

## **Recent Trip to Nashville Report on Accessibility By: Sean Stenglein**



I recently went to Nashville to check out the accessibility in the city. I'm hoping my experience can help out fellow travelers. I had a very adventurous trip however, the snowy weather and Covid-19 stopped us from seeing or doing as much as we wanted to. Most places in Nashville were closed due to the snow but we were determined to make the most of it! We were able to see some things by the end of the week. The trip started off on a frustrating note because our connecting flight to Nashville from Washington DC got cancelled due to the snow. The airlines flew us to Newark where we had to stay for two days. The airport was very empty. Even finding food to eat was hard to do. The airlines even had us go out onto the tarmac to load when the weather was cold and raining. We did not enjoy this. We decided to fly to Raleigh, rent a van, and drive the 9 hours to Nashville in the snowy conditions. We arrived Wednesday night instead of our original Monday morning arrival.

The bad weather meant that we stayed in several different hotels. They all had their own ideas of what accessible means. The first hotel we stayed in was a Holiday Inn in Newark, NJ and was definitely not accessible although it stated it was accessible. The room barely had enough space for the wheelchair to squeeze by and the shower was a full tub with bars which is difficult for anyone with a wheelchair.



The second hotel, Embassy Suites, we stayed at was in Raleigh, North Carolina. This was the opposite of the first hotel. The room was extremely accessible with a spacious table area, large doorways and an accessible shower with a shower chair. They even had a fully accessible pool! This experience I would rate as a 10 out of 10.



Finally, after driving to Nashville in bad weather we stayed in Bento Living. This was an apartment style hotel about 2 miles from the center of the city. It had plenty of room and an accessible bathroom as well as a washer and dryer. Hallways were wide and the design of the room was very accommodating. There was also a spacious kitchen and bodega within that made it easy for us to do all of our own cooking. It was nice that we had a van available so that we could travel easily from the hotel to other attractions in Nashville. I recommend Bento Living to anyone traveling to Nashville because it was a comfortable place to sleep!





One of my favorite places we visited was the Grand Ole Opry, although it was not located near downtown Nashville. I was happy we had our own transportation. The Grand Ole Opry was very accessible from the wide hallways, plenty of ramps, and accessible bathrooms. The shows, shopping, gardens and parking were also accessible. The parking and wide sidewalks were well plowed and easy to get around in. The guided tour is a little expensive at \$35 a person but, I highly recommend it. It was awesome to stand on the stage where so many famous stars have stood before us. It took us about 45 minutes to walk through and there was so much history to learn about!

Another fun place I went that was very accessible was the Johnny Cash Museum. This museum is small and is very detailed on the history of Johnny Cash's life. When you're there you have access to headphones that play songs from the different years of his career. You either park down the street from the museum or in the garage which is accessible and free of charge if you have a handicapped pass with you. The museum itself had accessible bathrooms, wide hallways, and plenty of room to move around. Tickets are 30 dollars a person and definitely worth it if you're a Johnny Cash fan. There was a gift store that you could walk through as well but, it was a little bit of a tighter squeeze getting around the store.



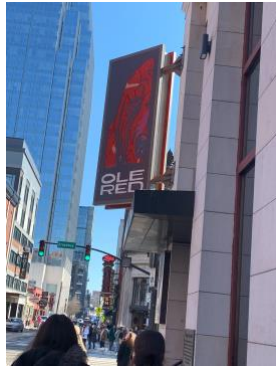




The Parthenon was also impressive. We tried our best to walk around the park in which it sits but pushing a wheelchair through six inches of snow was indeed a challenge. Definitely worth seeing in good weather. There was plenty of street parking and parking lots available close by. The Ryman Auditorium was an amazing place to see in Nashville. Conveniently, there was free handicap parking right across the street in the parking garage. They offer guided tours for \$40 a person which I highly recommend because it's much more informative than the self-guided tour. The tour routes are very accessible and there are elevators where they are needed. We got a tour of famous dressing rooms and learned a lot about the history of country music and famous musicians. We learned alot about the original King and Queen of Country music Minnie Pearl and Roy Acuff.



The Country Music Hall of Fame was a very informative place as well. We bought tickets ahead of time for \$25 a person and I would recommend doing so because even with pre-bought tickets you have to wait a little bit upon arrival. The Country Music Hall of Fame was very spacious and accessible. There were two elevators to access each floor. We spent a lot of time walking around looking at the displays of outfits, cars, events, instruments, awards and much more in the country music industry. It was not very interactive though as we spent most of our time reading and looking at the displays.



The main street -Broadway became crowded in the downtown area with lots of bars along the streets. While there were only a few restaurants open when we were in town, we were able to grab a bite to eat at Ole Red, which was both delicious and accessible. We loved listening to the live country band inside. One thing we found challenging was that there was little handicap parking in the downtown area especially on the streets. I recommend renting a van or your own vehicle to drive around to places because we did not see any public transportation. Keep in mind, a lot of the attractions were pretty spread out. For example, the Grand Ole Opry was about a 20 minute drive from downtown Nashville.

Through all the challenges we faced on this trip including weather, travel delays, Covid-19 and more, we managed to have an awesome trip and I would enthusiastically recommend people to travel to Nashville Tennessee!