

7 Tips for Safe Travel with Seniors

Discover how a little extra preparation and knowledge of senior travel benefits can make your traveling experience with your senior loved one enjoyable and worry-free.



Airport security regulations and general discomfort that comes with airline travel can be exhausting for anyone, let alone seniors. However, airports and the Federal Aviation Administration have taken steps to ease the burden of older travelers — especially those with disabilities — making travels a little easier. After all, traveling should be a rewarding experience to see the world or visit long-distance family or friends, rather than be a headache for everyone involved.

How to Travel with Seniors: Tips for a Unique Experience for Everyone

Our loved one may not be [mobile](#) without a wheelchair, or they may have a specific health condition such as [Alzheimer's disease](#) or heart problems. Any of these can make vacationing much more complex, regardless of whether you're traveling by car, cruise ship or plane. As with any other vacation, preparation is crucial. Make sure the chosen destination is appropriate to your loved one's limitations. It's also important to plan ahead for some of the most common senior travel needs so that you and your family will be able to enjoy a hassle-free trip that's memorable for the right reasons.

Here are a few tips to help make your travel exploration a good experience:

1. Get Appropriate Vaccinations

The all-important first step is making sure your loved one is cleared for travel by his or her primary care doctor, especially if you're [accommodating a health condition such as Alzheimer's](#).

Before travel, seniors should be up-to-date on routine vaccines, such as measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) and seasonal flu. Some of these may be considered "childhood" vaccines, but the diseases they protect against are often more common in other countries than in the United States. More than half of tetanus cases are in people over 65, so seniors should consider getting a tetanus booster before they travel, according to Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Seniors should also receive other vaccines recommended for the countries they are visiting. These may include vaccines for hepatitis, polio, typhoid or yellow fever. It's important to visit a doctor before travels to assess and address any medical conditions that could hinder travel plans and determine whether vaccines are necessary.

2. Travel with Medications

Ask your loved one's doctor for specific travel tips as well as any necessary [medications](#). For example, it's important to keep up with the senior's regular medication regime, in addition to medications recommended for ease of traveling, such as medications for altitude illness, malaria or traveler's diarrhea.

In addition to medicine prescribed specifically for travel, seniors are likely to take other medicines regularly, such as medicines for high [blood](#) pressure, diabetes or arthritis. It's important to watch out for possible drug interactions between the medications.

Pack enough medicine for the duration of the trip, plus a few days' extra in case of travel delays and only give seniors medications brought from the U.S. as counterfeit drugs may be common overseas.

3. Request Assistance in the Airport

Senior citizens are able to [request assistance in the airport](#), from the time they arrive to the time they board. They can request assistance getting to the gate by asking at the check-in desk for a ride on a cart or assistance with a wheelchair. Seniors can also request assistance at security, where they may be able to go through a shorter line.

4. Enjoy Eased Security Restrictions

Senior citizens are able to request assistance in the airport, from the time they arrive to the time they board. They can request assistance getting to the gate by asking at the check-in desk for a ride on a cart or assistance with a wheelchair. Seniors can also request assistance at security, where they may be able to go through a shorter line.

The TSA has made several [changes to its security policies to make the process easier](#) for seniors:

- Passengers 75 and older can leave on their shoes and light jackets when going through security
- Passengers in wheelchairs who are unable to stand will be accommodated with a variation on the screening process
- Senior travelers with medical devices like pacemakers should request a pat-down at security rather than going through the scanner

5. Request Airplane Boarding Assistance

Seniors requiring special assistance can board before other travelers through priority boarding. They can also [request escort help from airport staff](#) to help get them to their seat with help stowing their bags, or simply enjoy the ease of boarding before other passengers.

6. Travel Judiciously to Prevent Injury

Injury is the most common cause of preventable death among travelers. Seniors can minimize their risk of serious injury by following these guidelines:

- Always wear a seatbelt
- Avoid small, local planes
- Don't ride in cars after dark in developing countries
- Don't travel at night in questionable areas

Seniors should consider purchasing [supplemental](#) travel [health insurance](#) in case of injury or illness overseas as many health plans, including [Medicare](#), will not pay for services received outside the U.S. Seniors who are planning travel to remote areas should consider purchasing evacuation insurance, which will pay for emergency transportation to a qualified hospital.

7. Inquire About Airfare Discounts

With age comes some benefits. Discounted airfare is occasionally available to senior travelers, so it's worth asking the airline whether there are available discounts. It's important to remember, though, to book with the airline directly as discounts may not be eligible through third parties or travel agents.

So [seize the day and start creating great memories](#) with your aging loved one, even if you have to make frequent bathroom stops. Just remember to have fun as he or she won't be around forever!