

Episode 3 - Transcription

Welcome back, fellow travelers, this is Trouble with Me, your in... accessible travel experience podcast.

If you enjoy the show and would like to be a part of it by sharing about your cities or telling us your accessibility horror stories, you can visit us at troublewithme.com or at Tabi Folk, your accessible travel community. And now, without further ado, welcome aboard and get ready to take off.

This is episode 3: Trouble in Barcelona. And, as the name suggests, our menu today will be a special on the city. First, we'll have an accessibility review of Barcelona, followed by a tourist attraction review of Sagrada Familia. Then, as usual, we'll have an accessibility Horror Story, this time also in a station nearby the city, and, finally, we'll get some tips of the day and we'll hear some sounds of the world. Let's begin.

The sound of the waves really catches the spirit of our city... welcome to Barcelona.

The second biggest city in Spain, Barcelona, capital of Catalonia, is a city friendly towards arts and culture. It is also known for its healthy Mediterranean food, it's nice weather and for being home of Gaudi's architectural masterpieces.

We're on board of one of Barcelona's trains to give our score on Transportation accessibility.

We are giving it 4 out of 5 stars. Actually, it is quite good, especially comparing it to other cities, as nearly all subway system (90% currently) and all buses are wheelchair accessible. On subways, though, it's very important, if you are using a wheelchair, you should always board on the first car. Elevator maintenance and RENFE trains accessibility to outer cities can be improved. Also the Navilens system to give information for people with visual impairments is a nice feature.

[Elevator: opening doors, closing doors.]

From the subway to the street through an elevator, we're going to give our score on streets accessibility, it's 4.5 out of 5 stars. Nearly perfect, with great zero level curb cuts, the only downside is that audio signals on traffic lights is only available through a remote control that may be hard to get for tourists. Next, restaurants and shops. Also good, 5 out of 5 stars. It's one of the best in the world, as inaccessible places are the exception and not the norm. Also, accessible toilets are common in either new or bigger restaurants. Still on the bright side, hotels and accommodation accessibility, 5 stars. There are many accessible options in different price ranges. We specially recommend hotels from the ILUNION hotel's chain, which have outstanding accessibility for all type of disabilities and are also well located within the city

We are nearby Las Ramblas, one of the most famous areas in Barcelona to give our score on tourist attraction accessibility, 3.5 stars. Even though it's the worst mark so far, it's still quite good, as most attractions are wheelchair accessible, although many of them have inaccessible

areas. Park Güell, for example, may only be for the adventurous, due to its many slopes and rough terrain, somewhere. Nevertheless, accessibility information is usually available on all attractions' websites and discounts for disabled people, plus companions, are common. Beach accessibility is pretty good too. And last, but not least, Getting there.

On board of the TGV, we are giving it 4 out of 5 stars.

Accessibility from main transportation hubs, be it the airport or Barcelona Sants train station, to the city center is good. We recommend the bus from the airport to Plaça Catalunya, if you want to avoid subway transfers. With this, we've reached the end of the review and our overall accessibility score of Barcelona is 4.3 out of 5 stars. As we have seen, accessibility is above average in all of its categories, which nowadays is still a remarkable feat around the world. Aside from occasional out of order subway elevators or some minor inaccessible areas in tourist attractions, accessibility should not be an issue for you to enjoy the city. Remember that for the full report with links to maps on accessible transportation and details on how to get to the accessible beaches, and how to use the accessibility service there, you can go to troublewithme.com and check today's episode notes and download it from there. Having said that, now it's time for Sagrada Familia. Let's know more about it.

One of the most famous cathedrals in the world, designed by Gaudi and inspired by the shapes of nature, it is the emblem of the city of Barcelona. Today's review will focus on its most remarkable accessibility features and we want to start with hearing accessibility, as compared to other touristic attractions around the world, Sagrada Familia's is top notch.

This is one of the videos in the museum area. All of them have captions in English. Furthermore, all audio guides from Sagrada Familia's mobile app are also available in Catalan, Spanish and International Sign Language. As for physical accessibility, it is quite good too. Despite the steep slope to access the museum area, the inaccessible towers, as there are stairs before and after the elevators, and some issues with the accessible toilets. It may seem a lot, but the rest is really really good. The pavement really smooth, the rest of the ramps, you will really be able to enjoy the cathedral, so don't worry at all. Also visual accessibility is fair, but it improves a lot if you book a guided tour, for an extra 4€, that will get you access to some 3D touch models.

Finally, it is worth to mention that despite there being lots of tourists, Sagrada Familia is a really calm and silent place. This was the interior of the Cathedral on any given day. By the way, let's not forget to mention that there's also free admission for persons with disabilities, plus one of their companions. So, for all of this, we are giving Sagrada Familia a total score of 4 out of 5 stars. And now, before moving on to the next section, when visiting Sagrada Familia, we stumbled upon a random tourist and decided to interview him. Here's what we got.

[Joan] Okay, thank you for being with Trouble with Me podcast. What's your name?

[Frank] My name is Frank, from Taiwan.

[Joan] Where in Taiwan?

[Frank] The northern side of Taiwan, in Taipei.

[Joan] From Taipei!

[Frank] Yes.

[Joan] So, do you think in Taipei transportation is good for people with disabilities?

[Frank] I think so, because we built after... the city, like 20 years ago, we built our own MRT system, so it's quite new. So, we considered all the structure for the disability people. It's very good. But, as for the blind people, we do have a...

[Joan] Yeah, the tactile pavement.

[Frank] Yes, we do have, but sometimes illegal parking...

[Joan] Oh!

[Frank] ...on the streets are blocked away.

[Joan] Yeah...

[Frank] It's embarrassing, but we are going to be better in the future.

[Joan] That's very nice. Thank you so much, because you actually know a lot about accessibility. And, just to, just to finish it, are you enjoying Sagrada Familia?

[Frank] Of course, yeah. I think everyone's enjoying the structure. It's the first and the only in the whole world, so I think everyone, if they have a chance, they should be here.

[Joan] Thank you so much. Thank you!

[Frank] Thank you.

It's really cool because, thanks to Frank, we were able to know more about accessibility in Taipei, which, for many of us, feels like an exotic destination. And, with our Asian connection, we go back to Barcelona for our awaited Accessibility Horror Story.

It was the year 2014. At the time, I used a crutch, instead of a wheelchair. It was late at night, past 2am, and I had taken the last train to go back home. The train stopped at Valldoreix, an outdoor station at a residential area 20 minutes away from Barcelona. I got off and made for the elevator to change platforms, as I had parked my car at the other side of the station. The elevator was out of order. Apparently, it only worked until 10pm. I guess it was unthinkable that disabled, elderly or people with baby carts roamed outside after 10. Curfew for everyone.

Anyway, reluctantly, I made for the stairs and one step at a time, little by little, I reached the underground corridor. I crossed it at my own pace. It was winter and my joints needed their time to move about. I reached the other end and, when I was starting to climb the stairs on the other

side, I heard a loud metallic noise: “rack”, “rack”. I’d been locked up inside the station. Apparently, there was an automatic shutdown. Later, I learned that if cameras didn’t detect any movement, about 3 minutes after the last train, all shutters would go down. As I’m a little person, while being at the base of the stairs, cameras happily pointed above my head, so neither human nor AI saw me.

The thing is, when I got to the top of the stairs, I realized that all shutters were down and, thus, all exits were blocked. I didn’t panic. I’m quite used to surreal situations. And you’ll say, well you just made a phone call to the police or emergency services. But, you know, I didn’t feel quite like saying: “hey, I’ve been locked up at the station...”. Who knows how many explanations would I’ve had to give and, also, who knows how long it’d have took them to come up and get me out. It was cold, I was tired and the only thing I wanted was to get home and sleep. So, I started checking which was the smallest fence that I could try to jump.

The smallest fence was more than 2 meters. It’s as if someone with average height finds a 4 or 5 meter fence. I thought, “ok”, probably because of my brain being half numb due to sleepiness and cold. Anyway, I was in front of the fence, but I couldn’t jump it with a crutch. No problem, I took the crutch and threw it over to the other side. Climbing with the belt pouch was kind of complicated too, as it restricted my movement. So, I took the cellphone, just in case, put it on my pocket and threw the pouch. Luckily, there didn’t seem to be any thieves around. I was also wearing shoes, crap, I do usually wear shoes, but they wouldn’t allow me to pass my feet between the bars and climb the fence as a ladder. No problem, I took them off and threw them to the other side.

Good. I was ready and I started to climb. When I was nearly on top, the fence started shaking, but it was already too late to turn around. I kept going and went over it, clinging tight for my life. I made it and I went down. I put my shoes back on, I took the pouch and started walking with my crutch. A few minutes later, I was home. In bed, I wondered what would they think if they reviewed the security footage. But that’s another story...

We've reached the end of the story and, with this, we've gotten to the Tip of the Day. Today's tip is quite simple.

We think that before making a trip, you should check and you should have emergency phone numbers for the police, or the fireman, or for a medical emergency. Maybe, afterwards you decide not to use them, like in the story, like I did in the story... anyway, I had my reasons. So, even if countries have different numbers for each of the different Emergency Services, usually they also have a unified number. For instance, in Europe it's 112. As an extra tip for today, I'd like to talk about Google Maps accessibility info. It's very useful to know beforehand if a stations, restaurants or other places, are accessible or not. How does it work? Well, you look for a place in Google Maps and then you have to press the “More info” button. Afterwards, some tabs will appear with like information on news, photos, reviews, blah blah blah... and you have to click on the tab “Information”. If scroll down, here you may find accessibility details on the place. For instance, if they have accessible entrances or if there are accessible toilets. In some countries, after pressing on the “More information” button, sometimes an icon of a wheelchair directly appears next to the

name of the place. Usually, only for stations and the likes. Finally, if you want to edit or help editing this information, you have to be a Google Maps Local Guide. This is for free. You just have to register and you'll be able to help the disability community, giving information on accessibility on the places where you've been. Also, if the information is not there, in some places, unfortunately, it's quite common, you can always go to Tabi Folk community and ask our members there. By the way, remember that on Tabi Folk you can find the full accessibility reviews and all the links of the places that we've been talking about during this episode. And, if you like the show, don't forget to subscribe on YouTube, Spotify or your preferred platform. Like that, you won't miss any of the upcoming episodes, like the next one, where we will be visiting Paris. Okay, let's move on to the final stretch and hear some Sounds of the World.

For our first sound, we are staying in Barcelona. This is Park Güell, a really nice park full of Gaudi's structures and buildings, with its famous dragon on the marvelous flight of stairs.

And the second one is a preview of our next episode in Paris. It's an interpretation of the main theme of the movie Exodus.

The original version in French is by Édith Piaf.

With this, we say goodbye, have a nice day and see you next time, fellow travelers.