

VisitScotland highlight accessible tourism

VisitScotland invited two European accessible tour operators to come to Scotland to see for themselves what we can offer. There is a growth in demand for accessible travel and the European delegates found out for themselves about Scottish tourism products on the familiarisation trip.

The trip lasted for three days after VisitScotland Expo last week and the delegates visited Royal Yacht Britannia, DoubleTree by Hilton Edinburgh City Centre, the Scotch Whisky Experience and Beach Wheelchairs in North Berwick on the east coast as well as other west coast locations.

The tourism experts were joined by Paul Ralph of [Euan's Guide](#), the disabled access review site, at the Botanics to discuss their findings. Euan's Guide is a charity and is working with VisitScotland to create three accessible Scottish itineraries.

A survey by Euan's Guide found that 54 per cent of people with access requirements avoid going to new places if they can't find information about accessibility. It is therefore vital that businesses cater for this market by providing up front, essential information about their venue's accessibility.

Marina Di Duca, VisitScotland Inclusive Tourism Manager, said: "It is our aim to make tourism inclusive and accessible for all, so that every single person can benefit from all that Scotland has to offer. It also represents a huge commercial

opportunity for the country with accessible tourism spend valued at £1.3 billion.

“I’m thrilled we were able to welcome Fenna and Christel so they could see Scotland’s accessible offering first-hand. The Accessible Market is growing year on year and it’s important we do all we can to let the travel trade and visitors with access requirements know they can have a great experience in Scotland.”

Fenna DeSmet, of WeTravel2 in Belgium, said: “I am impressed by the fact that Scotland doesn’t seem that accessible from the first sight, but you do a lot to make buildings, castle and historic sights accessible, not only for wheelchair users but also for people with hearing or visual disability or autism. We are very keen to package Scotland for individual travellers, so we can tailor the tour for their interests and requirements.”

Christel Stejlborg, of HandiTours in Denmark, said: “I’m from Handi Tours in Denmark this is my first time in Scotland and I’m very impressed we will be including Scotland in our tour programme now that we seen a small part of Scotland and hope I can see more. Scotland is a totally new destination for us. I was given the impression that Scotland wasn’t accessible but that’s totally wrong, I’ve seen some of the products and I’m happy and I look forward to working with VisitScotland on developing our programme.”



The familiarisation trip ended with a discussion session at the Botanics