Zero Project Innovative Practice 2018 on Accessibility

# Wheelchair-accessible tours in Amazonia, the Galapagos Islands and Machu Picchu

# Ecuador – South America For All

## Summary:

### Together with partners, South America For All (SAFA)– a travel company based in Ecuador – offers tours to various South America destinations that are accessible by wheelchair users. SAFA started as a private initiative and is now expanding to more countries in South America. In 2016 approximately 300 wheelchair users booked tours.

## Problems Targeted:

### Being confronted with a wheelchair user who wanted to visit the Galapagos Islands, SAFA developed a dedicated programme for people with disabilities to enjoy prominent sites in South America.

## Solution, Innovation and Impact:

### SAFA has developed a systematic approach to evaluating potential tourist locations, starting with market research and a visit to the most emblematic sites and attractions at the destination. It then performs a disability check of the various locations (including hotels, restaurants, attractions, availability of accessible transport, etc.) and performs tests with off-road wheelchairs and other devices. Finally, they offer and promote the tour.

### SAFA has adapted basic equipment (for example, an off-road wheelchair, a manual lift for swimming pools, etc.) such that travellers with wheelchairs can participate even in jungle walks. The company considers every detail of their clients’ physical limitations, and organizes their stay in the light of these. Furthermore, it helps to coordinate accessibility adaptations in some hotels and municipalities.

### The programme began with the construction of an accessible Eco-Lodge in Amazonia, Ecuador, and extended to tours of the Galapagos Islands. Now SAFA has expanded to such places as Machu Picchu in Peru, the Iguazu waterfalls in Argentina and Brazil, and Ushuaya in Argentina. The increase in disabled tourism flows to such popular tourist attractions also helps to raise awareness in the public and private sectors of the importance of inclusion. Over the last three years approximately 320 wheelchair users from the European Union, the United States, and Israel have paid visits to Amazonia and the Galapagos Islands, and for the last past two years to sights in Peru as well.

## Outlook, Transferability and Funding:

### In 2013, a consultation was held with the Ministry of Tourism to develop 5 accessible tourist sites in Ecuador. An assessment was made of the accessibility of tourist services on each of the sites and training was provided jointly with the Ministry on accessibility topics. This has increased awareness of the subject.

### In 2016 disabled tourism to Latin America had an annual growth rate between 5 and 10 per cent. In addition, it has been possible to increase the number of tourist destinations that are accessed to people with disabilities in Latin America mainly by adopting infrastructure.

### The project is self-sustaining, and sales are generated from the tours themselves, membership fees, and subscriptions.

## About the Practice at a Glance:

### Name of Innovative Practice: Wheelchair-accessible tours in Amazonia, the Galapagos Islands and Machu Picchu

### Organisation: South America For All

### Country of Implementation: Ecuador

## Facts and figures:

Over the past three years some 320 wheelchair users have used the SAFA tour services

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## Links and further reading:

### [South America for All – YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooqNIG_vdj4) (English)

## Quote:

“And I’m happy to say that I was be able to swim because there was an access lift. If you want to swim, just let the staff know and they will attach the sling to the lift. I was somewhat surprised, but thrilled, that there was a pool lift.”

– Cory, guest in the Huasquila Amazon Lodge