

SCIENTIFIC NOTES

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ACCESSIBILITY OF SELECTED TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN LOWER SILESIA FOR THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite current law and social norms, the disabled are very often passed over in everyday life while the accessibility and adaptation of tourist attractions leave a lot to be desired. The aim of this article is to evaluate the accessibility of selected attractions in Lower Silesia for the physically disabled. Because of the lack of unambiguous accessibility measures in the tourist literature, the author has chosen the following definitions: 1) barrier – an architectural or town-planning element whose existence prevents those with a particular level of physical disability from self-sufficient sightseeing of selected tourist attractions. For instance three or more steps for wheelchair tourists; 2) difficulty – an architectural or town-planning element whose existence interferes with those of a particular level of physical disability from self-sufficient sightseeing of selected tourist attractions. This kind of interference, for instance the lack of selected parking places for the physically disabled, can however be overcome; 3) improvement – an architectural or town-planning element whose existence facilitates those with a particular level of physical disability to self-sufficiently sightsee selected tourist attractions, for instance a lift in a multi-storey building.

2. ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS FOR THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED

An accessibility evaluation of tourist attractions for the physically disabled is possible thanks to the classification and description of those basic difficulties whose existence interferes with self-sufficient sightseeing, or

barriers which prevent sightseeing at all, at selected tourist attractions.

Two barriers have been chosen and presented. Architectural barriers, which JARNOWSKA (1985) defines as building elements which make movement difficult or even impossible for the physically disabled. The second group are town-planning barriers which prevent or interfere with movement inside or in the surroundings of the tourist attraction.

The accessibility evaluation of tourist attractions in Lower Silesia for tourists with differing disabilities means that even one barrier is enough to make sightseeing impossible. Because of this a combination of a ranking method as well as site exclusion (from the list of accessible places for tourists with a classified level of disability), has been used.

The aim of ranking is to attribute particular barriers or improvements for physically disabled tourists at a selected attraction on the following scale: -1 point (indicated with '-' symbol) – difficulties whose presence for a particular level of physical disability interferes with self-sufficient sightseeing; 0 points – when neither barriers nor improvements are selected; +1 point (indicated with '+' symbol) – improvements whose existence facilitates those with a particular level of physical disability in self-sufficient sightseeing; the 'X' symbol – barriers whose existence prevents those with a particular level of physical disability from any sightseeing.

Barriers are described according to the law: *Rozporządzenie Ministra Gospodarki i Pracy z 19 sierpnia 2004 r. ...; Rozporządzenie Ministra Infrastruktury z 12 kwietnia 2002 r. ...; Rozporządzenie Ministra Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z 22 maja 2003 r.*

Table 1. Accessibility evaluation of selected natural attractions in Lower Silesia for wheelchair tourists

Name of the site	Barriers and difficulties which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites					Improvements which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites					In total
	Steps (3 steps and more)	Significant irregularities of surfaces	Absence or bad localization of parking	Obstacle on the road	Prejudice of natural environment	Lack of steps	Driveway	Hard and smooth surfaces	Convenient localization of parking	Adapted toilets	
Errant Rocks	x	x	0	x	x	0	0	0	0	0	x
Szklarka Waterfall	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	+2
Bear's Cave	x	-	-	0	x	0	0	0	0	0	x
Szczytnicki Park	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+1
Japanese Garden in Wrocław	0	0	-	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	-1
Zoological Garden in Wrocław	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0

Source: Own compilation, based on information gained at investigated sites in May 2007.

Table 2. Accessibility evaluation of selected non-natural attractions in Lower Silesia for wheelchair tourists

Name of the site	Barriers and difficulties which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites							Improvements which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites							In total	
	Steps (3 steps and more)	Significant irregularities of surfaces around visited attraction	Absence or bad localization of parking	Obstacle on the pavement	Width of the doors is less than 0,90m	Swing or revolving doors	Width of the passages is less than 1,2	Lack of steps	Driveway	Hard and smooth surfaces	Convenient localization of parking	Doors are wider than 0,90m	Elevators	Passages are wider 1,2m		Adapted toilets
Książ Castle	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	+4
Church of Peace of Świdnica	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	0	+1
Raławice Panorama	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	+	+6
Srebrna Góra Stronghold	x	x	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	x
Gross Rosen Museum	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Museum of Papermaking in Duszniki Zdrój	x	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x

Source: Own compilation, based on information gained at investigated sites in May 2007.

Additionally the author includes the needs of the physically disabled as classified into two tourist groups: 1) those who walk with crutches or use a prosthesis; 2) those who use wheelchairs.

The overall accessibility evaluation of tourist attractions is calculated from the sum of points and an analysis of the symbols. Tourist attractions were classified into four groups, both for those who use wheelchairs and for those who walk with crutches or use a prosthesis. If in the 'in total' section is an '**X**' symbol - attractions are not available to physically disabled tourists; if a **negative figure** - these are attractions in which sightseeing is difficult but possible by the physically disabled; if the total is **0** - these are attractions which have neither difficulties nor improvements for physically disabled tourists; if a **positive figure** - these are attractions with a lack of barriers and where improvements for physically disabled tourists are found.

It should be remembered that the method used by the author refers to seemingly non-comparable elements whose meaning for the functioning of the disabled tourist may vary. In the situation where barriers make sightseeing impossible, the tourist attraction is excluded from further classification and considered as inaccessible for a particular group of the physically disabled.

3. DESCRIPTIONS OF SELECTED TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN LOWER SILESIA

The author to briefly describe selected attractions, has used two tourist guides by CZERWIŃSKI: *Sudety, przewodnik* (2003) and *Wrocław, przewodnik turystyczny* (2004). The criteria for their evaluation are the classification of tourism in Poland presented by LIJEWSKI *et al.* (2002), who distinguish three main groups: rest, sightseeing and specialised tourism.

The selection presented belong to the sightseeing group and takes into consideration the most attractive (according to the author) in particular categories: 1) rocks and rock formations: Errant Rocks (*Błędne Skały*); 2) waterfalls and springs: Szklarka Waterfall (*Wodospad Szklarki*); 3) caves and grottoes: Bear's Cave (*Jaskinia Niedźwiedzia*); 4) parks and gardens: Szczytnicki Park, Japanese Garden in Wrocław; 5) zoological gardens: Zoological Garden in Wrocław; 6) smaller architectural monuments: Książ Castle, Church of Peace in Świdnica; 7) specialist museums and unique collections: Raclawice Panorama; 8) historical military sites: Śrebrna Góra Stronghold; 9) martyrdom sites and museums: Gross-Rosen (Rogoźnica) Museum; 10) industrial monuments: Duszniki Zdrój Papermaking Museum.

4. ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION OF SELECTED TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN LOWER SILESIA FOR TOURISTS WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS

1. Sites which are unavailable for tourists who use wheelchairs (in Table 1 and 2 marked with an X symbol). In this group are Errant Rocks, Bear's Cave, Śrebrna Góra Stronghold, and the Duszniki Zdrój Papermaking Museum.

In the case of natural attractions such as Errant Rocks or Bear's Cave nothing has been done to make the sites accessible for physically disabled tourists. The natural environment is privileged which means that a tourist in a wheelchair is not able to overcome the difficulties. The Śrebrna Góra Stronghold, erected at the end of 18th c., was never designed as a tourist attraction and that is why its infrastructure leaves a lot to be desired. Numerous steep approaches, steps and narrow passages prevent disabled tourists on wheelchairs from visiting this site. At the moment sightseeing at the Duszniki Zdrój Papermaking Museum is also impossible for those tourists who use wheelchairs, while for those who walk on crutches or use a prosthesis it is very demanding because of the narrow passages and steep steps.

2. Tourist attractions in which sightseeing is difficult but possible by a wheelchair tourist (in Tables 1 and 2 the points totals are **negative**).

Among these tourist attractions the author has selected the Japanese Garden in Wrocław, the Zoological Garden in Wrocław and Gross-Rosen Museum. The main difficulty in the Japanese Garden is lack of direct access by car. The only possible way to get to it is on foot via the Centennial Hall and then through a pergola. The hump-backed bridge crossing the pond is a real challenge for wheelchair tourists because of the steep approach and wooden projections. Wrocław Zoo in its open part is fully accessible for tourists in wheelchairs, unfortunately access to the most of the pavilions is impossible because of numerous steep steps. Gross-Rosen Museum does not have any special improvements for physically disabled tourists however it is possible to move around the site by electric vehicle.

3. Tourist attractions which have neither difficulties nor improvements for wheelchair tourists (in Tables 1 and 2 the points totals are **0**). In this group Szczytnicki Park and the Church of Peace in Świdnica should be considered. These sites do not have any special improvements for those using wheelchairs, however their location and character do not result in any significant barriers.

T a b l e 3. Accessibility evaluation of selected natural attractions in Lower Silesia for tourists who walk on crutches or use a prosthesis

Name of the site	Barriers and difficulties which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites				Improvements which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites						In total	
	Steps (3 steps and more)	Significant irregularities of surfaces	Absence or bad localization of parking	Prejudice of natural environment	Lack of steps	Driveway	Hard and smooth surfaces	Convenient localization of parking	Convenient handrails	Benches		Adapted toilets
Errant Rocks	-	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-3
Szklarka Waterfall	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	+	+	0	+4
Bear's Cave	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-4
Szczytnicki Park	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	+2
Japanese Garden in Wrocław	0	0	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	+1
Zoological Garden in Wrocław	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+1

S o u r c e: Own compilation, based on information gained at investigated sites in May 2007.

T a b l e 4. Accessibility evaluation of selected non-natural attractions in Lower Silesia for tourists who walk on crutches or use a prosthesis

Name of the site	Barriers and difficulties which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites					Improvements which physically disabled tourists can find at tourist sites							In total	
	Steps (3 steps and more)	Sleepy surfaces	Significant irregularities of surfaces around visited attraction	Absence or bad localization of parking	Swing or revolving doors	Lack of steps	Anti-slip surface	Automatic doors	Convenient localization of parking	Elevators	Convenient handrails	Benches		Adapted toilets
Książ Castle	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	+	0	+2
Church of Peace of Świdnica	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
Raławice Panorama	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+3
Srebrna Góra Stronghold	-	0	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-3
Gross Rosen Museum	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Museum of Papermaking in Duszniki Zdrój	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1

S o u r c e: Own compilation, based on information gained at investigated sites in May 2007.

4. Sites with a lack of barriers where improvements for wheelchair tourists have been made (in Tables 1 and 2 the points totals are **positive**). Tourist attractions friendly for physically disabled tourists are Szklarka Waterfall, Książ Castle and Raclawice Panorama. In these three examples adaptation for wheelchair tourists is noticeable thanks to accessible approaches, a lack of steps, the presence of lifts, and passages and paths of appropriate width.

5. ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION OF SELECTED ATTRACTIONS FOR TOURISTS WHO WALK ON CRUTCHES OR USE A PROSTHESIS

1. Attractions in which sightseeing is difficult but possible by tourists who walk on crutches or use a prosthesis (in Tables 3 and 4 the points totals are **negative**). As a matter of fact each researched site can be accessible, however among them some have noticeable barriers: Errant Rocks, Bear's Cave, Srebrna Góra Stronghold, the Duszniki Zdrój Papermaking Museum. Numerous barriers here make sightseeing much harder than for able tourists. Among them we can list narrow passages (Errant Rocks), numerous steps (Bear's Cave, the Duszniki Zdrój Papermaking Museum, Srebrna Góra Stronghold), significant irregularities and steep slopes (Errant Rocks, Srebrna Góra Stronghold).

2. Attractions which have neither difficulties nor improvements for tourists who walk on crutches or use a prosthesis (in Tables 3 and 4 the points totals are 0). According to research the Japanese Garden in Wrocław, Zoological Garden in Wrocław, the Church of Peace in Świdnica and Gross Rosen Museum should be included. The main barriers at these selected sites are lack of direct access by car (Japanese Garden in Wrocław, the Church of Peace in Świdnica), steps which lead to some parts (Zoological Garden, Gross Rosen Museum) and steep paths (Japanese Garden).

3. Attractions friendly for tourists who walk on crutches or use a prosthesis with a lack of barriers and where improvements are found (in Tables 3 and 4 the points totals are **positive**).

According to the ranking method Szklarka Waterfall, Szczytnicki Park in Wrocław, Książ Castle and Raclawice Panorama should be included. These sites have infrastructure suitable for physically disabled tourists such as a lack of steps and the presence of

paths (Szklarka Waterfall, Książ Castle, Raclawice Panorama), convenient handrails (Szklarka Waterfall, Raclawice Panorama), and numerous benches along sightseeing routes (Szczytnicki Park).

6. SUMMARY

Most of the researched tourist attractions in Lower Silesia are not adapted for physically disabled tourists. Among the twelve sites described only two can be designated as 'attractions friendly for physically disabled tourists': the track to Szklarka Waterfall and Raclawice Panorama. These two attractions have been intentionally adapted. Some attractions such as Bear's Cave or Errant Rocks are not available for disabled tourists because of the natural environment and their character. Sites however which do not need great expense to become accessible for disabled tourists are indicated, where thanks to some simple improvements such as placing benches and removing narrow paths and posts blocking road access, the tourist activity of the physically disabled can be increased. This is an easy way to improve the quality of life for disabled tourists who are able to sightsee on their own and, what is most important, they can integrate with society. Tourism gives lots of opportunities for rehabilitation, and sightseeing activates both intellectually and physically.

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