

Travel Accessible travel

TEN OF THE BEST ACCESSIBLE HOLIDAYS

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ISTANBUL AND ANATOLIA

"There's nothing quite like the spice market of Misir Carsisi to wake up your senses," says Andrew Milburn, tour manager at Traveleyes. The company specialises in holidays partnering blind and sighted travellers, and its 11-day tour of Turkey in March starts with Istanbul. "It's not just the smell of turmeric and cumin that gets you tingling," he adds. "It's the hubbub of voices and the tang of the local coffee." The sensory overload continues with beach days in Bodrum, an ancient spa in Pamukkale and the touch of Roman stonework warmed by the Mediterranean sun in Hierapolis. For visually impaired travellers, the price is £2,199pp, B&B, including most meals, flights and transfers; the sighted pay £1,499pp (traveleyes-international.com).

SAILING FROM ANTIGUA

With the Jubilee Sailing Trust, it doesn't really matter where you sail. For most of its crews, it's the personal discoveries that count, as they learn to helm a 200ft ship or hoist themselves onto the crossbeams, halfway up a mast. That said, its island-hopping Antigua itineraries

have a special allure – thanks in large part to the delicious balm of a Caribbean breeze when it's winter back home. In February, it has two 11-day voyages planned on the fully adapted Tenacious, exploring the islands to the north and south. Both cost £2,200pp, full-board, excluding flights. First-time sailors with a wide range of disabilities are welcome (jst.org.uk).

TAKING IT EASY IN TENERIFE

Its volcanic landscapes may be raw and rugged, but the Canary Island has long been a pioneer of accessible travel. As a base, Disabled Holidays recommends the chic, wheelchair-friendly rooms at the Baobab Suites hotel, in Costa Adeje; from there, both the beach and excursions beckon. Plenty of beaches are barrier-free and equipped with amphibious wheelchairs, ramps, promenades, toilets and changing rooms. The accessible day trips include tapas and wine tastings in the capital, Santa Cruz, as well as tours of the spectacular landscapes in adapted coaches. A week starts at £1,105pp, including flights and adapted-taxi transfers (disabledholidays.com).

DISNEYLAND PARIS

Hats off to Mickey and co, whose French theme parks have an exemplary approach to accessibility. Many of the attractions take wheelchairs, and information about who can ride what is available at disneylandparis.com, so you can plan ahead. Best of all is the Priority Card, available to each disabled guest and up to four companions: your licence to jump the queues. Magicbreaks has a two-night



Sailing has taught me to take life's challenges as they come



Breakfast at the Hotel Schani, Vienna; top, Turkish spices

package for a family of four, staying in interconnecting rooms (one of which is wheelchair-friendly) at Disney's Sequoia Lodge Hotel, from £287pp, half-board, including three days' park entry and direct Eurostar travel from London St Pancras (magicbreaks.co.uk).

CRUISING THE NORWEGIAN FJORDS

This year, P&O launches a new megaship, Iona, and she'll be spending much of the summer cruising the Norwegian fjords. So, as well as the thrill of being on board a state-of-the-art liner, there'll be plenty to look at as the world slides by. The weekly itineraries start and finish in Southampton, so there's no need for flights, and 55 accessible cabins are available at a wide range of prices. Cue seven nights of relaxing, with dinner under the stars in the glass-roofed SkyDome among the highlights. Seven nights in an inside accessible cabin with a balcony start at £899pp, full-board, including afternoon tea, 24-hour snacking and the odd barbecue if the weather's good (pocruises.com).

GALLERY-GOING IN VIENNA

Vienna is kind to wheelchair users. All the underground stations are accessed by lifts or ramps, and there are low-floor trams and buses on every public transport route. But it's the Austrian capital's world-class art and music that will thrill. Almost every venue is wheelchair-friendly – whether it's the Musikverein (home of the Vienna Philharmonic) or the collection of Old Masters and archaeology at the KHM. There's detailed access

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information at wien.info, and the Hotel Schani Wien offers accessible rooms (twins from £65; hotelschani.com). Fly to Vienna with easyJet.

BASQUE COUNTRY GASTRONOMY

San Sebastian, in the Spanish Basque country, offers another sensual feast and is well suited to wheelchair users – with Michelin-starred restaurants, covered markets and pintxos tastings all on the menu. There's the chance to get into the sea, too, with disabled surfing lessons. The accessible holidays specialist Enable offers a tailor-made trip with airport assistance, staying at the wheelchair-friendly Astoria 7, which has a rare ceiling hoist and a range of harnesses. A week starts at £1,399pp, B&B, including flights and transfers, for a wheelchair user and their partner (enableholidays.com).

SKIING IN THE FRENCH ALPS

Not everyone will take to adaptive skiing as quickly as a former motorcyclist taught by Alain Proux, of Prosnèige, in Val Thorens. After just three days, he was making turns down intermediate-level pistes in his ski-bottomed chair. But even those who aren't quite so gung-ho will love the excitement of learning. Proux teaches skiers with a range of disabilities, with lessons starting at £100 for two hours (prosnèige.fr). In between, wheelchair users can try one of the resort's new Z Green electric buggies. The accessible

self-catering apartments at the ski-in, ski-out Montana Plein Sud, next door to Prosnèige, are the best bet for accommodation. A self-drive, self-catering week in a two-bedroom flat starts at £433pp, based on four sharing and including return Eurotunnel crossings (skitcollection.co.uk).

SELF-CATERING IN STYLE

The Blue Badge Access Awards and the accessible travel website euansguide.com have created a People's Choice award – and the Dairy, in Wensleydale, North Yorkshire, was the 2019-20 winner.

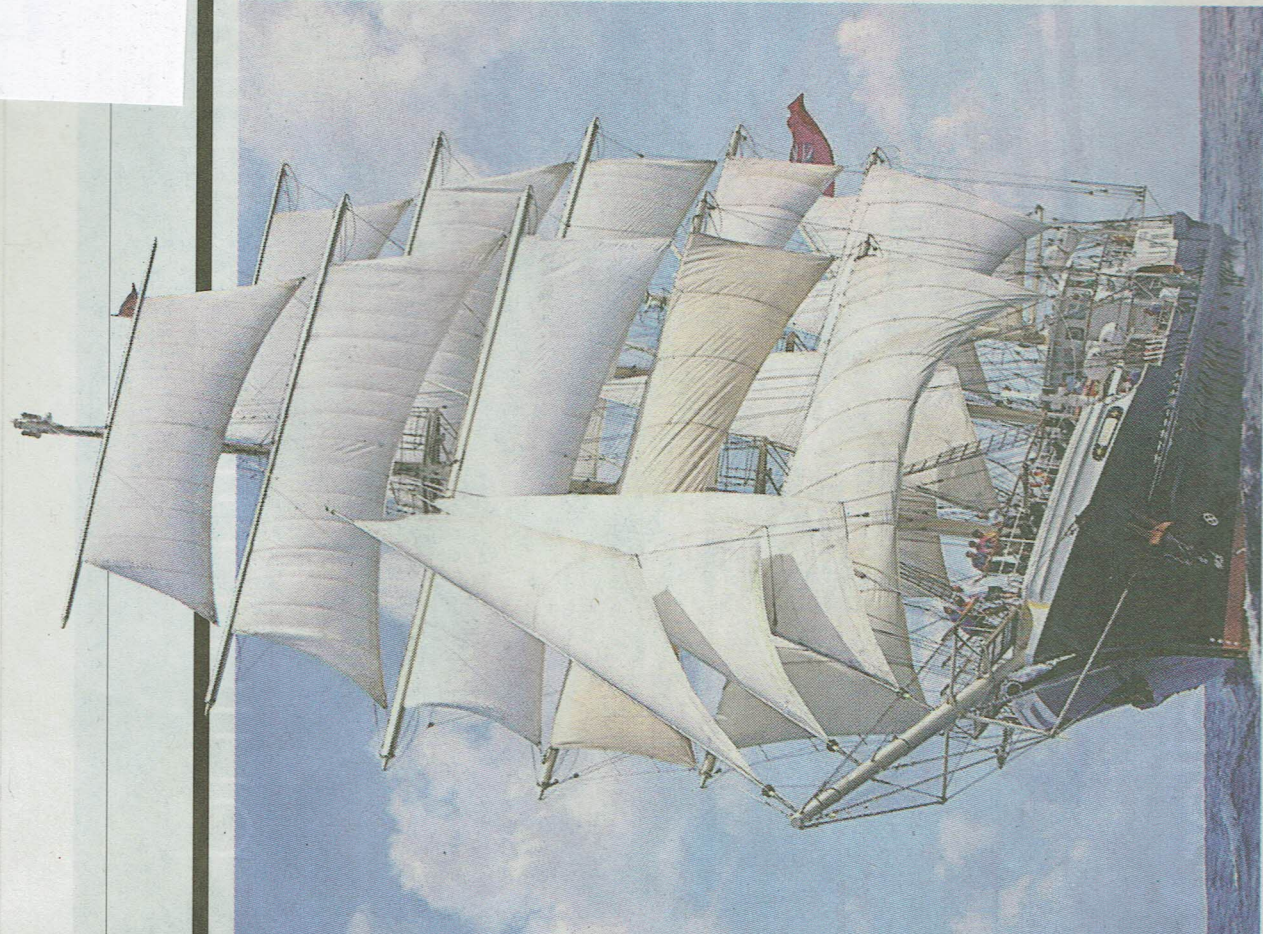
Designed with mobility, visual and hearing impairments in mind, the one-bedroom, single-storey cottage is step-free and equipped with hearing loops, a giant accessible wetroom and a bespoke kitchen aimed at wheelchair users. Three nights start at £450 (premiercottages.co.uk).



HOUSES AND GARDENS OF THE NORTH

Revitalise wants to give everyone a break. The charity's purpose-built centres in Essex, Lancashire and Hampshire run residential holidays with 24-hour nursing care, invigorating excursions (waterskiing, anyone?) and live entertainment. What's more, with the ratio of staff and volunteers to guests as high as 1:1, carers can have a holiday too. In Southport, the seven-night Spring Gardens & Country Houses itinerary takes in the northwest's grandest mansions and floral displays. Prices start at £1,288pp, full-board, arriving on May 11 (revitalise.org.uk).

Sail a tall ship; above, pintxos in San Sebastian



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