

A photograph of a narrow, cobblestone street in a historic Italian town. The street is lined with multi-story buildings featuring light-colored facades and green shutters. People are walking along the street, and a street lamp is visible overhead. The sky is blue with some clouds. The street is paved with dark cobblestones, and there is a sidewalk on the right side. A man in a green shirt and backpack is in the foreground, walking away from the camera. A woman in a light blue shirt and orange skirt is also walking away. Other people are visible further down the street. On the right side of the street, there are signs for a tobacco shop and a self-service kiosk.

Explorica Canada Customer Accessibility Policy

Explorica Canada

Customer Accessibility Policy

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1. Introduction

Explorica Canada (including Keating by Explorica) supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005. As the Ontario Government continues to strive toward making Ontario barrier-free by 2025, Explorica Canada will progressively become more accessible and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (also referred to as the accessible customer service regulation or the “customer service standard”), came into force on January 1, 2008. It is the first accessibility standard created under the authority of the AODA and is a significant step toward the overarching goal of a barrier-free Ontario. Private sector organizations are required to be compliant with the regulation by January 1, 2012.

Accessibility standards will set requirements in a number of other key areas and will be reviewed at least every five years. New requirements may be added over time. Whenever new or revised standards are developed under the AODA, this policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure consistency. Updated information about the AODA and accessibility standards is available at Accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities or by calling the AODA Contact Centre at 1-866-515-2025 (TTY 416-325-3408) or 1-800-268-7095 (toll-free).

This policy has been prepared to outline what Explorica Canada must do to comply with the regulation and what our customers may expect from us. This policy also supports the vision, mission, and values of the organization, which is intended to guide employees in their efforts to meet or exceed customer needs and expectations.

The policy is intended to benefit the full range of persons with disabilities, as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Whether a person's disability is apparent or not, everyone should be treated with courtesy, made to feel welcome, and have their need for accommodation respected whenever they interact with a government service.

2. Our vision, mission, and values

Explorica Canada is an educational travel company whose vision is to create a better world by enriching every student with a cultural experience through educational travel.

Our mission is to be the product leader in educational travel, helping teachers and students discover the wonders of the world through safe and reliable tour experiences.

Our values are:

- > Passion for delighting customers and connecting travellers to the world
- > Integrity in our words and deeds
- > Innovation in everything we do
- > Reliability in our products and services
- > Quality as our daily mindset

Explorica Canada strives at all times to provide goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

3. Training for staff

Explorica Canada will provide training on customer service to all employees who provide services, and who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and

procedures. New staff and staff who commence new duties that involve interaction with the public or other third parties will undertake training as part of their orientation, if they haven't already done so.

Each department will provide staff with training that includes:

- > A review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service;
- > How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- > How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- > How to use the equipment or devices available on the provider's premises, or otherwise, that may assist with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities;
- > What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Explorica Canada's goods and services; and
- > Explorica Canada's policies, practices and procedures relating to the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.
- > Policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.
- > The various departments, to the greatest extent possible, will ensure that organizations providing services on behalf of Explorica Canada undertake training in accessible customer service, as outlined above.
- > How to use assistive devices available in their various locations for customers, and inform customers of the assistive devices that are available.

4. Assistive devices & transportation

Explorica Canada is committed to serving persons with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use, or benefit from our goods and services.

With respect to specific devices and modes of transportation:

Wheelchairs: Explorica Canada is happy to accept persons using wheelchairs on tours. We request that participants let us know well in advance of their departure so the company can accommodate their needs. Participants should know that Explorica Canada tours are fast-paced and physically demanding, and that tour buses are not necessarily wheelchair accessible overseas. For North American tours, a limited number of buses offer wheelchair accessibility.

Additionally, few buildings (including hotels) overseas are wheelchair accessible and are often without elevators. In North America, most hotels are wheelchair accessible. Participants and/or the Group Leaders should contact Explorica Canada to discuss their specific needs. Explorica cannot provide wheelchairs, therefore participants should bring their own. The wheelchair must be collapsible for local transportation overseas, and in North America, with the exception of wheelchair accessible buses in North America.

The following information will be helpful for the Operations team & Tour Director to know pre-tour:

- > Size of wheelchair. Does the wheelchair fold?
- > Will there be a chaperone dedicated to assisting the participant?
- > Is the participant bound to the wheelchair, or can he/she walk short distances to board the bus, etc?

Cruises: Participants on Explorica Canada tours should note that generally speaking the ships that are used on tours are not wheelchair friendly. There are no special facilities in the cabins or in the bathrooms overseas. In North America, certain cruises are wheelchair accessible,

but may have restrictions on allowing electric wheelchairs on board their vessels due to safety concerns. Specific questions about the accessibility of the ships should be directed to Explorica Canada using the contact information at the end of this document.

Public Transportation: Explorica Canada's overseas and certain North American tours rely heavily on public transportation in major cities. Most public service stations have no facilities for wheelchairs, and buses may not be accessible in all locations overseas. In North America, most stations are wheelchair accessible. Participants should therefore be prepared to take taxis when necessary. In major European cities, such as Paris, approximate taxi costs of \$150/day should be budgeted for accordingly.

Buses: A participant with physical disabilities might need more than one seat on the bus. This information should be shared with Explorica Canada well in advance of the tour so that proper arrangements can be made. Additionally, the steps of many coaches are often too narrow for assisting participants into the coach. Best efforts will be made by Explorica Canada in such cases.

Flights: Airlines have varying regulations and restrictions regarding accessibility. Often the airline will ask for the size/weight of the participant in order to determine their need for a second seat. If a second seat is required, the participant is responsible for any associated costs. It is the responsibility of the participant to contact the airline directly 48 hours prior to departure to address any special needs.

When Explorica Canada staff members are made aware of any participant with disabilities who may be interested in travelling on a tour, the participant will be sent a letter outlining some of the possible restrictions and challenges with respect to accessibility. Many such restrictions are beyond Explorica Canada's span of control, and it is therefore important that Group Leaders (eg. those teachers who are responsible for a group, including participants with disabilities) and participants understand these conditions in advance of travelling with us. Assistive device related costs will be passed on to the participant.

A copy of this letter can be viewed in Appendix A or B.

5. Use of service animals and support persons

Persons with disabilities may bring their service animal to Explorica Canada's offices that are open to the public or other third parties. Explorica Canada will ensure that all staff, volunteers and third parties dealing with the public are trained in how to interact with persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

On rare occasions, a manager may determine that a service animal cannot enter an area of the premises consistent with other laws. In these instances, managers will suggest appropriate alternatives and provide assistance.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Explorica Canada's offices that are open to the public or other third parties with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

When support persons are required (e.g., sign language interpreters, attendants) to assist persons with disabilities on Explorica Canada tours, the participants are responsible for all related expenses and fees. Explorica Canada will make best efforts to minimize such expenses where possible.

6. Communication

Explorica Canada will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This means staff will communicate in a means that enables persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for purposes of using, receiving and requesting Explorica Canada goods and services.

Explorica Canada will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.

7. Feedback process

The ultimate goal of this policy is to meet service delivery expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Staff will let customers know what methods are available for giving feedback. If a method is not suitable, customers may request another method. Privacy will be respected and all feedback will be reviewed for possible action that can be taken to improve ministry services. Feedback received from customers will be directed to, and reviewed by, Explorica Canada's Human Resources Manager.

Where possible, complaints will be addressed immediately. However, some complaints may require more effort to address, and must be reviewed for action, possibly at a higher level. In accordance with the Explorica Canada's service level agreement, customers can expect an acknowledgement of verbal/telephone feedback, or feedback left on a comment card, within two business days, or a response to a mailed/e-mailed complaint within fifteen business days of the receipt of the complaint. If a mailed/e-mailed complaint cannot be responded to within fifteen business days an interim acknowledgement must be sent to the customer. The acknowledgement must indicate when the matter will be addressed and when the customer will be notified, and staff will follow up with any required action within the timeframe noted in the acknowledgement. Feedback/response will endeavour to be in a format that is accessible to the complainant.

8. Modifications to this or other policies

Explorica Canada and its staff are committed to ensuring that their customer service policies, practices and procedures respect and promote the dignity and independence of all persons with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on persons with disabilities.

Explorica Canada will make best efforts to review and modify any operational policy affecting customer service that does not respect and promote the dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity of persons with disabilities.

9. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, if the purpose of this policy is not understood, or to receive a copy of this policy, please contact:

Explorica Canada, Inc.
3080 Yonge Street, Suite 5052
Toronto, ON M4N 3N1

accessibility@explorica.ca
Telephone: 1-888-378-8845 or 416-485-1200

Appendix A - International Tours

Explorica Canada Letter to Group Leaders and Participants re: Accessibility

Month 00, 0000

Dear <GL NAME> and <PARTICIPANT NAME>,

Thank you for your interest in Explorica Canada's <TOUR NAME> tour. We're thrilled that you're considering travelling with us on this exceptional tour. Since we want to ensure that all participants have an extraordinary experience with us, we want to let you know that standards for wheelchair accessibility and other issues of concern to travellers with disabilities vary from country to country. I'd like to address a few of these subjects below.

While we certainly welcome all travellers on our tours, the trips are fast-paced and physically demanding. The tours require a great deal of walking, and our buses are not wheelchair accessible. Because most countries do not maintain the same strict standards for accessibility, we also cannot guarantee accessibility for wheelchairs, walkers, dialysis equipment, guide dogs, or other special aids at hotels, restaurants, public transportation, museums, or other attractions. Of course, we will try our best to accommodate accessibility requirements where we can.

Because of these restrictions related to group travel, particularly overseas, you may not be able to fully participate in the tour, and we regret that because the restrictions are out of our control we cannot refund the cost for any activity in which you are unable to participate. Explorica would hate for these limitations to make you or others in your group disappointed with the tour.

Listed below are several resources for travellers with disabilities. I urge you to seriously consider both the issues I've raised and any others you may find on these sites, as well as to consult with your physician, before deciding whether to travel with an educational travel company like Explorica. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 1.888.378-8845 ext xxx with any further questions.

Sincerely,

<PROGRAM CONSULTANT NAME>

<EMAIL ADDRESS>

Resources for Travellers with Disabilities

Fodor's Smart Travel Tips: Disabilities & Accessibility

<http://www.fodors.com/traveltips/disabilities/>

MossRehab's ResourceNet for Accessible Travel

<http://www.mossresourcenet.org/travel.htm>

Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality

347 Fifth Avenue, Suite 610

New York, NY 10016

212.447.7284

www.sath.org

Appendix B - North American Tours

Explorica Canada Letter to Group Leaders and Participants re: Accessibility

Month 00, 0000

Dear <GL NAME> and <PARTICIPANT NAME>,

Thank you for your interest in Explorica Canada's <TOUR NAME> tour. We're thrilled that you're considering travelling with us on this exceptional tour. Since we want to ensure that all participants have an extraordinary experience with us, we want to let you know that standards for wheelchair accessibility and other issues of concern to travellers with disabilities vary from country to country. I'd like to address a few of these subjects below.

While we certainly welcome all travellers on our tours, the trips are fast-paced and physically demanding. The tours require a great deal of walking, and buses with wheelchair accessibility are limited and require advance booking to secure. Unfortunately, we also cannot guarantee accessibility for wheelchairs, walkers, dialysis equipment, guide dogs, or other special aids at hotels, restaurants, public transportation, museums, or other attractions. Of course, we will try our best to accommodate accessibility requirements where we can.

Because of these restrictions related to group travel you may not be able to fully participate in the tour, and we regret that because the restrictions are out of our control we cannot refund the cost for any activity in which you are unable to participate. Explorica would hate for these limitations to make you or others in your group disappointed with the tour.

Listed below are several resources for travellers with disabilities. I urge you to seriously consider both the issues I've raised and any others you may find on these sites, as well as to consult with your physician, before deciding whether to travel with an educational travel company like Explorica. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 1.888.378-8845 ext xxx with any further questions.

Sincerely,

<PROGRAM CONSULTANT NAME>

<EMAIL ADDRESS>

Resources for Travellers with Disabilities

Fodor's Smart Travel Tips: Disabilities & Accessibility

<http://www.fodors.com/traveltips/disabilities/>

MossRehab's ResourceNet for Accessible Travel

<http://www.mossresourcenet.org/travel.htm>

Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality

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www.sath.org