

New European Accessible Tourism Directory, 'Pantou' connects travellers and suppliers

A flight of stairs without alternative ramp access, 'No Entry' for Guide dogs or lift buttons without tactile information – all these barriers and many more can make travelling a real challenge for people with a disability or other access needs. Any trip has to be planned in advance down to the last detail when you are disabled and just finding a website with the right access information has always been a problem. That is until now. Pantou.org, a new online directory of accessible tourism suppliers is helping travellers find Europe's accessible accommodation, restaurants, transportation and other services, making it much easier to discover places to go and things to do – comfortably and safely. Pantou-listed tourism suppliers have their own Pantou profile page, making them visible to the increasing numbers of visitors who are dependent on accessible venues and services.

Rolling out across Europe

The Pantou directory (Pantou means "everywhere" in Greek) is supported by the European Commission with the aim of providing a single source of information about accessible suppliers. It is something that disabled visitors have been demanding for many years. "There are already many tourism suppliers in Europe who have made efforts to make their business more accessible. But until now, there wasn't a single platform where travellers could search for those suppliers", says Antonio Tajani, Vice President of the European Commission and responsible for tourism policy within the Enterprise and Industry portfolio. "With European populations getting older and in need of better access, it is becoming more and more important to provide high quality information for visitors with accessibility needs", he emphasises.

Vice-President Tajani sees Pantou as the "missing link" that can help people with access needs to plan their future travels more easily. It can also encourage tourism businesses to invest in the accessibility of their services. "This is a win-win situation. For the tourists, it makes travelling more enjoyable and stress-free and for suppliers, being visible on Pantou provides them with more potential clients".

Pantou does not aim to replace existing regional or national accessible tourism information platforms. Instead it works with them to extend their reach to European and global markets. Already 16 such access information schemes across Europe are collaborating with Pantou to add their suppliers to the directory. Pantou may be the first point of contact for tourists with access needs travelling in Europe but it will still rely on the efforts of destinations and suppliers at the local level to make their detailed access information available to tourists. Suppliers wanting to register may either indicate which accessibility scheme they already belong to or fill in an accessibility statement available on the website. The Pantou service is free for both suppliers and tourists.

Prize draw

Pantou held a prize draw among the accessible suppliers registered up to 31st December 2013. The lucky winners and prizes are: 1. [Wisteria static caravans](#), Morecambe, UK – an iPad Mini, 2. [HereWeGo](#) web application, Portugal – a Kindle Fire and 3. [TravAbility](#) travel agency, Australia – a management handbook.

The prize draw will be repeated on 31st January 2014, when three more winning suppliers will be drawn: an extra reason for accessible tourism suppliers to register with Pantou.

To Editors

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