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How The Expo 2020 Dubai is Making Accessibility a Priority

FEATURES & ADVICE | LACEY PFALZ | DECEMBER 13, 2021



A family walks towards Al Wasl at the Expo 2020 Dubai. (photo via Expo 2020 Dubai LLC)

The [Expo 2020 Dubai](#) is the world’s largest event of the year. Spanning from October through March 2022, the [Expo](#) offers a theme of 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future,' showcasing countries around the world and their innovations that could truly change the world, for the better.

It’s also innovative in its approach to accessibility.

The Expo 2020 Dubai is expected to welcome 25 million visits by people from around the globe by the time it ends in March 2022, while the numbers of visitors to its online platform (which includes virtual tours of many of its pavilions and attractions for those who can’t physically attend), rose to nearly 16 million by the end of November, only

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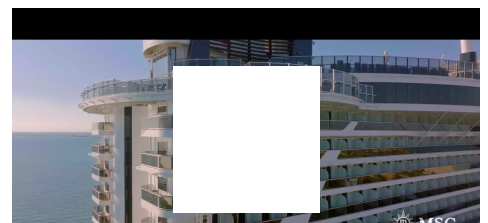


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them as “people of determination,” instead of as disabled. The term is an umbrella category for a variety of different people with differing needs, including individuals with invisible disabilities, like those with sensory processing difficulties, or those who are hard of hearing or Deaf.



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Visitors watch an event at Al Wasl during World Children's Day at the Expo 2020 Dubai. (photo via Expo 2020 Dubai LLC)

Dina Storey, Director of Sustainability Operations at Expo 2020 Dubai, shares their approach to making this massive event accessible and approachable for everyone: “Inclusion is one of the UAE’s most important values, and it was crucial to ensure that the team behind Expo 2020 was diverse, accepting and dedicated to the task of delivering an exceptional event to the world. People of determination played an important role in the lead-up and delivery of the global event.”

“As a result, [the] Expo has built a thorough understanding of the journey of a person of determination by regularly engaging with the community and relevant stakeholders. This involved a series of accessibility forums that led Expo to introduce a number of provisions for people of determination,” continued Storey.

The true scale of accessibility features at the Expo 2020 Dubai is staggering. Far from installing wheelchair ramps and elevators where needed and calling it accessible, the Expo goes further than any previous event to ensure that any visitor can enjoy it.

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Aerial view of the Expo 2020 Dubai at night. (photo via Expo 2020 Dubai LLC)

dogs, bathrooms with height adjustable benches and hoists, step-free access to every pavilion within the Expo, Hearing Induction Loops or Hearing Enhancement Systems to ensure individuals who use hearing aids would be able to enjoy audio within pavilions, Braille and tactile map boards, ear defenders and sunglasses, Quiet Rooms in Visitor Centers and sensory rating cards for every pavilion that displays the sensory impact of the pavilion based on the six senses for neurodivergent individuals or those with sensory processing difficulties.

These are only a few of the most thoughtful ways the Expo 2020 Dubai is making it more accessible for individuals.

“Our team has also developed the PODway app, in collaboration with SAP – Expo’s Innovative Enterprise Software Premier Partner, designed to help people of determination navigate the site,” added Storey. “The app is specifically designed to support mobility, visual, hearing, cognitive or sensory-access needs, by locating the accessible features available in each pavilion and accessible services. It also includes a feedback-based journey, supported navigation and assistance tracking for people of determination.”

The Expo 2020 Dubai has been certified a Sensory Accessible Event by [Sensory Access](#), an organization that works with events to help make them more inclusive for individuals with sensory processing difficulties. It’s also one of [The Valuable 500](#), a collection of businesses and corporations around the world who are dedicated to business inclusivity with a focus on disability inclusion.

The Expo is providing free entry to people of determination and offers half-off the regular ticket price for an additional companion.

“In addition to these efforts, accessibility is a key focus for Expo’s Theme Weeks, a series of ten Thematic Weeks that address key global issues, where we



Interior of Al Wasl, one of the Expo 2020 Dubai's main pavilions. (photo via Expo 2020 Dubai LLC)

have hosted Tolerance and Inclusivity Week in November. Our ultimate aim is to ensure this mega-event fulfills its purpose of bringing the world together to create a better future for all humanity," said Storey.

Events, and even attractions, around the world should take note of this approach towards accessibility.

For more information on the Expo 2020 Dubai or to take a virtual tour, please [click here](#).

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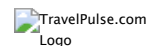
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