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Tips for Traveling From the Perspective of a Wheelchair User

By: Steven Nguyen

School is out; summer is upon us, now what? For many of us, this may mean taking the family vacation that we worked so hard for. If you're someone with a disability or if your loved one has a disability, traveling, especially by airplane, may seem daunting or even impossible because of the amount of planning and uncertainty that goes into it.

As an adult with a physical disability, who depends on my wheelchair to provide me with the independence to move around, it can be nerve-wracking thinking about if

something were to happen to my expensive piece of equipment. That being said, I can't and won't let it stop me from enjoying what life has to offer. Here are a few tips for traveling for those with disabilities.

Preparation – I can't stress the importance of this enough! From booking lodging and travel arrangements well in advance, doing plenty of research related to accessibility in the places you plan on visiting, and having a backup plan; it's best to be prepared!

Check Your Airline's Policy for Persons with Disabilities

– Most airlines and airports offer services such as pre-boarding, and aisle chairs to board/deplane aircraft, etc. Most airlines also have a special number that travelers can call if they need any assistance.

Travel Products for persons with mobility issues

– As a wheelchair user, I find luggage with 4-wheels, upright, and 360-degree swivel works best for me. I find those easier to push either in front of me or on the side of me, along with my wheelchair. You can view other recommended products at this link: <http://www.newmobility.com/2017/05/travel-product-wheelchair-users/>

At the Airport – Try to arrive at the airport at least 2 hours ahead of your scheduled flight. This gives you adequate time to get through TSA security checkpoints and take care of any business that you would need before boarding the plane. Should you have any concerns, bring it up to airport staff or a designated airline ticket agent.

Going Through TSA – If you are unable to walk through the metal detectors, without assistance, then most likely you will be asked to be patted down. This may feel or seem uncomfortable at first, but it's one of those things you get used to.

Inform the agent of any items that are of medical necessity including medications, syringes, and other supplies. From personal experience, I always find it easiest to dress comfortably for travel. Comfortable to me is shorts and t-shirts. You will be required to empty your pockets, take off waist belts, shoes, jewelry, etc. So keep that in mind when going through security. For more information on TSA procedures for persons with disabilities, visit: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures>

If you travel often, TSA Pre-Check may be worthwhile for you. Read more about Pre-Check [HERE](#).

When traveling abroad, consider using a specialized travel agency or company

– A travel agency that specializes in accessibility will be able to help you with an itinerary of activities, hotels that are accessible and help with arranging private transportation for an area that is less accessible. This applies to cruises and general travel.

Take advantage of special offers/

discounts – Example: If you enjoy the outdoors, inquire about the National Park Service Access Pass. This pass offers free access to U.S. Citizens with permanent disabilities and grants access to any of the national parks, monuments, historic sites and more.

Know and understand your rights as a traveler with a disability, and last but certainly not least, enjoy your vacation!

For more information, visit the following links:

[CruiseCritic – A Beginner's Guide to Accessible Cruising](#)

[Curb Free w/ Cory Lee \(Shares blogs and travel trips from the perspective of a wheelchair user.\)](#)

[Traveling with a Disability – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[NewMobility – Best Travel Products for Wheelchair Users](#)



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