

For immediate release



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West Michigan Tour Company 1st in U.S. Endorsed For Accessibility

Tours Around Michigan 1st U.S. tour company endorsed by Europe's [Accessible Travel Press Online](#) & 1st tour company ever in [AbleVu/AbleEyes](#) accessible resources

GRAND RAPIDS, MI, February 28, 2023 - *"It's not easy finding family outings when you have special needs."* Caledonia's Melinda Shaver knows exploring in her wheelchair can be a challenge. She's not alone.

Today 1-in-4 Americans have a disability, physical or invisible. For people 60+ years, 46% already have a disability (Source: *World Health Organization*). As people live longer, more accessibility concerns emerge from illness, injuries or accidents. Sadly, many businesses don't go beyond what's legally required to help all visitors feel welcome. Travelers who need accessibility generate \$16-billion worldwide, but still get too little attention.

Organizations like [AbleVu](#) share businesses going beyond the norm. Co-Founder Meegan Winters says, *"We help people of all abilities have the information needed to experience their best life. We're so excited to include [Tours Around Michigan](#) as our first tour company, providing equitable tours, accommodations and experiences."* *Tours Around Michigan* welcomes guests seeking barrier-free fun or different communications. *"We always try to do better for our guests who rock life on wheels, use sign language interpreters, love a guide dog, or see life through neurodivergence or a mental (dis)ability. We are also LGBTQ+ and pet friendly... we really just want to be friends with everyone,"* says Candice Smith, Owner, [Tours Around Michigan](#).

Tours Around Michigan is proud to also be [Accessible Travel Press Online](#)'s 1st U.S. tour company. While there's always more to learn, simply actively seeking accessible options is key. *"If only there were more companies like [Tours Around Michigan](#)! Candice wants everyone, regardless of (dis)ability, to enjoy a tour. She sees that as normal, but it really is exceptional,"* says Marlies van Sint Annaland, CEO & Founder. Smith adds, *"With so many historic buildings and unique experiences, it's common to have barriers. We're always checking for alternative routes, how to get someone onto a Lake Michigan cruise or join us in a haunted building."*

Challenges finding accessible experiences means the average adult with a disability travels about half the distance of someone without (Source: *England Department of Transport*). *Tours Around Michigan* makes it easier to explore. Shaver says her family enjoyed the historical facts and hauntings, *"but more importantly was the wonderful attention to my accessibility needs and including my dog. I was barred from nothing."*

Local organizations aren't surprised *Tours Around Michigan* is getting kudos for accessibility. Erin Murphy from [West Michigan Tourist Association](#) says, *"Whether folks are visiting or exploring their own backyards, tourists should get to enjoy local attractions. Candice is paving the way for other local destinations to improve accessibility."* [Circle Michigan](#)'s Lisa Kukulski adds, *"Tours Around Michigan is always willing to customize an experience for any interest or ability, to rave reviews. Everyone has positive experiences exploring with them."*

Tours Around Michigan loves to share the joys of Michigan, including people who need a unique style of communication. Smith adds, “When leading adults who are neurodiverse, we minimize information, and focus on visuals, smells, and what they can touch. It’s so fun when faces light up connecting to something new.”

[Tours Around Michigan](#) is a Grand Rapids-based company that shares joy through storytelling on public and private tour experiences, including history, ghosts, riverfront, art, and distillery, wine and beer tastings. Find it on *ReVue Magazine’s* list of “Top 50 Things To Do” and *Detroit Free Press’* list as “one to check out” amongst Michigan ghost tours. Please call us at 616.970.4825 or email info@ToursAroundMichigan.com with any questions or interview requests.

Disability Awareness Calendar

JANUARY Glaucoma, Braille Literacy Month

Jan 4 - World Braille Day (Fact: Early 1900s Grand Rapids woman helped standardize English braille)

FEBRUARY- Heart and Stroke Month (often resulting in disabilities), Low Vision Awareness Month

Feb 28/29 Rare Disease Day

MARCH - National Disabilities Awareness, Cerebral Palsy, Developmental Disabilities Month

March 1 - International Wheelchair Day

March 21 - World Down Syndrome Day

March 25 - U.S. National Cerebral Palsy

APRIL - Autism Acceptance/Awareness, Limb Loss Awareness, Parkinson's Disease Awareness

April 2 - World Autism Awareness Day

April 4 - Auditory Processing Disorder Awareness Day

April 13 - International Functional Neurological Disorder Awareness Day

April 29 (Last Sat in April) - Show Your Mettle Day - encourage amputees to show their metal (prosthetic devices, wheelchairs, etc)

MAY - Awareness Month - Guide Dogs, Cystic Fibrosis, Mobility, Older Americans, Arthritis Awareness Month)

May 18 (3rd Thursday of May)- Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) (digital access and inclusion)

May 21 - Global Accessibility Day

May 30 World Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Day

JUNE Alzheimer’s & Brain Awareness, Cataract Awareness Month

June 18 - Autistic Pride Day

JULY 14 Disability Awareness Day

July 26 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Awareness Day

AUGUST - (First Week in August) International Assistance Dog Week

August 21 - National Senior Citizens Day

(Back To School: Support Students with Disabilities)

SEPTEMBER - Deaf (International) Month, National Guide Dog Month, National Spinal Cord Month

September 19-25 International Week of the Deaf

September 23 - International Day of Sign Languages (1951 World Federation of the Deaf Established)

OCTOBER - National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Down Syndrome Awareness

Oct 1 - International Day of Older Persons - (UN)

Oct 5 - American Veterans Disabled for Life Day

Oct 10 - World Sight Day

Oct 15 - World Blind/Sight Day, National White Cane Safety Day, Blind Americans Equality Day

Oct 17-23 Invisible Disabilities Week

Oct 27 - World Occupational Therapy Day helping physical, sensory, or cognitive problems.

NOVEMBER Nov 2-3 - WordPress Accessibility Day

Nov 10 - Global Usability Day

DECEMBER - Dec 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities