

A museum in an ancient citadel as a role model for accessible sights

ISRAEL – JERUSALEM / TOWER OF DAVID MUSEUM – INCLUSION PROGRAMME

In 2017 the Tower of David Museum, an old citadel based in the middle of Jerusalem, Israel, has developed a model to enable persons with disabilities to visit the museum and its shows in an accessible, inclusive, and stress-free way. The model includes special hours to provide a calmer setting and programming activities accessible to persons with various disabilities. It serves as an example that even in buildings that are very old accessibility features such as elevators can be built. The Tower of David is now leading the Museum Accessibility Forum, reaching all museums in Israel.

Problem targeted

Very often families with children with disabilities feel excluded from cultural institutions as there is little infrastructure to support them.

Solution, innovation, and impact

After consultations with parents and disabled people's organizations, the Tower of David Museum developed programming appropriate for both children with and without disabilities. Specialist activities were designed for the blind and visually impaired as well as the deaf and hearing impaired, with staff receiving professional training on guiding visitors with sensory impairment or cognitive disabilities, and on Hebrew sign language. Relaxed performances and audio



Visitors to the Tower of David Museum experience Israel's first inclusive museum.

“This is our second time that we have come here, and we really enjoy these special activities.”

Tali, visitor to an inclusive event at the Tower of David Museum

description of shows and accessible tours for adults with various disabilities are also examples of how the practice is integrated into the museum agenda. The creation of a professional Museum Accessibility Forum promoting cultural inclusion now reaches all museums in Israel, sharing best practices, led by the Tower of David. Moreover, the Museum has advised the Israeli Parliament and the National Insurance Institute on accessibility and inclusion.

Outlook, transferability, and funding

In 2017 the project began with a \$50,000 donation

from an anonymous donor, which was the total cost of the programme to date. Funding is now achieved through self-finance and individual donations. In 2018 the Museum was awarded the Accessibility Prize by Access Israel, and the Tower of David Coordinator of Accessibility and Inclusivity continues as a role model and as manager of the Museum Accessibility Forum. The Museum fully reopened after a renewal project at the end of 2022 with added accessibility features, which will continue to be developed. Arabic language events are being planned, and innovative technologies will be adopted to further improve the visitor experience.

FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- Between 2017 and 2019 there were 4,200 participants in inclusive activities.
- The Museum Accessibility Forum has been established to promote accessibility in other museums.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



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