

Space the Final Frontier? Disability and Barriers to Holidays

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Increasing interest in access to tourism has been brought about in many societies by the passing of disability discrimination legislation. Within the UK the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act has focussed attention on the obligations of service providers and led to a growing awareness of the barriers faced by the disabled.

Much of the emerging debate has centred on physical barriers and especially wheel chair users. This paper attempts to move beyond this perspective by exploring a range of barriers associated with the visitor journey alongside a wider view of disabling factors. Of particular importance is the notion of disabling space and more especially a disabling space of values associated with tourism.

The broader context of the discussion is in terms of the social model of disability and the scope of recent legislation. This also highlights an increasing dichotomy between the needs of the disabled and the views of the state, and the tourism industry. The paper also draws attention to the needs of the disabled by considering the results of recent surveys undertaken both by the author and organisations such as Visit Britain.