also important that its price is no higher than that of a mainstream experience offered by shipping companies and travel agencies. The design of accessible experiences for all, regardless of whether participants have reduced mobility or specific accessibility needs or not, is one of the main challenges we are facing. From an economic perspective, we must find a compromise between “accessibility” and “price” through quality and volume, creating tourist experiences that are both mainstream and accessible.



# International Congress on Accessible Cruise Destinations

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