

## Tourism can include people whose health conditions usually keep them from traveling

The global tourism industry has largely opened up again post-COVID, but travelling remains difficult for a large group of people.

The World Health Organization estimates 20 percent of the world's population suffer from non-communicable chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, or mental disorders.

These conditions can make travelling difficult, while some people may even avoid taking holidays altogether.

A research project from Edith Cowan University has highlighted the impacts this decision can have on people with these health challenges and outlined impacts for the industry as a whole.

Through collaboration between ECU's School of Business and Law and its Centre for Precision Health, the project has put forth the concept of "travel therapy," which sees tourism as a means of improving mental health and wellbeing.

Researcher Dr. Jun Wen said it is vital the tourism industry caters more to vulnerable people with physical or psychological disorders, a market he described as important but often overlooked.

"Tourism needs to be able to accommodate vulnerable travelers such as these for the industry's survival — but also because health is important and ... tourism can help support health."

— *newswise.com*



Photo / D.A. Varela, Miami Herald

**Matias Paillot navigates the waters of Biscayne Bay near Miami. The tourist from Argentina says, "This is where I feel most free and independent."**

## Miami welcomes visitors with disabilities

The Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, Miami-Dade's destination marketing agency, has made disability tourism a pillar of its marketing strategy.

The bureau is hoping to capture a new corner of the tourism market and be known as one of the world's most accessible beach destinations. To help attain that, the county tourism agency has launched marketing efforts, published guides on Accessible Travel in Miami and is organizing free workshops for hotels and tourism businesses about best practices for accessibility for visitors.

"For us, it's no longer about doing the minimum to meet ADA [Americans with Disability Act] requirements, it's about going above and beyond to become a more welcoming destination for tourists and business travelers," said Rolando Aedo, the

chief operating officer of the regional convention and visitors bureau. "It's not only the right thing to do, but we feel there's tremendous business opportunities."

Beyond making sure visitors have the ability to enjoy water sports and other activities, that includes things like making sure there are automatic doors and sensory rooms for neurodivergent people at places like hotels, restaurants, museums, and hotels providing beds that can be adjusted to different heights. Miami International Airport has such a sensory room for travelers with autism.

He also said Miami visitors bureau representatives have been attending the TravelAbility conference to learn how to make many more places in Miami-Dade that tourists visit more

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“This sector (disabled visitors) of the tourism market wasn’t on our radar, but it is now” – Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau

Captain Emiliano shows Rene Segura how to unhook a fish during an outing with Shake-A-Leg Miami, a nonprofit sailing and water sports program for people with disabilities.



Photo / D.A. Varela, Miami Herald

## Miami beaches accessible to wheelchairs

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accessible for every visitor. TravelAbility is an organization working with the travel industry to improve travel experiences for people with disabilities.

“We talk a lot about the diversity of our destination, and we want to market to a diverse audience,” Aedo said. “This sector (disabled visitors) of the tourism market wasn’t on our radar, but it is now.”

Part of the bureau’s disability tourism marketing strategy has included social media influencers to help share the message about Miami-Dade.

Last year, the bureau sponsored a trip for Cory Lee, a wheelchair user from Tennessee who runs a travel blog called Curb Free with Cory Lee. He went on Shake-A-Leg’s Impossible Dream, a 58-foot universally accessible catamaran, which splits its time between Miami and touring up and down the eastern seaboard.

“It was my first time in Miami, and I

was really surprised. I fell in love with the city and am itching to get back and see more,” Lee said in a recent interview.

Adaptive Beach Days, held during the summer, enlists help from lifeguards, firefighters and physical therapists to assist people with mobility issues to enjoy the beach, Miami’s most popular attraction.

Event founder Sabrina Cohen, a local disability rights advocate, estimated that the beach days are a 50/50 mix of tourists and locals, with 25% of the visitors coming from elsewhere in Florida and the other 25% coming from the rest of the United States and around the world.

Cohen and the city of Miami Beach have made the beach accessible in other ways: motorized and manual beach wheelchairs are available to rent for free in South Beach and there are nearly two dozen beach entrances with hard surfaces suitable for wheelchairs.

– [miamiherald.com](http://miamiherald.com)

## City in Belgium promotes tour in sign language

The city of Leuven in Belgium recently launched a city walk featuring sign language.

The tour was made available through the Heritage app (Erfgoedapp), a digital tool to help people navigate local landmarks.

The walk has 15 stops and each offers people a short film in Flemish sign language and in International Sign Language with subtitles in Dutch or English.

It was produced in collaboration with Gery Gerits, who is deaf and a member of the city’s Accessibility Advisory Committee.

– [www.themayor.eu/en](http://www.themayor.eu/en)

## Cities are noted for accessibility

A survey pinpoints the most accessible cities around the globe for people with disabilities.

Domestically, Las Vegas, New York and Orlando, Fla., are tops for travelers in this population, according to the study conducted by the Valuable 500, a group of CEOs from major companies including Apple, Google, Coca-Cola and Procter & Gamble that have committed to disability inclusion.

The designation is based on the results of a survey of 3,500 travelers with disabilities globally. They were asked to rate cities based on the proximity of accommodations to various attractions and the availability of accessibility information.

– [www.disabilitycoop.com](http://www.disabilitycoop.com)