

Wheel the World FAQ

What is Wheel the World and what does it mean to be Destination Verified?

[Wheel the World](#) (WTW) is a comprehensive guide and Online Travel Agency (OTA) booking platform with 24-hour support for travelers with disabilities and accessibility needs that aims to promote and improve accessibility in the travel and tourism industry.

WTW's accessibility seal of approval, Destination Verified, helps travelers with accessibility needs choose travel destinations with confidence. Hotels, activities, transportation and restaurants in a Destination Verified community have been evaluated for accessibility. WTW helps destinations collect, evaluate, improve and promote accessibility and trains local partners to provide a better experience for travelers with accessibility needs.

WTW has worked across Oregon since 2022 to increase accessibility, starting along the Oregon Coast, Portland, and Central Oregon. They are a trusted source of accurate information for travelers with accessibility needs, and they have an expansive reach throughout the diversity of disability communities. Their vision to increase access aligns with Travel Oregon's efforts to make Oregon a welcoming place for all.

How is Travel Oregon involved?

Travel Oregon has contracted with WTW to assess 10-15 lodging properties, restaurants and attractions in 21 communities across the state of Oregon with the goal of becoming the first state to be Destination Verified. **This designation will improve accessibility visibility** in communities and points of interest across the state. The participating communities were selected by RDMOs in consultation with Travel Oregon and WTW.

How is this being funded?

As a part of Travel Oregon's 23-25 biennial budget, the Oregon Tourism Commission allocated \$400K for accessibility assessments.

- **Phase 1: November 2024 through July 2025**
 - o WTW communities will be researched and selected in partnership with RDMOs. Ten to fifteen businesses in each community will be assessed by trained WTW staff to determine the attributes of each business available to those traveling with accessibility needs. Once the assessments are complete, individual landing pages will be built and launched to market and sell the experience of those communities and businesses through WTW's online platform.
- **Phase 2: July 2025 through June 2027**
 - o Travel Oregon will cover two years of partnership fees for all Oregon WTW assessed communities. This will entitle communities to have direct access to the resources and support that WTW provides destination verified communities.
 - o Travel Oregon will be launching a consumer-facing marketing and communications campaign in July (*launch day/time TBD*) to celebrate our WTW partnership, announce our statewide verification and showcase impactful content that will highlight all seven

regions with inspirational accessible travel and trip planning stories. Campaign content will be created by WTW in partnership with Travel Oregon with DMO consultation.

What are the anticipated outcomes for this work?

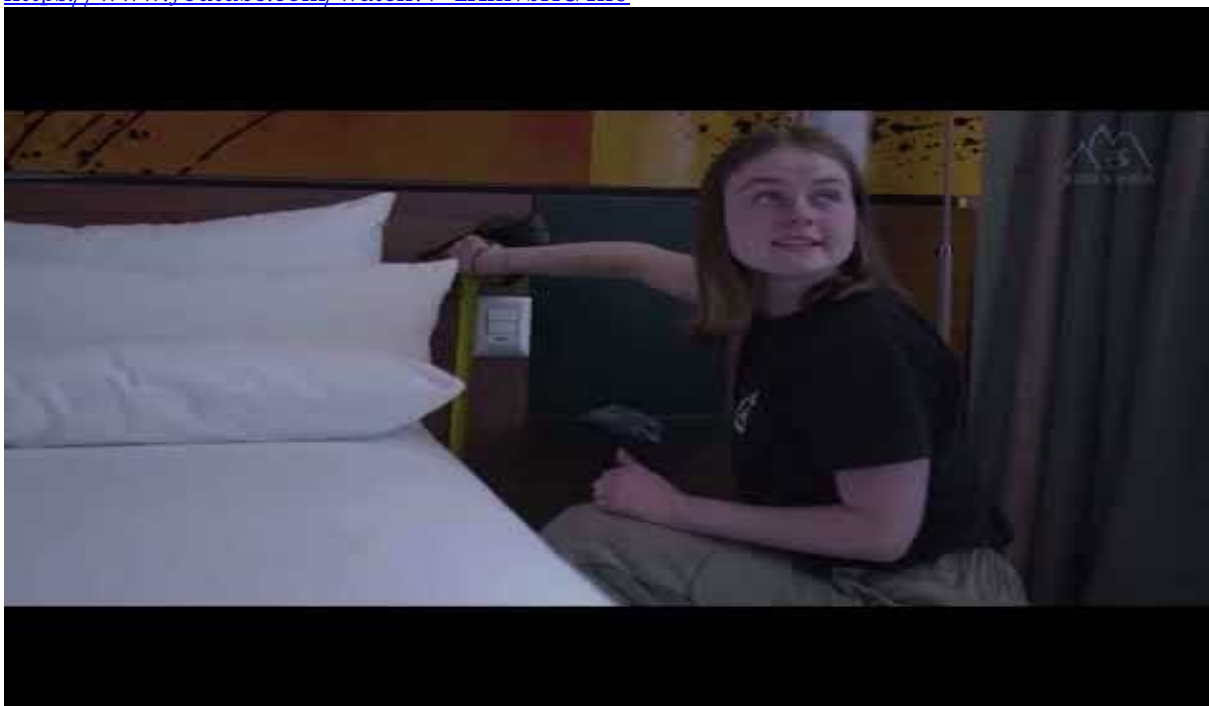
After the 21 communities are assessed, WTW will provide a full report on the assessed accessibility offerings and opportunities. Listings and evaluations will be uploaded to [Wheel the World community landing pages](#) (with destination's permission) and staff at assessed businesses will gain access to Wheel the World Academy—an online platform that offers essential training modules, including an introduction to accessible tourism; steps to meet diverse traveler needs; best practices for enhancing guest experiences; and other resources to become better educated on how to best serve the needs of visitors with accessibility needs.

Once this work is completed, the State of Oregon will be the first state to be “Destination Verified.” Travel Oregon’s Brand Stewardship Team and Communications teams will engage in a marketing and communications plan in partnership with Wheel the World to share this story.

What does WTW evaluate during an assessment?

This explainer video has everything you need to know!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXmvbriG4n0>



Which communities are participating in this coordinated assessment?

Portland Region	Willamette Valley	Eastern Oregon	Southern Oregon	Mt. Hood and Gorge
Oregon City	Salem	Ontario	Roseburg	Mt. Hood
Hillsboro	Eugene	Baker City	Medford	The Dalles
Beaverton	Corvallis/Albany	La Grande	Ashland	Hood River
	McMinnville	Pendleton	Klamath Falls	West Columbia River Gorge
	Newberg			

How were these communities selected?

The participating communities were selected by RDMOs in consultation with Travel Oregon and WTW.

Travel Oregon aims to have destinations verified across the state to provide a comprehensive statewide look at accessibility for travelers with disabilities. Because two of our state's regions—the Oregon Coast and Central Oregon—are advanced in this work and have already been Destination Verified, this program will focus on regions that have yet to be assessed.

When selecting communities to participate, RDMOs were encouraged to take the following criteria into consideration:

1. Communities that offer attractions, lodging, and restaurants (e.g. if a place is mostly outdoor based with limited lodging or dining, consider it a lower priority).
2. Community readiness.
3. Communities with a local champion, like a chamber or DMO, that's enthusiastic and willing to facilitate communication with local businesses.
4. Proximity to diverse transportation options (public transportation, major airport, etc.).
5. The overall size and the variety of experiences a destination provides.
6. Destinations with high-tourism traffic, dense populations, diverse transportation options, and popular attractions.

For communities that are interested in participating in accessibility assessments, Travel Oregon's Competitive Grant program is accepting Letters of Inquiry (LOI) through January 15, 2025, for projects that increase access and inclusion in the tourism industry. More information is available at [Competitive Grants Program - Travel Oregon](#) or via grants@traveloregon.com

What are the benefits of the WTW Destination Verified program for destination management organizations and local businesses?

- This demonstrates to the community that the DMO is committed to improving access for residents with disabilities as well as visitors.
- The mapping process highlights areas of potential improvement and provides pathways to make changes for increased accessibility.
- The provided training increases awareness of disability inclusion best practices for destination representatives and visitor-facing businesses.

- This verification elevates the destination among worldwide partners and travel audiences that follow WTW.
- Fifteen percent of the world's population lives with some degree of disability, and when we include families and friends, nearly one-third of us are directly affected by this issue. Currently, travelers with disabilities contribute \$120 billion to the travel market each year, representing 6% of the tourism industry. This potential is far greater; it should reach \$300 billion. We have a \$180 billion opportunity that we can seize by delivering accurate and reliable information. By doing so, we can unlock this emerging market and drive significant growth.

What are the benefits for travelers?

- **Comprehensive Accessibility Visibility:** The goal is to provide visibility for all accessibility levels, from basic to outstanding, so travelers can make informed decisions for themselves.
- **Access to Accessibility Research:** Wheel the World research forums, blogs, influencers, and travelers to identify accessible places, top activities and must-do experiences.

What marketing opportunities does Destination Verified create?

- Offers a tangible, bookable product to complement marketing efforts to disabled travelers and their companions, as well as global sales initiatives.
- Helps destination marketers build accessible itineraries tailored to individual needs on FAM, influencer and/or consumer trips.
- Demonstrates to potential visitors that the destination is serious about disability inclusion.
- Provides a genuine message for the destination to share during disability pride month and other similar campaigns.
- Ability to highlight local niches in Wheel the World landing pages and represent what makes a destination unique by including experiences that showcase its identity.
- Travel Oregon will be launching a consumer-facing marketing and communications campaign in July (*launch day/time TBD*) to celebrate our WTW partnership, announce our statewide verification and showcase impactful content that will highlight all seven regions with inspirational accessible travel and trip planning stories.
 - There is potential for an optional paid media co-op in partnership with Travel Oregon in this marketing campaign. Details are still being confirmed but if an RDMO is interested in learning more, please email Carie Behe (carieb@traveloregon.com).

For more information on WTW Destination Verified, please contact Kate Sappell, RCTP Manager, Travel Oregon (ksappell@traveloregon.com).