



## March 2018 Update

### Traveling with Vision Impairment

Has your vision impairment affected your ability to travel? Well, you are not alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost 23% of adults over the age of 40 years old in the United States have some form of visual impairment. These may include those who suffer from glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and macular degeneration.

Vision impairment can become a limiting factor to those who want to travel. The hardship of not being able to get around freely discourages many people from taking the opportunity to explore the world. Fortunately, there are travel agencies that cater to low vision tourists, offering special packages for people with disabilities including AMD and difficulty with mobility.

**Flying Wheels Travel ([www.flyingwheelstravel.com](http://www.flyingwheelstravel.com))**, based in the U.S., has specialized in travel for those with chronic illnesses or disabilities for nearly 50

years. They can even arrange travel companions for those who do not have family members or partners who can make the trip. Flying Wheels Travel can advise you on cruises, escorted tours, or assist with independent travel arrangements. Their top destination for disabled travelers is their 12-day tour of Peru and Machu Picchu.



A skiing accident put John Sage in a wheelchair at age 22, but it did not stop his love of adventure. He founded **Sage Traveling** ([www.sagetraveling.com](http://www.sagetraveling.com)) , based in Texas in 2009, to make Europe accessible for those in wheelchairs and with limited mobility. Individuals with AMD may be interested in some of the destinations that have been vetted by this company or in subscribing to his travel newsletter offering accessibility reviews of European destinations. One of his most popular trips is London and Paris in 8 days.

Amar Latif was living in Scotland and only 4 years old when he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited eye disease. 95% blind by the time he graduated from high school, Amar wanted to explore the world. He launched **Traveleyes ([www.traveleyes-international.com](http://www.traveleyes-international.com))**, a UK-based company that partners low vision travelers 1:1 with sighted travelers who provide audio descriptions of sites and gently guide low vision tourists during the trip. As Latif writes, “Travel is more than just seeing of sights, and when you start looking with your other senses, the world becomes more alive.” You can watch his video, [Sightseeing Blind on YouTube](#).

Navigating around a cruise ship may seem daunting to some with low vision, yet most cruise lines are used to accommodating the low vision community. Crew and staff can usually arrange a special orientation tour, and menus, newsletters and descriptions of shore excursions and daily activities are available in large print or audio tape.



Loss of vision should not prevent you from enjoying life. If travel is your passion, there are resources that can help you achieve what you thought you lost when your vision started to fade. Don't let your vision rob you of the opportunity to experience adventure.

*Information here is sourced from the internet and is not an endorsement of any organization by Macular Degeneration Partnership. Investigate any travel agency before you commit. Some of the questions you should ask of your tour guide can be found at <https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/trip-planning/travelers-with-disabilities>*

*Happy travels!*

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