

# Accessibility Workshop with Airbnb

## March 4, 2019

Airbnb held an excellent event on March 4<sup>th</sup> to educate hosts on accessibility. It was conducted by the AccommmableTeam, purchased by Airbnb in 2017. This team is going around the world to help folks understand what accessible accommodations look like. Here is what I learned:

- There are 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide.
- Over 20% of the world population will be over 65 by 2050.
- Millennial families are traveling more than singles or couples.
- The accessible market is growing at a rate of 22% every year.
- There were 2.5 million searches with access features in 2018.

The bulk of their presentation had to do with being super accurate and transparent in both description and pictures. Too many places say they are disabled-friendly yet are not. Your pictures should reflect what you have available as clearly as possible.

If you have a no-step access to your space, take a picture of it. Leave the doors open so that the transition from room to room or outside to inside can clearly be seen. If you have a roll-in shower, take a picture of the shower which includes the floor (remove the bathmat for clearer viewing).

The first thing searched upon by folks in this growing industry is a no-step entry. Take a picture of the entry to show what that means and show the rise if at all possible. You don't want people showing up to your house and being discouraged that you didn't show the thing that they need or that one thing that might make staying at your house be a deal-breaker.

It's not up to the host to decide what the guest needs. Give all the information possible and let the guest decide. Be clear and specific in your description. One attendee had an example of showing up to a place in Europe where the listing was on the first floor. She didn't realize the first floor was not the ground floor and the steps going up made staying there impossible for her party.

It's important to realize that if it is not possible to be strictly ADA accessible, it is possible to do some things that make guests much more comfortable. If you can put grab bars at the shower and the toilet, this helps. And be sure they are in the photos. People want to see the space around the bed, because it requires more room to

transfer from a wheelchair onto a bed. There are various sizes of wheelchairs, so state the width of your doorways. Thirty-two inches indicates an accessible-wide doorway, but many of us have thirty inch doorways or less. Again, be specific. Add this to your description.

Because Airbnb blocks numbers so frequently, it's a good idea to write out the numbers. We are hoping that Airbnb will allow floor plans with measurements in the photos, but we'll just have to try and see if they go through. Converting a document to a jpeg works.

In general, don't make assumptions about what your guests need. Ask. Opt to over-describe your listing. Use the accessibility checklist that Airbnb makes available.

#### 4 Photography Suggestions:

1. Prioritize floors
2. Open Doors
3. Visual Tour
4. Remove Visual Blockers (rugs, tables, pots, etc.)

The speakers emphasized that travelers have a priority list that includes being able to access the living space, use the bathroom, use the bed. Not every single thing in the house has to be accessible but there shouldn't be any question about accessibility in the listing.

Lastly, if you are planning to build a home or an ADU by all means make it ADA accessible. Hosts that have ADA accessible units book well into the future and often have waiting lists for their properties.