Accessible Tourism Day

Orfű, Hungary
Orfű Tourism Association
Local Destinations (including villages, cities, municipalities, islands)
People & Community

Summary of Good Practice Story
Orfű, a nature destination in Hungary's Mecsek Mountains, discovered ten years ago through joint workshops with disability organisations that many of its lake and outdoor experiences were only partially accessible — with information gaps and social uncertainty often posing bigger barriers than physical ones. The Gyeregyalog.hu Association, People First Association and the municipality co-created Accessible Tourism Day, offering dragon boating, sailing, horseback riding and adventure motorcycling adapted for visitors with mobility, visual and hearing impairments, supported entirely by volunteers (growing from about 30 to nearly 120) and local partners like a driving school that lets blind participants try driving safely, plus a community-run "Love Buffet" providing free meals. Now in its tenth year, the event has grown from roughly 450 to nearly 900-1,000 attendees, with people with disabilities also becoming service providers, like a visually impaired balloon-animal entrepreneur. The lesson: accessibility is fundamentally a matter of mindset, not budget or equipment — the most important resource is community openness and willingness to keep learning and improving, one small step at a time.

Setting the Scene: Destination & context
Orfű is nestled in the Mecsek Mountains in Baranya County and is one of Hungary’s best-known nature-oriented tourist destinations. Its lakes, forests, active recreational opportunities, and family-friendly programs attract visitors year-round.

Accessible Tourism Day is closely linked to Orfű's identity and its commitment to sustainability. The village has long been working to make its natural and tourism assets accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The initiative is based on the belief that everyone has the right to nature, relaxation, and new experiences, regardless of whether they have limited mobility, visual or hearing impairments, or other special needs.
What makes the event special is the collaboration of the local community. Civil society organizations, volunteers, businesses are working together to ensure that participants can enjoy experiences that they would often not have access to under other circumstances. The lakeside, sports and recreational facilities provide an ideal setting for activities such as dragon boating, sailing, horseback riding, and adventure motorcycling.
Accessible Tourism Day is a prime example of how the natural environment, social responsibility, and local cooperation can come together to ensure that tourism is truly for everyone.

The Turning Point: Why change was needed
Ten years ago, during a series of joint workshops, Orfű's tourism stakeholders, civil society organizations, and communities representing people with disabilities asked the question: Is the village's tourism offering truly accessible to everyone? Although Orfű is a popular destination thanks to its natural beauty and active programs, it soon became clear that many experiences were only partially accessible—or not accessible at all—to people with disabilities.
The personal experiences of participants with mobility, visual, and hearing impairments highlighted that the barriers are not merely physical. Lack of information, uncertainty, and social prejudices often posed greater obstacles than the environment itself. The community recognized that accessibility is not just a matter for a narrow target group, but a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable, responsible, and high-quality tourism.
This shared vision gave rise to Accessible Tourism Day, which creates opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in programs they rarely have access to in everyday life, while the local community and visitors can personally experience the value of inclusivity.
This year's event marks a special milestone: it is being held for the tenth time. Accessible Tourism Day has now become one of Orfű's defining community events, proving year after year that tourism becomes truly valuable when it is accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

The Vision: What you set out to do
Accessible Tourism Day was established to help Orfű become a tourist destination where access to experiences does not depend on individual abilities or limitations.
The initiative was born ten years ago during a series of workshops where the Orfű Tourism Association, local service providers, civil society organizations, and organizations representing people with disabilities came together to chart a path forward. During the dialogue, it became clear that accessibility is not a special need, but a fundamental prerequisite for quality and sustainable tourism.

The change was not initiated by a single organization: those involved jointly identified the problems and solutions. Participants with disabilities drew attention to the shortcomings through their own experiences, while the local community responded with openness and commitment. We wanted to create an event that not only offers new experiences but also breaks down social barriers. Our long-term goal was to establish an awareness-raising program that inspires local development and sets an example for other destinations.
Ten years later, Accessible Tourism Day, as one of Orfű's defining community events, proves that a shared vision can bring about real and lasting change.

The Journey: How change happened

The history of Accessible Tourism Day began ten years ago, when, during a series of workshops for a development project, stakeholders, local tourism operators, and civil society organizations worked together to find ways to make Orfű a more accessible and inclusive tourist destination for everyone. From the very beginning, the process was built on collaboration. The Gyeregyalog.hu Public Benefit Association, the People First Association, and the Orfű Municipal Government were involved in the organization from the very start. Later, additional civil society organizations, businesses, and community stakeholders also joined the initiative.
The shared goal was not merely to talk about accessibility, but to create experiences that would allow people with disabilities to enjoy nature, sports, and community life just as much as anyone else. It became clear in the early years that the key to success would be the active participation of the local community.
Volunteers have played a key role from the very beginning. While about thirty volunteers helped run the programs at the first event, today nearly 120 volunteers work to ensure that every participant can enjoy the day's activities safely and worry-free. Their duties go far beyond behind-the-scenes work. They help wheelchair users get on and off the dragon boat, assist them during motorcycle rides or horseback riding, and accompany visually impaired guests between the various venues. Many volunteers return year after year because they feel they have become part of the event and personally experience its positive impact.
Several special partners have played a role in developing the experiential programs. The Posta Robi Driving School joined right from the start and has since provided blind and visually impaired participants with the opportunity to try driving in safe conditions. This experience is unforgettable for many, as they get to try an activity they wouldn't otherwise have the chance to do in their daily lives.
One of the finest examples of community cooperation at the event is the Love Buffet. It is run by local residents, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers, allowing participants to enjoy free meals throughout the day. Some donate ingredients, others cook, make sandwiches, or help serve the food. Over the years, the Love Buffet has become much more than just a simple catering service: it has become a symbol of local cooperation and care.
As the event has evolved, it has faced numerous challenges. The varying needs of different disability groups, the safe organization of programs, and the steadily growing interest all required adaptation and innovative solutions. Each year, the organizers improved the programs

based on feedback from those involved, so the event has continuously expanded and been carried out at an increasingly high standard.
One of the most significant achievements of the past decade is that the event has become a cause for the local community. Year after year, residents participate in the organization with growing enthusiasm, and everyone strives to contribute whatever they can. Many put it this way: “doing good feels good,” and this mindset has become one of the event’s most important driving forces.
On the other hand, the participants have also formed strong ties with Orfű. Many guests with disabilities return to the town regularly, not only during the event but also at other times of the year. The event also has a significant impact on tourism. This program, which is unique in the country, now attracts visitors from all over Hungary. Many do not just come for a single day, but spend several days or even an entire week in Orfű, exploring the village’s natural and tourist attractions. Upon returning home, they share their positive experiences, reinforcing Orfű’s reputation as a welcoming and innovative tourist destination.

The Breakthrough: What you achieved
Over the past ten years, Accessible Tourism Day has evolved from a local initiative into a nationally recognized, community-building event. While the first event drew around 450 participants, last year nearly 900–1,000 visitors attended, and the number of volunteers grew from 30 to 120.
The program’s most important achievement is that it has made experiences previously unimaginable for people with disabilities accessible, while also strengthening the local community. Accessible Tourism Day has demonstrated that sustainability means not only the protection of natural resources but also equal opportunity and inclusion.
Another important achievement is that we involve people with disabilities not only as participants but also as service providers. A good example of this is "Vaklufis", a visually impaired entrepreneur who has been a popular contributor to the event for years, delighting children with his balloon figures.
The event also has a significant impact on tourism. This nationally unique program attracts visitors from all over Hungary, many of whom spend several days or even a week in Orfű. Accessible Tourism Day has proven that inclusion creates opportunities rather than barriers, and that tourism truly can be for everyone.

Reflections: What you learned and what others can learn
One of the most important lessons we’ve learned over the past ten years is that accessibility is primarily a matter of mindset. One might think that organizing an event like this requires special equipment and a large budget. However, our experience shows that the most important resources are openness and the community’s commitment.
The most important realization was that people with disabilities must be present in the program not only as participants but also as active shapers. We later reinforced this approach by giving them a role as service providers at the event as well.

Of course, we also faced challenges. One of the biggest difficulties every year is coordinating the various needs. In the early years, it happened that a particular program was less accessible for someone with a visual or mobility impairment, or didn't work as planned for all participants. However, we treated these not as failures, but as opportunities for growth.
For us, the main lesson is not to focus on the lack of resources, but on the people who are willing to work toward a common goal. It's worth starting small; you don't have to be perfect from the very beginning. The most important thing is to take that first step and keep learning.

The Ripple Effect: Lasting impact
Over the past ten years, Accessible Tourism Day has sparked a shift in mindset that has influenced not only the event's participants but also the overall tourism and community development of Orfű. The initiative has demonstrated that inclusivity and sustainability are not separate goals, but rather integral parts of responsible tourism.
One of the event's most important outcomes is that accessibility has become a permanent consideration in the village's development and has helped the community feel even more committed to the cause of inclusion. As a result, many guests with disabilities return year after year, making Orfű nationally recognized as a destination where openness, acceptance, and accessibility are not just promises but lived realities.
The 10th Accessible Tourism Day is both a look back and a new beginning. It demonstrates that even a small community can initiate lasting and far-reaching change if it believes in the power of cooperation and the importance of human connections. If the past ten years have proven anything, it is that inclusion does not mean limitations, but opportunities—opportunities that can connect even more people in the future, inspire even more communities, and further strengthen the belief that tourism truly can be for everyone.

Awards or Certifications
The success of Accessible Tourism Day was recognized not only by the participants and the local community, but also by the industry. In 2026, the Orfű Tourism Association won the City Diamond Award in the City Marketing category for Accessible Tourism Day, an award presented by the Hungarian Marketing Association and the Institute of Marketing and Tourism at the University of Miskolc to outstanding city marketing initiatives. This recognition was particularly important feedback for us, as it demonstrated that an inclusive initiative in a small village, built on community cooperation, serves as a model even at the national level. The award reinforced our belief that accessibility and inclusivity are not merely a matter of social responsibility, but also a key factor in a destination's development and long-term competitiveness.

The significance of Accessible Tourism Day was recognized not only by participants and professional organizations but also received international recognition. In 2022, Orfű won a Gold Award ifor its outstanding community collaboration at the European Entente Florale Europe competition. Community initiatives that promote the village's sustainable development and social inclusion played a key role in the jury's evaluation. Among these, Accessible Tourism Day

stood out as a prime example, clearly demonstrating how a local community can create genuine social value through the collaboration of volunteers, civil society organizations, businesses, and local government actors. The recognition confirmed that Orfű's sustainability efforts extend not only to the protection of the natural environment but also to equal opportunities among people and community cohesion.

Web Articles
https://akadalymentesnap.hu/?lang=en

Other Relevant Links
https://www.facebook.com/turizmus.akadalymentes/

Quotes or Testimonials
"A day when everyone works selflessly to give our fellow human beings facing challenges an unforgettable experience.
A day when everyone prepares, packs, cooks, organizes, accompanies, fetches and carries, transports, performs, plays music, paints, and creates; when they set up and take down tents, ride horses, drive cars, ride motorcycles, participate in rallies, ride motorboats, sail dragon boats —and all of this—perhaps without even realizing it—brings such boundless joy that it cannot be described in words.
That was today in Orfű.
That was the 9th Accessible Tourism Day.
For me and my fellow organizers, it only confirmed that we must definitely continue this!
The 10th anniversary is coming. See you in 2026!
It was a great experience!"
- Attila Tóth, one of the organizers "Accessibility Day has been held in this fairytale-like setting for years.
Thanks to the combined efforts of countless volunteers, we get to enjoy a truly exciting and meaningful day together—both able-bodied and disabled people—creating memories that will last a lifetime, thanks in part to the exciting activities on offer.
Horse-drawn carriage rides, dragon boat racing, motorboating, horseback riding, test drives, craft workshops, children's activities, live music, and the list goes on. Meanwhile, local residents treat visitors to delicious sandwiches, soft drinks, fish soup, and stewed pork cooked in a cauldron.
People with mild disabilities, severe disabilities, and the blind come here from other parts of the country with their dogs. This day spent together left a lasting impression on us, as everyone radiated such an energy of love that it was almost unimaginable. To see that incredible happiness on their faces—that this is happening to them right here! Honestly, I looked at them with teary eyes more than once and would have loved to hug them all at once.
Thank you to Orfű, and thank you to the volunteers for all your help!
See you here again next year!" - Zsuzsanna Kovacs, participant

GOOD PRACTICE
TOP
100
2026
STORIES