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**VISIT VISALIA FIRST CALIFORNIA DMO TO ADOPT THE HIDDEN DISABILITIES SUNFLOWER
PROGRAM SUPPORTING ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL MARKET**

Program supports community of travelers with special needs who take 32 million trips a year

Visalia, CA (Oct 5, 2021) Visit Visalia is the first California destination marketing organization to adopt the *Hidden Disabilities Sunflower*, a program lauded for supporting travelers with various needs to obtain additional support they may require while traveling. With this program, Visit Visalia is working to raise awareness, with the goal of making travel easier and safer for our visitors with autism.

Developed and launched in the United Kingdom, the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower](#) is now a recognized icon that travelers with accessibility needs can utilize to discreetly be identified as having a disability. Visit Visalia offers the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards and bracelets complimentary to those that request them when traveling to our city. When worn, the sunflower serves as a visual cue to trained visitor industry staff throughout Visalia that a traveler may need additional support during their visit. Additional accommodations may include:

- Expedited hotel check-in or restaurant seating when possible
- Consideration for a specific seating request
- Quick checkout if the need to leave arises

- Allowing outside food or accommodating a special request for the individual on the spectrum
- Understanding that the person may be non-verbal, have difficulty sitting still and making eye contact

The list of committed local partner businesses continues to grow and currently includes 5 hotel properties: Comfort Suites Visalia, Hampton Inn Visalia, Lamp Liter Inn, Visalia Marriott Hotel and the Wyndham Visalia. Additionally, top participating attractions include Visalia Adventure Park, Farmer Bob’s World, Imagine U Children’s Museum and Valley Oaks Golf Course. Restaurants and shopping businesses have also joined the program.

Visit Visalia provides online resources for travelers with accessibility needs planning trips to Visalia and the nearby Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, [visitvisalia.com/accessible-travel](https://www.visitvisalia.com/accessible-travel). The site offers travel-related links to information and resources helpful prior to and during a visit to the area.

Travelers with permanent disabilities, including mental or sensory impairment, are eligible for a free a [National Park Service Access Pass](#) that gives free access to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites, including the nearby Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.

Visit Visalia recently also became the first California destination marketing organization designated as a “Certified Autism Center” by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). This distinction is a result of the organization’s staff and governing board of directors completing specialized training in common behaviors and sensory considerations associated with ASD. Visit Visalia is taking the next steps toward



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achieving designation as a Certified Autism Destination (CAD) by having key local tourism businesses commit to and provide the required training to their staff.

To learn more about the Sunflower Campaign, find a list of local participating businesses, and watch an informative video on how to use the sunflower lanyards and bracelets go to:

visitvisalia.com/hidden-disabilities-sunflower-program. For more information on inclusive and accessible travel to our city and the nearby Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, go to visitvisalia.com/accessible-travel

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ABOUT VISIT VISALIA:

[Visit Visalia](https://www.visitvisalia.com) is a collaboration of the Visalia Tourism and Marketing District and the Visalia Convention and Visitors Bureau (VCVB) dedicated to marketing, advertising, public relations and other promotional efforts that inspire travel to the City of Visalia. Visit Visalia works closely with local lodging properties, restaurants and attractions to foster interest in Visalia as a year-round destination for leisure, family, and meeting and convention travelers. For more information about Visit Visalia go to [www.VisitVisalia.com](https://www.visitvisalia.com) and follow Visit Visalia on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/visitvisalia), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/visitvisalia), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/visitvisalia), [You Tube](https://www.youtube.com/visitvisalia) and [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/visitvisalia).