

Organization

Visit Mesa

Project Title

Travel Accessibility in Mesa, Arizona: Live Life Limitless

Project Description

Last year, Visit Mesa adopted several objectives supporting DEI programming with the backing of our stakeholders and implemented these efforts in our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. The planning process highlighted the need for accessibility promotion and helped Visit Mesa target the development of accessible travel offerings in the visitor industry, particularly because 1 in 4 people currently have a disability (Source: Center for Disease Control), and most of all people will be affected by a disability at some point in their lives. Visit Mesa implemented an Accessibility and Inclusion website. Featured throughout the website are virtual tours of 60 Mesa locations, in partnership with Threshold 360, that assist visitors with important pre-planning access. These videos were captured through the lens of accessibility, displaying parking lots, restrooms, and all ADA rooms. The website also features a series of customized itineraries tailored for visitors with low mobility:

<https://share.threshold360.com/map/p94rfm> and guests in Mesa with autism and/or traveling with guests on the spectrum <https://share.threshold360.com/map/s4n7w6>.

Each itinerary includes 360-degree videos of each GPS-enabled location. The website features accessibility sections for lodging, adventure, and dining as well as all certified autism centers in Mesa. In addition, Visit Mesa launched the citywide Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program. This globally recognized program has been hailed for supporting travelers with various needs as a way for them to secure additional support they may require while traveling. The lanyards and bracelets are available at Mesa hotels, museums, the airport and more locations with high visitor traffic. Visit Mesa launched a partnership with Aira, an on-demand visual interpretation service available to visually impaired visitors and residents. The new accessibility technology serves people who are blind or have low vision. Prior to arrival, visitors can download the Aira app and get access to a trained Aira agent who can assist with trip planning. While in Mesa's city limits, users gain complimentary access to agents who guide them in public buildings, attractions, restaurants, hotels and more.

Project Effectiveness

Visit Mesa leading with inclusion in the accessible travel space is not only the right thing to do to make sure that people feel welcomed, but it's a good business decision. Everyone wants to travel and explore but some visitors need extra assistance to do so. People with disabilities should be able to do all those same things when it comes to travel and experiencing a destination to its full potential. Access in Mesa and to our destination offerings should be a level playing field as much as we can make it. We know we are impacting change and these efforts were effective as they are now being used as examples across our DMO industry on how to support this market segment. We have been recognized by Destinations International, Travelability and ETourism and continue to share all we are doing in this space - and continue to do.

Return on Investment

The initiatives led by Visit Mesa ensure a commitment is being made to the legitimacy and substance of what Mesa specifically does or offers in these programs – and we are relying on innovation and advanced tools already in development for these market segments and enhancing their availability for

visitors who select Mesa as their travel destination. “We want residents and visitors alike to know that Mesa is committed to inclusivity and accessibility, and the availability of these tools is another step in the right direction,” says John Giles, Mayor of Mesa. “Visit Mesa has become a leader in our region, in putting tools like these to work to create greater ease for both guests and residents.”

Project Costs

Overall Budget for Accessibility Initiatives: \$25,000 AccessibleMesa.com Metrics: Pageviews: 3,754 Hidden Disabilities: 1,151 Aira pageviews: 521 Threshold 360 Accessibility Videos: 1.2 million Google views 83 hours of video time \$24,837 earned media value AIRA App: 267 minutes of total assistance time Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Distribution: 1100 lanyards distributed to 18 distribution points Mesa Accessibility Initiatives Earned Media Results: Earned Media Articles: 25 media features Earned Media Reach: 5,183,456 impressions Earned Media Value: \$72,588