

Accessible Museums Virtual tours for people with physical impairment

Mada Center

In recent years we can use maps apps to view any location we want from the comfort of our own home. We can view our local area or plan far-reaching travels, from mapping out journeys to viewing significant cultural institutes to help us prioritise and coordinate. This convenience helps us get the most out of expensive and timely trips but for those with a physical disability, it goes much further. Beyond convenience, these technologies open the doors of cultural institutions.

They allow exploration for those with a physical disability who may otherwise be limited by travel or physical access to these locations.

New 3D and VR tours provide immersive and interactive experiences allowing us to view a whole space and get a real feel for the institute as well as to get up close to individual pieces and artefacts.

From the comfort of your own home, you can take a virtual tour of the approaching landscape and view interior details of the Rome Colosseum navigating your way through the old stone arches or stroll the tree-lined avenues approaching Caracalla's Baths. You can take in the vista of Rome from a height over the Piazza Venezia or the Spanish steps controlling a full panoramic view of the city's scale and grandeur.

The Louvre Museum in France has a downloadable program that allows you to listen to the audio guide of the museum. By using a game console, you can take a virtual walk through the Paris gallery and enjoy more than 600 photographs of artwork, 400 images of museum rooms and 30 hours of audio commentary. The Met 360° project enables viewers to virtually visit and views the art collections and architectural

features of the Metropolitan Museum NY, this award-winning series of 6 videos can be viewed on your smartphone, computer or tablet or with a VR headset for a fuller immersive view.

Want to stick closer to home? One of the earliest museums to join the Google Cultural Institute was the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. You can take a virtual visit to the gallery or Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art.

What if your choice of museum or gallery is not available virtually?

The technology now is such that with a good quality 360° camera, a tripod and an app you can shoot 360° panoramic footage of any space. Photos can be uploaded and edited with software which will allow you to piece together scenes and transition from one to the next.

There are also organizations which provide this service to museums and galleries with packages to meet most budgets from basic 360° images to metatags and 3D object models.

These innovative developments make the past and present world of culture and art more accessible for people with physical limitations.