Short Survey: Experiences with People with Disabilities in the Tourist Area Bastion I and the Underground

Tomáš Jirouch

Josefov







Tourist Area Bastion I and the Underground

- Visited by app. 25 000 paying visitors a year
- A municipal organization of Jaroměř
- Basic concept: a tour in casemates and in the underground (1 km) for 60 minutes – focused on history, but mainly through experience:
 - Lamps with candles
 - Task to walk alone with the group and find the meeting place
 - Using maps, videos, paintings, video cartoons, guns...
 - It is not a lecture but a "family show"
 - The "dark corridor"

Short Survey

 I asked 38 of my colleagues working in Bastion I and the Underground:

 "What are your experiences with people with disabilities on your tours?"

 Recieved textual answers from 10 of them, referring to five categories of visitors: deaf, blind, wheelchair users, those with mobility issues, and with cognitive disabilities

The answers

Once, I had a group that included blind individuals with their guides. Basically, I would talk for a bit (for example, at the mines), and then the assistants would guide their charges to explore the surroundings by touch (placing their hands on the mines, loopholes, ceiling, etc., while describing the surroundings to them). We progressed gradually like this, and it was a really great experience. They especially enjoyed the mines and the walk in the dark, where they teased their assistants, joking that in the darkness, they were the ones with the advantage this time 😜. The whole experience was carried out in a very pleasant atmosphere because they could touch everything – something they wouldn't be able to do in a castle, for instance.

Tourist guide 1

As for other people with disabilities, such as difficulty walking or similar issues, it's hardly worth mentioning – just another visitor who was simply a bit slower.

I once had a group of deaf people. They came for the tour with a sign language interpreter. We managed quite well, though in the underground area, it was necessary to shine a light on the interpreter. Otherwise, the tour took longer due to the translation, but it went absolutely smoothly.

Tourist guide 2

I had a family on the tour, where the daughter was a wheelchair user with a mild mental disability. They pushed the lady in the wheelchair everywhere and they got into the underground through Dolík. The tour went completely normally. They were fully involved in the tour (they at least got to the edge of the mine shaft, walked along with other people on their own and even then they wanted to go in the dark Θ).







I think I once had a woman in an electric wheelchair, but I don't remember it very well—it might have even been someone else's tour. I just recall us figuring out how to get her into the underground from Dolík, and her companion helped her with it, so it went fairly smoothly. Then I had a mother with kids who wore hearing aids—there was absolutely no issue with that, and the underground acoustics are actually great. One boy had a physical disability and struggled with the stairs (I didn't know in advance, or I would have sent them through Dolík), but he managed in the end, just a bit more slowly. Overall, I don't think I've had any truly negative experiences in this regard \mathcal{A} $\mathbf{\Psi}$.

I had one blind lady in the group and one gentleman with one leg (without a prosthesis). Both of them did fine. But they were just individuals, not a group.

Tourist guide 5

I once had a guy with a prosthetic leg from the knee down on a tour. He was faster on the stairs than the seniors Θ .

Tourist guide 6

I once had a group of wheelchair users—if I remember correctly, there were 4 quadriplegics (really with very limited mobility) and 4 companions who pushed them. We toured the casemates, then went the long way around to Dolík, and followed the standard route from there. From the powder magazine, I think they continued on their own, and we skipped the part in the dark. It took longer, but they were such a great group, joking around the whole time, so it didn't matter at all 😳.

I once had visitors from Velichovky Spa who had recently undergone surgeries and <u>walked</u> with crutches. They moved more slowly than regular visitors, so I accompanied them throughout the route to provide light, as they couldn't carry the lamps themselves. I skipped the walk in the dark because, for obvious reasons, they couldn't touch the walls. Otherwise, everything went smoothly and without any issues.

Tourist guide 8

Oh, and this year, there was definitely a mentally disabled visitor with a ZTP/P card. They come occasionally, and how well they handle it really depends on the individual, as far as I know. It's usually up to the guide to improvise, because even their companions often don't know how the person with the mental disability will react.

Tourist guide 9

Working with mentally disabled visitors can be quite challenging. As a guide, you usually have no way of knowing the specific type of mental impairment they have or how they'll react to different things. It's not easy at all. I remember one guide coming back from a tour with such a group in such a state that I had to pour her a shot just to get her back on track.

Tourist guide 6 reacts on tourist guide 9

I once had a tour group of wheelchair users. We adjusted the tour to include the lapidarium and the casemates, and those who wanted could also explore the corridors. The tour took longer due to the transfers, but they had their own ramps, which were enough for the few steps, so we accessed the corridors through Dolík. It worked out, but it was more challenging and time-consuming. And then I remember another guide led a group of wheelchair users as well. I'm not entirely sure, but I think they also entered through Dolík and used their own ramps.

We don't have a manual for working with people with disabilities, except for guidelines on how to handle wheelchair users. Otherwise, we just improvise—and as you can see, we're pretty good at it O. However, the new exhibition on the upper floor should address this in some way.

Manager 10

Short Survey results

- Usually, these visitors come in groups with assistants / sign language interpreters
- The most challenging groups are those with cognitive impairments
 Visitors with disabilities can be even more skilled in walking the underground compared to regular visitors

= there is no manual, only oral recommendations for the tourist guides= there is no special offer for people with disabilities in Josefov

Posible Improvements

1. To obtain ramps for Dolík (five stairs there – still an obstacle)

To obtain a 3D model of the fortress to be touched by visitors and even the blind ones

A model for touching, not eating! ③

Bastion I by Ilona

We Wish You a Merry Christmas!







CONTACT the FIC Josefov

Mgr. et Mgr. Bc. Tomáš Jirouch

j.thomas@centrum.cz

+420 777 016 761