

# Traverse City Becomes the First Certified Autism Destination™ in the Midwest

*Traverse City is now a Certified Autism Destination™ with 19 organizations certified to create welcoming experiences for autistic and sensory-sensitive visitors*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- In September 2023, Traverse City began its mission to provide a more inclusive and welcoming city for autistic individuals and their families looking for vacation destinations. The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) proudly announces that Traverse City has now achieved the [Certified Autism Destination™](#) (CAD) with 19 organizations completing certification to ensure that autistic and sensory-sensitive visitors have a positive and welcoming experience at their venues.

“The goal is to create a welcoming environment for all residents and visitors, regardless of their unique needs, and to make the travel experience friendlier for families,” said Whitney Waara, chief operating officer of [Traverse City Tourism](#). “Sometimes it’s as simple as having knowledgeable employees, creating a quiet space, or providing accurate information about what a certain experience is like and how to navigate it easily before the visitors arrive.”

The process of becoming a CAD, which was led by Traverse City Tourism, requires a representative sampling of lodging, recreation and entertainment options to complete certification to be more accessible and accommodating to autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals and their families. Each participating organization must earn the [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) designation, which requires public-facing staff to complete specialized training, as well as some locations to undergo an onsite review by IBCCES.



“We’re immensely proud to recognize Traverse City as the first Certified Autism Destination™ in the Midwest. This achievement highlights the community’s commitment to inclusivity for visitors and will make a huge impact for millions of travelers. We know that so many families and individuals are looking for organizations and destinations to differentiate their offerings by focusing on accessibility and inclusion, and this is a huge step toward fostering a sense of belonging and understanding that will resonate far beyond the Traverse City borders,” says Myron Pincomb, IBCCES board chairman.

The following organizations have completed the CAC process to date:

- Traverse City Tourism & Traverse City Visitor Center
- Blossom Hotel & Suites Traverse City
- COGNiTiON Science and Discovery Center
- Crystal Mountain
- Great Lakes Children's Museum
- Great Wolf Lodge - Traverse City
- Inland Seas Education Association
- The Inn at Black Star Farms
- KOTI Experiences
- Lake 'N Pines Lodge
- Michigan Legacy Art Park
- Mt. Holiday
- National Writers Series
- Rainbow Valley Family Farm
- Seaside Sailing Excursions
- TART Trail
- The Dennon Museum Center
- The Garden Theater
- The Inn at Black Star Farms
- Traverse Area District Library
- Traverse City National Writer Series





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*Whitney Waara, chief  
operating officer of Traverse  
City Tourism*

- Traverse Tall Ship Company

According to a travel survey conducted by IBCCES, 78% of respondents indicated they are hesitant to travel or visit new locations because they or their child is autistic. The goal of community-wide certifications such as the CAD is to provide millions of individuals and families with more travel options where they feel welcomed, featuring accommodations or options that other destinations may lack. In addition to the training and certification, IBCCES also provides onsite evaluations, ensuring that venues maintain their attractiveness to families with autistic individuals over time.

IBCCES is a leading credentialing organization dedicated to providing comprehensive training, certification, and resources to travel and entertainment organizations. Its mission is to enhance the understanding and accommodation of visitors who are autistic or sensory-sensitive, along with their families. With research indicating that one in 36 children is diagnosed with autism and one in six Americans experiences sensory issues, the need for autism-accessible communities is more critical than ever, especially in the realms of travel and entertainment.

#### About Traverse City Tourism

Traverse City Tourism is an independent, not-for-profit destination organization that promotes the greater Traverse City area as a leisure and business destination with an excellent quality-of-life. Through the impact of travel, Traverse City Tourism helps strengthen the local economy and supports a thriving entrepreneurial community. Details of the regions lodging, attractions and area events are available at [www.TraverseCity.com](http://www.TraverseCity.com)

#### About IBCCES

For more than 20 years, IBCCES (<https://ibcces.org/>) has led the world in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education, and corporate professionals around the globe. IBCCES created programs specifically for hospitality and recreational organizations such as hotels, theme parks, and other attractions so their staff would be more knowledgeable and provide more accommodations to this growing yet underserved part of the community. IBCCES is the only credentialing board offering these types of programs, which include training from subject matter experts and autistic self-advocates, as well as long-term support and continuous learning, onsite reviews, and more. IBCCES also created AutismTravel.com, a free online parents' resource that lists certified destinations and connects families to other resources and each other. Each destination on the site has met the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) requirements.

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