How to Write an Access Guide

Contents

How to Write an Access Guide 1

Introduction 2

What is an Access Guide? 2

Creating an Effective Access Guide 2

Why Transparency Matters 2

Key Considerations for Your Access Guide 2

How to Set Up, Write and Publish Your Access Guide 3

Setting Up Your Access Guide 3

Writing Your Access Guide 4

Publishing Your Access Guide 6

Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide 7

Accessibility Assistance Contact Details 7

Introduction Section 7

Booking Section 8

How to Reach Your Premises Section 8

Getting Around Onsite Section 10

Supplementary Advice for Each Subsector 18

Accommodation 19

Bar, Café or Restaurant 22

Experiences, Activities and Tours 23

Introduction

This resource has been developed as part of a pack. Before developing your access guide, ensure you have read the following documents:

1. **Accessibility in Tourism 101:** Understanding your customers is key to creating a truly inclusive experience. This guide explains the benefits of accessibility in tourism, provides insights into the needs and expectations of customers with disabilities, and highlights ways to offer appropriate assistance.
2. **Best Practice for Accessibility:** This document highlights best practice for parking facilities, pathways, stairs and ramps, entrances, restrooms and special features. It is useful to have an understanding of this when describing your premises in the Access Guide.

What is an Access Guide?

An Access Guide is a resource that provides clear, accurate information about the accessibility of your business, helping customers understand what to expect before they visit. It does not imply that your establishment meets any specific accessibility standard—instead, it outlines your current features, services, and potential barriers, allowing customers to assess how they might navigate your space.

Creating an Effective Access Guide

An Access Guide is a valuable tool that enables customers to plan their visit with confidence. Rather than setting expectations for a particular standard, an Access Guide provides honest, detailed insights into your infrastructure, landscape, and services.

Since every business is unique, each Access Guide will vary depending on the type of experience, establishment, or activity you offer. To ensure consistency and quality, this document outlines a simple and effective approach to structuring an Access Guide while allowing you to tailor it to your specific experience. Keep the style and tone consistent with your website for a seamless customer experience.

Why Transparency Matters

Accessibility is not one-size-fits-all—what may seem challenging or awkward does not necessarily make a space inaccessible. Customers have different abilities and comfort levels, and providing detailed yet straightforward information about your physical environment allows them to determine how best to approach their visit. Even if you assume an area may be difficult to access, transparency empowers customers to make informed decisions, whether by preparing in advance, bringing a support person, or adjusting their expectations.

Key Considerations for Your Access Guide

- **Be clear and concise.** Keep information simple, to the point, and easy to understand.
- **Provide relevant details.** Focus on the aspects of accessibility that directly impact your customers.
- **Use visual aids.** Video, photos and diagrams can serve as a “visual map,” giving customers a better understanding of what to expect.

The level of detail included is up to you, depending on your business infrastructure and the depth you wish to provide. The goal is to equip customers with the information they need without overwhelming them, allowing them to confidently decide whether your experience is right for them.

The Makingtrax Foundation offers various levels of support, including an Access Guide template, assistance in developing your Access Guide, or a fully customised Access Guide creation service.

How to Set Up, Write and Publish Your Access Guide

Setting Up Your Access Guide

Naming Convention

Use the title “Access Guide” and include your business or experience name for clarity and consistency.
Format: [Your Business Name] Access Guide
Example: Shotover Jet Access Guide

Structure

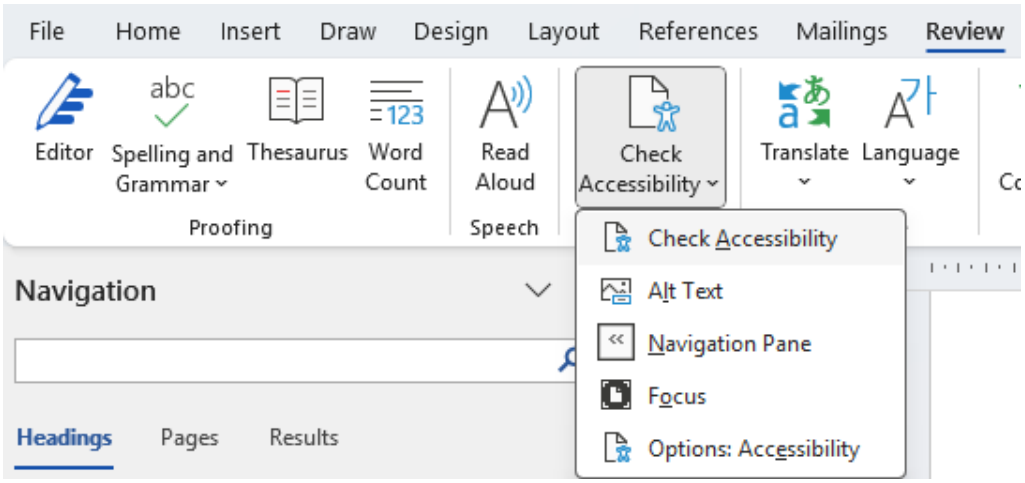
Structure your document as if it is a walkthrough of your premises. The headings should be in the order a customer approaches the activity or establishment. It can help to create a walkthrough video first and then write the Access Guide in the same order.

Format

The guide can be laid out on a webpage, or as a PDF document.

Accessibility of the Document Itself

It would be remiss to produce an accessibility-focused document in a way that is not optimised to support those with visual impairment. It is recommended that you use a word processor that has an in-built accessibility checker (such as Microsoft Word). Accessibility checkers help you to optimise accessibility as you write your document. In Word, you can navigate to “Review” and then “Check Accessibility”.

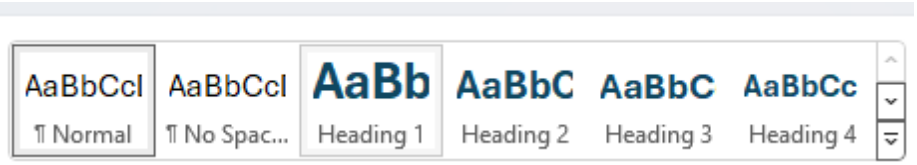


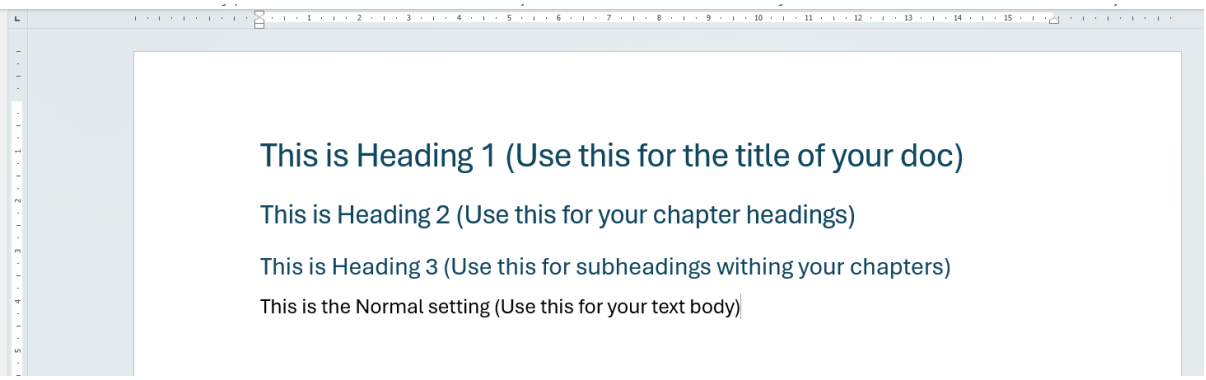
Considerations include:

- To structure your document effectively, use Styles (found in the Home tab). This improves readability, navigation, and accessibility for users with assistive technologies like screen readers.
    - For **headings**, use **Heading 1** for the main title, and **Heading 2, 3, etc.** for subheadings based on their hierarchy.

- For **body text**, highlight it and select **"Normal"**.

Applying styles ensures a well-organised, professional-looking document that's easy to navigate. You can click the style before you start writing to write in that style. Or you can highlight text you've already written and click a style to change it to that style.





- Add alt text (alternative text) to images. Alt text provides a description of visual content, allowing people who use screen readers to understand what each image is showing. If you are familiar with generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or Copilot, you can use them to quickly generate alt text. Word's Accessibility checker will prompt you to add alt text.
- Avoid hard-to-read text contrast. It is best to use black text on a white background and avoid overlaying text on images. Word's Accessibility Assistant will warn you if your document contains hard to read text.

  This is easier to read. This is harder to read.
- Additional tips include: Keep the text left-aligned (and not justified/stretched across the page), avoid the use of italics and random bolded words, and use a clear sans-serif style font (such as Calibri or Arial) at a minimum font size of 12.

Writing Your Access Guide

Wording Considerations

The objective of the Access Guide is to provide a welcoming environment for customers who require more information and/or assistance to book with you. Your understanding of terminology and your choice of words have the power to attract or deter your potential customers. Avoid being clinical in your language and stick to the same manner as the rest of your business communications style. When stating safety policy or regulations, focus on the physical requirements rather than assumptions of abilities.

Review the Ableism section in the Accessibility in Tourism 101 document and have this in mind when writing. It's important to understand that not everyone with access requirements identifies with the word "disabled". Use inclusive terminology, such as "Access Requirements". Always put people first and if explaining a product or service then there is no need to mention the person's ability at all. Examples include:

- We provide experiences for people with access requirements or who require more assistance.

- Information, menus and signage at our establishment are in enlarged bold print.
- Customers with limited mobility (including customers who require a wheelchair) will need to...

The label “Accessible” can be misleading if it doesn’t align with a customer’s specific needs. Access throughout Aotearoa is inconsistent, with building access standards generally lower than in countries like Australia and the USA. Therefore, it’s crucial to avoid blanket statements like “we are accessible” or “we have wheelchair accessibility,” as these can create unrealistic expectations.

Instead, offering transparency about specific access features—such as step-free access, ramps, bathrooms with grab bars, or accessible parking—allows customers to assess whether the space meets their needs.

Videos

Consider creating video walk-throughs or virtual tours of key accessways, as they are one of the most effective ways to share accessibility information. Video walkthroughs can provide a comprehensive view of the space, highlighting important transitions or potential hazards, and helping users better navigate the guide.

Slowing the video down at key areas such as ramps, steps, kerbs, door thresholds, and entrances allows the viewer to absorb important details. Additionally, these videos can be especially beneficial for people with anxiety, as they can orient themselves in advance.

360° Virtual Tours

360° imagery can be used to create an interactive walkthrough of your premises, allowing viewers to navigate or zoom in to get a full understanding of the layout. These can be uploaded to Google Earth, and you can include a link to this within your Access Guide. Businesses in the Queenstown District Lakes area can hire a 360° camera from Makingtrax. The camera is available for pick up at Destination Queenstown.

For even greater accessibility, think about creating a virtual access tour, similar to the example from the Auckland Museum.

Imagery

Supplement video walkthroughs and 360° walkthroughs with high-quality imagery and written content within your Access Guide to further highlight key areas and obstacles, creating a more complete and accessible experience. High-quality imagery is essential to effectively showcase accessibility features, providing clear, detailed views of accessways, areas, and key features. Here are some key guidelines for capturing and presenting these images.

- **Imagery Quality and Composition:** Ensure all photos are high quality, visually clear, and taken from a position that best represents the area or feature. When documenting specific objects or areas, ensure the image clearly showcases the object in question, without distractions such as people or vehicles. If multiple objects are involved, ensure they are all visible in the image.
- **Detailed and Accessible Views:** Capture detailed images of accessways, pathways, and any potential obstacles. This is especially important for areas with challenging terrain, gradients, or undulating surfaces. When photographing ramps or sloping areas, take photos from the bottom of the incline at a level viewpoint to accurately show the gradient. If it's not possible to capture all potential obstacles in one image, provide additional photos to highlight the features and any challenges.
- **Description and Accessibility for All Users:** Every image should include a concise description, including the specific location of the shot, to aid navigation and support people with low vision

or screen readers. Avoid placing written text directly over images; instead, use contrasting banners or exclude text entirely. This ensures the imagery remains clear and accessible to all users.

- **Usability Focus:** If your images feature furnishings, signage, or amenities, ensure they also demonstrate how people can engage with these elements. The perspective should highlight ease of use and accessibility. For pathway or accessway images, focus on the most challenging parts, detailing the layout and any features that could pose difficulty.

By following this structure, you can create a comprehensive and visually clear guide that provides detailed information about the accessibility and infrastructure of your business.

Examples

The text below provides an example of the how to write clear descriptions within your Access Guide. It also shows which images or video focus should be provided for each of the areas or objects of focus (highlighted in green).

Establishment Areas and External Access: The establishment is accessible via two routes and offers both indoor and outdoor dining options. Approaching from the onsite carpark leads to a lower-level dining area with step access and an alternative step-free paved access route to the upper level.

The café provides multiple areas for dining, including indoor seating, a covered wooden deck area on two levels, and a grass area near a children's play area.

Entrance & Exit: The step-free access route leads to the covered deck where several step-free, double-opening glazed doors provide easy access into the café. Alternatively, there is a similar doorway that accesses the lower dining area via a series of five steps. The wooden steps are dark-coloured and lack handrails, which may pose difficulties in low-light conditions due to the dark colour scheme and absence of contrasting colours.

Interior Layout: The café features step-free, level access with light-coloured hardwood floors. Wide accessways (exceeding 900mm) ensure easy navigation, and low, non-fixed seating and dining tables offer accessibility. The service counter and display cabinet are of standard height (not lowered). Drinking water and utensils are conveniently positioned, and staff are available to assist. The café interior is consistently well-lit, although parts of the covered deck may experience lower lighting at certain times.

Potential Obstacles: Glazed doors and full-length glazed windows lack contrasting colors or frosted horizontal strips, which could be hazardous for individuals with vision impairments. The wooden steps to the lower dining area lack colour contrast and handrails, presenting obstacles for those with visual or mobility impairments. There is no barrier or colour contrast highlighting the edges of the lower deck and the grass area, posing hazards in low-light conditions to individuals with vision impairment.

Toilet Facilities: Step-free external toilet facilities can be accessed from the main Café area. Accessible features including bold enlarged contrasting signage, easy opening doors, grab-rail, enlarged for wheelchair access and gender-neutral single cubicles.

Publishing Your Access Guide

Feedback and Review

There’s no better way to enhance your business’s inclusive practices than by learning directly from your customers. As platforms like TripAdvisor currently lack a dedicated section for access and inclusive services, it’s highly recommended to actively seek both positive and constructive feedback from your

customers. Consider adding a statement to your Access Guide inviting reviews, along with a clear point of contact for feedback.

Where to Feature the Access Guide on Your Website

It is recommended that you save the document as a PDF and upload it to your website. Most importantly, it should be easily found in your menu bar or top navigation and should not be hidden in the footer of your website, or on a medical page. It is also good practice to include a link to the guide on your FAQ page.

Provide to DQ, LWT and Making Trax

Send your access guide to Destination Queenstown or Lake Wānaka Tourism here so they can use it to promote your business. Send the guide to Jezza Williams too for endorsement.

Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide

This section provides clear, step-by-step instructions for writing each section of your Access Guide, helping you communicate essential accessibility information in a structured and user-friendly way. By following this guidance, you'll ensure your guide is comprehensive, accurate, and easy to use, making your business or venue more inclusive for everyone.

As mentioned, structure your document as if it is a walkthrough. The headings we have used in this section are in a logical order and can be used for inspiration. But remember that the headings should be in the order a customer approaches the activity or establishment, so you may need to move them around to tailor them to your premises. Ensure you detail each area separately, and include only what's relevant to your experience.

Accessibility Assistance Contact Details

Include a contact for accessibility queries at the top of your Access Guide, perhaps on the title page, ensuring that customers know where to turn for any specific questions or concerns. The assigned person should have a solid understanding of the process, be familiar with the available services, and be capable of making further arrangements if necessary.

If you are subscribed Makingtrax's Inclusive Movement, you can also add their adaptive advisor contact to your Access Guide. This provides customers who need additional or specialised assistance with a direct point of contact for support.

Introduction Section

Start with an introduction. The Access Guide's introduction should engage and reassure your potential customer from the get-go. Focus on creating a warm welcome by generating a meaningful personal statement. Use the personal statement to generate trust and convey that your business is inclusive for the right reasons. Avoid using vague phrases like "we are accessible". The Waitangi Treaty Grounds' personal statement is a great example.



"The Waitangi Treaty Grounds are of great significance to all people. Providing an inclusive environment for everyone to be welcomed is at the core of our journey. Understanding and valuing the fact that we all have different requirements we believe in learning from your experience will enhance our knowledge towards the future. The following access guide is created to ensure you can best prepare prior to your visit. We look forward to welcoming you and learning from you."

Reviewing the Accessibility in Tourism 101 document may help you in developing the statement. Once created, it's important to share this statement with your staff and even add it as part of your Business Inclusion policy in staff training and induction.



You should not start your Access Guide with safety policies and regulations. Instead, focus on creating a warm welcome and setting the right tone.

Booking Section

Your customer's experience will likely start before they arrive onsite. In your Access Guide, include a Booking section to describe your booking process.

Online booking systems/platforms can sometimes present barriers for customers who need more assistance.



In your Access Guide include:

- Describe the booking process in detail, including screenshots.
- To ensure a smooth experience, it's important to make any additional information requirements clear upfront, giving customers an opportunity to indicate their specific needs. This allows for instant bookings, with extra communication only required if further details are needed.
- Provide different options for booking and communication if possible. Review the Booking Options section in the Best Practice for Accessibility document to for ideas on what you can offer.

How to Reach Your Premises Section

This section is applicable to all business, regardless of whether customers make their own way to your premises, whether you provide shuttle services, or whether transport is a core part of your offering. In all cases it is recommended to include details on how your premises is reached and information on your transport offerings within your Access Guide.

Pedestrian Access

If your premises has pedestrian access, provide details of what the customer can expect when getting to your premises. It is best practice to describe this from a suitable landmark such as from the nearest bus stop.

Helpful information to include in the description includes:

- The distance from the landmark
- Topography (steep, sloping or level)
- Road crossings
- Potential obstacles for a customer who uses a wheelchair (such as stepped access only)
- The type of tread surface (such as sealed pavement vs. natural environment).
- Whether there are tactile ground indicators on the access way
- Availability of street lighting (for evening experiences) – this information will make a big difference for customers with vision impairment.

Cycle Way Access

Active transport is a growing tourism initiative. This also includes customers with access requirements. Modern e-bikes/trikes for families and seniors, the rise of top-quality adaptive mountain bikes and an increase in trails has created a whole new market.

Explanation: If customers can access your activity location via trails categorised as grade 3 or less, provide details in the Access Guide, including the trail name, approximate distance and hyperlink to the trail.

Transportation

Include a section on transportation if your business provides transportation (including ground vehicles, aircraft or water vessels),

Images/Videos: It is best practice to provide high quality imagery or video of each the vehicle options available. Ensure the imagery has no one in the image and shows where the customer accesses the vehicle (such as the side doors).

Explanation: Include the following information in your explanation.

- The make and model of each vehicle.
- Consider adapting simple solutions to optimise the customer experience. For example, if a car can be provided as an option, add this to the list.
- Any services or transfer assistance you can provide.
- If access to the activity location is in a shuttle vehicle access only, for certain customers it may be easier to use their personal adapted vehicle. If it is possible for the customer to follow the shuttle vehicle to the activity, provide details including the meeting place and time to meet (minutes prior to departure) so the customer can remain in their vehicle. Alternatively, if using the shuttle is mandatory (due to private road restrictions), ensure this is stated in the description.

Getting Around Onsite Section

This section explains how to write up typical areas that may be found in your premises including parking, pathways/accessways, stairs and ramps, entrances, interior accessways and corridors, restrooms and changing rooms etc. If you are an accommodation provider, bar, café or restaurant, or an experiences, activities or tour provider (including water-based activities and transportation), please read the additional information provided in the Supplementary Advice for Each Sector section of this document. As mentioned, only detail what is relevant to your premises and include them in a logical order (e.g. parking, pathway to the building, the entranceway, internal corridor, reception desk etc.).

A Note on Transfer Assistance

The Access Guide should list the situations in which customers with limited mobility will need to transfer themselves over, up, into or onto structures, platforms, vessels, vehicles, activity equipment, infrastructure or across rough or uneven terrain.

Provide options for how to tackle each transfer. If you offer the option for staff to assist in any lifting, they should be trained, and a weight limit should apply (at your discretion). The limit should be detailed in the Access Guide.

The information should include the adaptive equipment that is available, including a photo of the equipment. This enables your customer to have awareness of what's available so they can request what is most beneficial to their abilities and comfort threshold.

Parking

Focus on your designated accessible parking spaces. If you only have standard parking available, feature what is available.



Images/Video: Take a wide shot of the parking space. It should be free of vehicles, showing any signage, ground surface texture and if possible, where the accessway to the activity is compared to the parking area.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting kerb cuts, ramps, steps, sloping or uneven surfaces leading from parking to the pathway, (entrance or activity if parking location is within 20 meters).

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Potential obstacles.
- The proximity of the parking to the activity location or entrance.
- State the number of parking spaces dedicated to mobility impairment or if there are only standard car parking facilities.
- Add relevant additional details such as time limits, mobility permit requirements, or height restrictions (bearing in mind that many adapted vehicles in Aotearoa are high roof vans and require 2.2m).
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Pathways/Accessway

Pathways/accessways are defined as the main (primary) onsite customer access-way to your activity location. If there are multiple pathways to the activity or entrance way, information provided should be in relation to the most accessible. It's advised to provide mobility signage. If the pathway featured in the Access Guide is not the primary access, for example an alternative secondary access way that is more accessible to wheelchair users, state the obstacles of the primary access (such as being step access only). If there are multiple activities, provide access details to each activity separately.



Images/Video: Capture the main accessway, showing the entire width and ground tread surface. The image featured should provide an overview that best represents the accessway in question. If the accessway is sloping, provide an image taken from the bottom of the approach at eye level gradient, not tilted with the landscape. This will best represent the slope angle.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting tight spaces, ramps, steps (outlined further in the next section), any sudden and abrupt gradient transitions, ground tread surface changes or inconsistent surface structure.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Potential obstacles.
- Pathway width.
- Surface type.
- Any features that aid in navigation (such as tactile paving, street lighting).
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Stairs and Ramps

Stairs and ramps are defined as onsite access to get over a step or series of steps. These could be externally or internally located on your site/at your experience. Document the steps and ramps with each accessway. If pathways have any steps or ramp access, provide the details within pathway description. The same goes for information on the entrance, interior access, bathroom access etc. If there is an alternative method of access without requiring step access (such as lift access), feature the most accessible option.

Images/Video: Photograph any steps, full staircase or ramp, ensuring visibility from bottom to top and landing areas. Take the photo from the bottom of the ramp at level gradient to show the incline.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting any steps that are uneven, ramps with steep gradients, or that have a lip or trip hazard on the upper or lower transition.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Potential obstacles.
- The number of steps.
- The presence of handrails
- Contrasting/strip colours or tactile indicators
- The gradient of ramps. Measure and calculate the gradient as a ratio. Gradient = Run / Rise.
- Whether the ramp is fixed or temporary.
- Details of any alternative routes for accessibility.
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Entrance

Entrances are defined as the landing area and/or doorway to access any onsite activities and additional facilities such as toilets or a booking office. If steps or ramp access to the landing area is directly on the

entrance approach, feature the details and imagery together when possible. Document additional information as advised in the steps and ramps section above.



Images/Video: Take a wide photo of the main entrance. Ensure the entrance is fully visible, especially the bottom threshold, and include any steps, ramps, or automatic doors within the image.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting steps, trip hazard or lip on door threshold, any uneven surfaces, heavy self-closing doors, non-lever door handles, no level landing areas either side of the doorways, take additional close-up images highlighting these features.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Description of the type of entrance (e.g., automatic door, manual door).
- Whether the doors have an inward, outward or sliding opening and how they open (manual or automatic).
- Accessibility features (e.g., ramps, handrails),
- Potential obstacles like self-closing heavy doors, threshold ramp, step or lips.
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Interior Accessways and Corridors

Any internal accessway significant to the establishment.



Images/Video: Take a wide shot of the corridor showing the layout. If there are multiple or varying areas, provide multiple images of each.

Obstacle Awareness: Describe the location and significance of the corridor. For example, if it serves as the accessway to a particular experience or facility, it should be detailed under accessway to that location.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Describe the location and significance of the corridor. For example, if it is the accessway to a particular experience or facility it should be detailed under accessway to that location.
- Potential obstacles.
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Restrooms and Changing Rooms

This is defined as onsite toilet facilities and changing areas, whether they are combined or separate. When documenting toilet facilities avoid statements like “we have Accessible toilets”. Rather, explain what facilities are available. If your business has multiple options or only standard toilet facilities, share details of the most accessible option.



Images/Video: Capture a photo of the entrance to the restroom/changing facilities and interior layout.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting any narrow entrances, steps, heavy self-closing doorways or awkwardly placed fixtures.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- The availability of accessible stalls (oversized for wheelchair access)
- Presence of grab bars, hoist and changing tables.
- Whether the sink is designed for wheelchair users.
- Potential obstacles.

Common, Viewing and Seating Areas

Areas available to customers including foyer, balconies, displays, dining areas both externally or internally located.



Images/Video: Take a wide shot of common areas showing seating arrangements and layout. If there are multiple areas, provide multiple imagery.

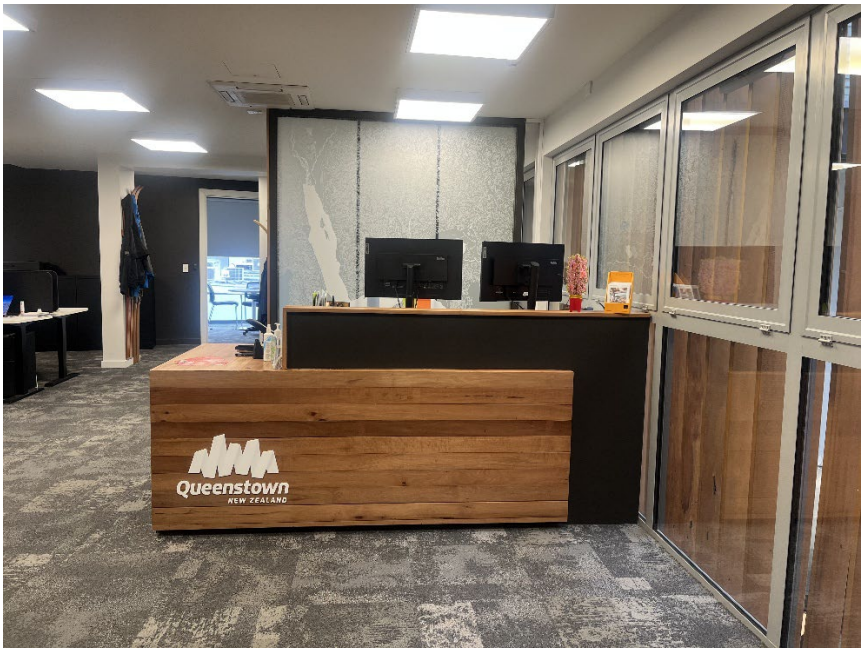
Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting any tight spaces, level changes or areas with high foot traffic.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Describe the types of seating, fixed or moveable.
- Available space for mobility aids
- Any accessible features (such as lowered counters).
- Potential obstacles.
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Special Features (such as Reception Desks, Check-In Kiosks)

Special Features include any reception or service desk. This could also include food counters or buffet tables if food or beverages are available. They could be externally or internally located (i.e. BBQ area).



Images/Video: Photograph these features from a perspective that shows their usability and location.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting high counters or limited space, call buttons or after hours service intercom that would be inaccessible to a customer in a wheelchair.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- Explain how these features are used.
- Any accessibility options (such as low-height or standing-only counters or kiosks).
- Potential obstacles.
- Information and menus with large bold lettering or contrasting colours for customers with vision impairment.
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Elevators

This is any onsite lift system. It refers to elevators and access lifts for customers who require a wheelchair.



Images/Video: Take a clear image of the elevator doors, control panel, and interior.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting any barriers leading to the elevator or inside it, such as high thresholds.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- The elevator's capacity and size.
- The elevator's controls, including any accessibility features (such as braille buttons and audio announcements and areas it's limited to if any).
- Any obstacles.
- The ways in which staff members may assist the customer (including transfer assistance).

Supplementary Advice for Each Subsector

This document has outlined the process relevant to all businesses when writing an Access Guide. However, different types of businesses—such as accommodation, dining, and adventure experiences—each have unique considerations when it comes to accessibility.

This section provides additional guidance for those types of businesses in order to tailor your guide to your premises.

This document has outlined the core process for creating an Access Guide, applicable to all businesses. However, different businesses—such as accommodation, dining, and adventure experience providers —have unique considerations.

This section offers supplementary guidance to help you customise your Access Guide based on the specific needs of your premises and services.

Accommodation

This information should be read in conjunction with the Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide section.

Providing quality access and accessibility information for accommodation is fundamental to ensuring a positive experience for all guests. However, the real game-changer lies in transparency—allowing customers to fully understand the level of accessibility currently offered, so they can choose accommodations that meet their individual needs and preferences.

Accessibility requirements for accommodation vary widely from one guest to another. For example, some wheelchair users may require larger spaces, while individuals with vision impairments may prefer smaller, more manageable areas. For those with vision impairments, rooms with contrasting colours and minimal clutter can significantly enhance their experience. Understanding these diverse needs and offering clear information empowers customers to make informed decisions, ensuring their stay is both comfortable and enjoyable.

As mentioned, even if your establishment has accessibility features, or blanket labels such as “Wheelchair Accessible” or “Accessible” doesn’t offer customers the detailed information they need to understand how they can access your space and whether it meets their specific requirements.

In your Access Guide, for each room or unit, split out the sub-rooms within your accommodation separately (e.g. bedrooms, kitchenettes, ensuites, common areas, shared facilities). If you supply Airport Pickup or Shuttle Services, ensure you include the transport information as per the Transportation section earlier in the document. In addition, if you have an onsite restaurant, follow the instructions in the Bar, Café or Restaurant section.

Bedrooms

This refers to the bedroom itself. If there are multiple bedrooms in one facility add the master bedroom first. If your rooms are not a similar layout, size and shape, consider including each room type separately.



Images/Video: Take a wide shot of the bedroom showing the entire room, bed arrangements and layout, including any seating and/or fixtures. If there are multiple areas, provide multiple images.



Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting any tight spaces, level changes or hard to reach fixtures, controls or windows for a customer in a wheelchair.

Explanation: Write a concise description. Include:

- The number of rooms with accessibility features, and the number of standard rooms that have level and/or elevator access.
- Whether all rooms with extra accessibility features and/or standard rooms have a similar layout, size and shape or whether they vary. If not, provide details of the differences.
- Details of the entrance and any alternative exits, including balconies or private areas.
- Describe its location and distance from reception and parking.
- The size of the room - is it standard like all other rooms at the premises or larger for ease of movement?
- The height of the bed – For customers who have limited mobility or use a wheelchair, bed heights taller than standard can become hazardous for transfers,
- Whether the beds and/or room furniture is fixed or movable.
- Any accessible features like large bold print information, tactile room numbers, large keypad and/or hearing aid compatible phones, roll under counters, space under beds for a hoist (20 cm), mini fridge for medication, alarm system that is multi-sensory, or any other features that enhance the customer experience.
- Add additional services that your staff can provide at no extra charge, this could include, turning on heating prior to arrival, moving furniture layout and/or lowering hard to reach items prior or during the customers visit, assisting with luggage.

Bathroom and Shower

This section only refers to any shower and/or bathing facilities relevant to the bedroom/s in your Access Guide. Combine this knowledge with the Restrooms and Changing Rooms section. This could be in-room ensuite, private to customers, shared facility and/or external toilet block. If facilities are separated from the unit or communal, state the location in the description and include access way details including the entrance.

Not all customers with access requirements require a wheelchair accessible or open shower. The Access Guide is to show what facilities are currently available at the premises. If you have minimal or no wheelchair-accessible facilities, it is advisable to document and share standard room bathroom details also.

Images/Video: Capture the entire shower cubicle or area with a wide shot showing floor to ceiling. If multiple bathing areas include multiple imagery.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting any narrow entrances, steps, thresholds, awkwardly placed fixtures and/or hard to reach faucets including non-lever faucets (which are hard to grasp).

Explanation: Write a concise description. Include:

- The availability of alternative shower stalls on the premises.
- If you have a standard cubicle shower with an opening or door (even with a small threshold), provide dimensions of opening. Some customers will travel with their personal shower seat and can access standard showers.
- Mention of whether standard rooms have handrails or not (a large percentage of customers will not require a wheelchair accessibly bathroom if there are handrails in the standard bathroom).
- The number of rooms that have the same facilities and layout. If they differ from the bathroom featured provide a detailed explanation or separately present multiple rooms.
- Availability of large, bold print on products supplied (e.g. soap, shampoo, conditioner, moisturiser etc).
- Presence of easy opening containers, bottles and bins.

Kitchenette or Kitchen

This includes in-room kitchenettes, private kitchens, shared kitchen facilities and/or external kitchen blocks.

Images/Video: Take a wide shot of the kitchen facility showing the usable area and layout. If there are multiple areas provide multiple images.

Photograph fixtures, switches, cooking/eating utensils and features from a perspective that shows their usability and location. If a cupboard is high, include an image with the cupboard open so customers can ascertain how they can interact with it.

Obstacle Awareness: Include additional details and images highlighting high counters or tight spaces, equipment or utensils inaccessible to a customer in a wheelchair and/or non-lever faucets (which are hard to grasp).

Explanation: Write a concise description. Include:

- If facilities are separated from the unit or are communal, state this in the description. Include the location, accessway and entrance details.
- If the kitchen is standard with items inaccessible to some customers, make this known.
- Explain if features are standard or accessibility options like low-height or movable bench and/or prep areas.
- Availability of large, bold print on products supplied (e.g. condiments, spices, drink, washing etc).
- Presence of easy opening containers, bottles and bins.
- Note that an easy-open fire extinguisher must be available and accessible to all.
- Any additional services your staff provide at no extra charge, such as moving equipment or the layout and lowering hard to reach items prior or during the customers visit.

Bar, Café or Restaurant

This information should be read in conjunction with the Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide section. This section is relevant to any business with food and beverage services.

A significant challenge for customers with access requirements is gaining the confidence to choose establishments that meets their needs, whether they're heading out or selecting a destination for food or entertainment. The time and effort required for research, coupled with the trust needed in the accuracy of the information provided, can often discourage engagement.

Imagine your restaurant has stepped access and no ramp, but a customer with mobility needs has heard rave reviews about your cuisine or wants to attend a special occasion. By clearly noting the stepped access in your Access Guide, that customer can decide in advance whether they are comfortable making arrangements or, in some cases, bringing assistance. This upfront information empowers them to make the choice best suited to their needs.

As mentioned, even if your establishment has accessibility features, or blanket labels such as “Wheelchair Accessible” or “Accessible” doesn’t offer customers the detailed information they need to understand how they can access your space and whether it meets their specific requirements.

Combine the relevant information in the Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide with this supplementary information for food and beverage establishments. This information is also relevant to other types of businesses with onsite dining.

Consider each distinct area in turn (such as main service areas, main dining and/or bar area, balconies and external dining areas, toilet facilities, children's facilities.

Images/Video: Capture the primary entranceway, layout and accessways, additional features (service counters, dining tables, seating, facilities and fixtures), balconies and external dining areas.

Obstacle Awareness: Consider obstacles such as high or fixed seating, changes of floor level (steps, ramps, door thresholds), narrow spaces (less than 900mm wide), doorway openings (less than 850mm wide).

Explanation: Write a concise description. Include:

- If you have policies or practices that accommodate customers with access needs (such as reserving quieter tables), highlight them.
- Include any alternative way of accessing information (i.e. audio announcements, visual announcement, raised tactile information, enlarged print menu, or large QR code to access information via phone).

Experiences, Activities and Tours

This information should be read in conjunction with the Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide and the Experiences, Activities and Tours sections. This section applies to all experiences, activities, and tours, though for simplicity, we will refer to these as "experiences" throughout. A subsection on water-based activities and transportation is included, though relevant information appears throughout the main section.

It is recommended that when there are multiple experiences or different options of an experience at the one location, provide details of each experience separately.

Safety Policy and Restrictions

Safety is the top priority for both customers and operators. Each operator will have different safety policies and customer requirements. It's advisable to state these in detail in your Access Guide. Refer to the Accessibility in Tourism 101 document for context and to avoid making assumptions about the client's abilities.

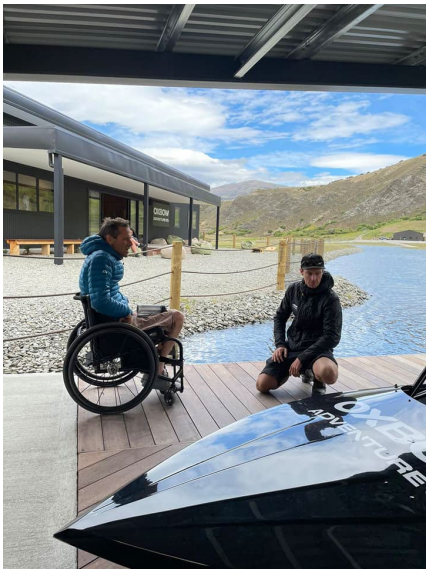
Safety regulations should not exclude customers with physical limitations from participating in activities. For example, safety guidelines that focus on leg strength should not be applied in a way that would prevent participation from people who may have different physical abilities, such as children with shorter legs. Just as children can still participate in activities despite their physical differences, customers with limitations should be assessed individually to ensure they can still safely take part.

It's essential to distinguish between safety policy/regulations versus situations that you assume will challenging for certain individuals. If a customer requires certain abilities to safely engage in the activity, in the Access Guide explain why and provide details and imagery when applicable. Real world examples include:

- **Oxbow:** Customers must be able to independently release the three-point harness as part of an emergency evacuation procedure. *(Include a video or photo sequence demonstrating how to release the buckle.)*
- **Air Milford:** Customers requiring their personal wheelchair for the Fly-Cruise-Fly option to Milford Sound must ensure it is collapsible to fit in the cargo hold, as power wheelchairs cannot be accommodated. A standard-issue wheelchair is available for use upon arrival in Milford. *(Include photos and dimensions of the cargo hold, as well as an image of the standard wheelchair in Milford.)*

- **Shotover Canyon Swing:** Due to the nature of the accessway to the Swing location, clients who are unable to walk must be accompanied. *(Include photos or a video showing the accessway.)*

Furthermore, if a customer requires an additional support person to accompany them on the activity, explain the reason for this need.





If you have any questions related to what is a mandatory requirement and a potential barrier contact Makingtrax Foundation adaptive advisory service via WhatsApp or email jezza@makingtrax.co.nz.

Hardware Safety Equipment, Seating and Adaptions

This includes any hardware, adaption or equipment (such as harnesses or seating) needed for customers to participate in the activity. This may include seating for activities like jet boating, chairlifts, or luge rides, as well as equipment such as zipline, swing, or bungy harnesses. It could also involve specialised adaptive equipment for customers with disabilities, such as changing hoists or adaptive mountain bikes.

When documenting, avoid making assumptions about what the customer can do. Instead, focus on explaining the equipment and its usage, such as noting that a safety buckle must be released by the user. Customers are aware of their own abilities.

Providing clear details on how you can assist customers with equipment can make a significant difference. Simple solutions can greatly enhance accessibility, but they should always be offered as options rather than assumptions. By transparently outlining these choices, you create a personal connection with your customers, fostering confidence and encouraging participation.

State Requirements: Firstly, provide context around your regulations, requirements and procedures.

- **Regulations:** Explain your non-negotiable business and activity regulations. This allows potential customers who fall outside the regulations to pursue alternative options, and customers who may require additional planning to make arrangements or choose to go elsewhere. If there are no regulations or safety policies that restrict your customers, provide reassurance that your business welcomes every ability.
- **Standard Requirements:** Detail the rules you require your customers to adhere to. This includes weather or environmental considerations, advanced check-in requirements, prior induction requirements or meeting areas and preferable time slots. These are different to Regulations that can barrier participation.
- **Standard Procedures:** Begin with a concise description of your standard procedures. This is an alternative to a Business Inclusion policy. By outlining the experience procedure, a customer with limitations can visualise the process and if required, can make arrangements or acquire further support to plan accordingly. It also provides customers with anxiety disorder or ADHD to orientate themselves prior.

- **Video:** It is highly recommended to create a full video walkthrough (see Videos section). If the equipment is technical, provide additional short videos that explain the standard procedure.
- **Images:** Photograph all equipment the customer must use to participate (such as seating, safety hardware, harnesses) from a perspective that shows its usability. Try to best represent how it is used, but avoid having people in the shot. Some equipment (such as harnesses) may require additional imagery of a customer to show how it is fitted.

Obstacle Awareness:

- **Access to the Experience:** Provide details and images of any potential obstacles, such as narrow pathways, ramps, steps, steep gradients, uneven surfaces, or sudden level changes.

Clearly indicate where the image was taken in relation to the starting point of the experience.

- **Movement Within the Experience:** Highlight any tight spaces, seating arrangements, areas with grab rails, or wheelchair-accessible sections. Include images to help customers assess whether they can navigate the space independently, with assistance from a support person, or with help from staff if available.

Explanation: Write a concise description under each image. Include:

- **Standard Equipment:** Equipment that a customer must use to participate (such as seating, safety hardware, harnesses). Include a concise description of its relevance to the activity focus on the details of the equipment (such a firmness of seating), not on the customer or assumed abilities.
- **Adaptive Equipment:** the same applies to any Adaptive Equipment your business provides for customers to enhance mobility or to optimise their experience. This enables the customer to decide if it's of value or irrelevant to their requirements. Other customers may decide to make arrangements to optimise the adaptive equipment more to their requirements.
- **Special Service:** Provide details of any additional services or solutions to optimise the customer's experience such as how the staff may assist the customer.



Water-Based Activities & Transportation

This section is relevant to all water-based activities and transportation. This information should be read in conjunction with the Section by Section Guidance for Writing the Access Guide and the Experiences, Activities and Tours sections. The types of vessels detailed below may present access challenges and feature specific restrictions, systems, or solutions designed to enhance the customer experience.

- **Vessels where customers stay seated or have limited movement onboard:** Small power vessels such as jet boats, water taxis, fishing charters, and scenic water tours.
- **Vessels where customers move freely onboard:** Such as scenic cruises, water taxis and ferry services.
- **Kayaking:** Including sea and lake flat water kayaking.



- **Vessel Access:** Capture the full width and surface of the accessway leading to the loading zone or landing area, providing a clear overview. If the access path is sloped, take a photo from the bottom of the slope at eye level to accurately represent the gradient, ensuring the shot is not tilted with the landscape. Include images that best represent the method of accessing the vessel, such as shots of the vessel parked at the standard loading zone or landing area, along with additional images highlighting the interior layout, including seating options. If there are multiple embarkation/disembarkation points, document all of them and include a short description of the process, including alternative options like dry loading if available.
- **Embarking and Disembarking:** Include images of both the landing areas and transitions at the entry/exit points, from the loading zone to the vessel, as well as any access steps or ramps.
- **Onboard Facilities and Movement:** Include images of key onboard facilities such as toilets, dining areas, and any accessible features like ramps or grab rails. Additionally, provide imagery that illustrates the ease of movement around the vessel, highlighting pathways, seating arrangements, and spaces for wheelchair access, ensuring customers can navigate the vessel comfortably.



- **Access to the Vessel:** Include additional details and images highlighting tight spaces, ramps, steps, and any steep, sudden, or abrupt gradient transitions, side fall, or ground surface changes. If the access path is sloping, provide an image taken from the bottom of the slope at eye level (not tilted with the landscape) to best represent the gradient. Also, include the location of the image in relation to the vessel approach.
- **Onboard Facilities and Movement:** Include additional details and images highlighting tight spaces within the vessel, the type of seating, seating areas with grab rails, and any available wheelchair access. By providing these images, customers can assess how best to access the vessel—whether independently, with assistance from a support person, or with help from the operating staff if they are available.

Explanation: Write a concise description. Include:

- **Boarding Process:** Outline the boarding procedure, including any alternative options such as dry loading. Document all embarkation/disembarkation points, including beach access if applicable.
- **Accessing the Vessel:** Describe the primary access structure, whether a wharf, floating pontoon, or fixed jetty, detailing its width, surface types, and features that aid accessibility (e.g., grab rails, tactile paving, lighting). If the structure is narrow (less than 900mm of free tread width), specify the dimensions. Include any additional assistance or services your crew is willing to provide.
  If there are multiple ways to board—such as beach access at different tides or various embarkation/disembarkation points—explain the standard procedures and provide supporting imagery. Note any factors that could affect accessibility, such as weather, tide, or lake level changes.
- **Onboard Access and Movement:** Describe how customers can move within the vessel, including space for wheelchair users in both external and internal areas.
  Provide details on onboard facilities such as toilets, dining areas, ramps, and steps, along with any weather-related restrictions or company policies regarding independent or assisted access. Outline emergency procedures for customers with mobility or sensory impairments.
  As mentioned, include safety regulations and any mandatory requirements expected of participants.
  Consider that heavy power wheelchairs may need tie down points for rough conditions or due to the type of access. In addition, power wheelchairs may be restricted from accessing certain areas. If this is the case, provide details.
- **Additional Services:** Include information on pre-departure meeting areas if they differ from standard procedures. Detail options for transporting adaptive bikes (as modern adaptive mountain bikes are compact and lightweight) and mobility equipment. Specify your company's policy on assistance dogs and provide a point of contact for any specialised accessibility services.

Additional Advice Specific to Kayaking

It may be difficult for some operators to envision a person with a disability, particularly a wheelchair user, participating in kayaking safely. However, with the proper procedures and adaptations, kayaking can be an enjoyable and accessible experience for all. As safety professionals, you recognise that assumptions have no place in adventure tourism, and that creative, lateral thinking is key. When striving to be an inclusive operator, it's important to remember that you're serving a diverse group, not a uniform one, with a wide range of abilities. A person's ability to paddle, balance, or swim doesn't always directly relate to their physical impairments or overall functionality.

The level of participation potential customers can have in your services depends on your company's attitude, policies, the experience and skill of your staff, and how effectively you communicate your inclusive practices and the support available through the Access Guide.

Customers with disabilities, including those who use mobility aids such as wheelchairs, can be incredibly strong, fit, and capable. Below are examples illustrating the diverse range of abilities, with specific examples related to kayaking provided.

- **Able-bodied with some cognitive limitations**: Physically able to participate but may feel overwhelmed in large groups and/or have limited ability to concentrate or retain information.
- **Able-bodied with sensory impairments**: Able to participate physically, but may have challenges understanding or accessing information due to sight or hearing impairments.
- **Moderate physical limitations**: May be capable of self-transfer into a kayak independently, swim with a personal flotation device (PFD), and assist with self-rescue if needed.
- **Lower extremity limitations**: May self-transfer into a kayak independently or with minimal assistance and is comfortable in standard seating, though some may prefer additional support for balance. Can swim with a PFD and assist with self-rescue if needed.
- **Full-time wheelchair users with lower extremity limitations**: Generally comfortable in standard seating, though some may need extra support for balance. They may swim with a PFD and assist with self-rescue if needed.
- **Lower extremity and core limitations:** May experience balance challenges, so additional support seating is preferred. Can swim with a PFD and assist with self-rescue if needed. Important to monitor for skin integrity and comfort due to prolonged sitting on firm surfaces.
- **Lower and upper extremity limitations:** Most will need additional support seating for balance, as standard seating may not be ideal. May have the ability to swim with a PFD and assist with self-rescue varies. Important to monitor for skin integrity, temperature regulation, and comfort during prolonged sitting.

For further guidance, you contact Jezza Williams at the Makingtrax Foundation's Adaptive Advisory Service, who has decades of experience in the kayaking industry. he has developed support seating specifically for customers with limited mobility. Makingtrax has collaborated with several top operations in Aotearoa to provide mobility support seating, including Kaikoura Kayaks, RnR Kayaks, and Franz Josef Wilderness Tours.

