

19 destinations across Europe win awards for accessible and sustainable tourism

The European tourism sector remains strong amidst the economic crisis, but European destinations must continue finding ways to stay competitive and expand into new markets. One of the tourism sectors in Europe that still remains largely untapped is accessible tourism for senior citizens and people with special needs.

By developing this sector of tourism we not only support equal opportunities and human rights but also improve the overall quality of tourism destinations, and have the opportunity to extend our tourism season. This is why the European Commission has decided to dedicate this year's European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) awards to accessible tourism destinations.

Tonight in Brussels, representatives of 19 destinations from all over Europe will receive EDEN trophies for their efforts to offer accessible features and equipment such as walking paths adapted to wheelchairs or prams, specially adapted bike rentals as well as adapted access to beaches and mountains. These kinds of services and features make holidays more enjoyable for people with different kinds of special access needs: reduced mobility, visual impairments or learning difficulties; but also for senior citizens or families with children. They also mean better overall quality of services and more comfort for all tourists.

EDEN awards: promoting sustainability for six years

EDEN is an accolade that the European Commission has been giving out for six years now, awarding emerging destinations that have successfully contributed to sustainability and opening up tourism to everybody. The goal of this year's EDEN awards is to give accessible tourism more visibility and to encourage other destinations across Europe to start following their example. In return, they will reap great benefits, because barrier-free tourism opens many new, sometimes niche, markets and attracts new clients. This in turn has a positive effect on economic growth and the jobs that come with it.

source: European Commission

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