|  |
| --- |
|  |
|   **Accessible Travel: Resources for the Disabled Explorer** |
| **Accessible Travel: Resources for the Disabled Explorer****By Patti Jackson**[**www.wakanow.com**](http://www.wakanow.com)**(Reprinted here with the permission of the author)**Traveling with a disability may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Understanding current federal laws that protect those with disabilities helps guard citizens' rights whether traveling by air, accessing websites to book vacations or seeking accessible accommodations. Preparation and careful planning are essential for all travelers, but for the disabled traveler, this can mean the difference between a vacation in paradise, or a trip to hell and back. Wherever the destination, the disabled explorer must equip him or herself by understanding their rights, travel industry regulations and ensuring that the industry meets their individual needs. Making certain an intended destination is accessible and disabled-friendly is paramount to a successful vacation.**Resources for Blind Travelers**Whether traveling independently with a guide dog and/or cane, or accompanying a seeing person on vacation, there are certain safety measures blind travelers must take. Maintaining a sense of independence is important for those dealing with vision-loss, but the decision to travel alone is not one to take lightly. It is always safest to travel with a trusted companion; but if that isn't an option, blind travelers can journey independently as long as they take necessary precautions. Determine what assistance your preferred transportation choice provides, place of lodging and points of interest before planning your trip. Decide whether you will use provided assistance or truly travel independently. Find the layout of places you will visit and familiarize yourself beforehand. If flying by plane, select a boarding pass to save time.* [Passengers who are Blind or Visually Impaired](http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/passengers-who-are-blind-or-visually-impaired)
* [Tips and Tricks from a Blind Business Traveler](http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/passengers-who-are-blind-or-visually-impaired)
* [The Independent Airport Traveler](http://www.tsbvi.edu/orientation-a-mobility/1977-the-independent-airport-traveler)
* [Travel Tips for the Visually Impaired](http://www.blindness.org/blog/index.php/travel-tips-for-the-visually-impaired/)
* [Travel Tools and Techniques of People who are Blind or who have Low Vision](http://www.apsguide.org/chapter2_travel.cfm)

**Deaf Travelers**Deaf travelers often find that they can have successful journeys as long as they make arrangements ahead of their scheduled departure. Always notify travel-related industries you are hearing impaired, whether it's an airline, the hotel you will stay at or intended sites you will visit. Preparing for difficulty in advance can ensure you have eliminated trouble before it occurs. Arrive early to ensure plenty of time to let transportation officials know you are hearing impaired and will need personal notification when time to board. Make certain to have written verification for travel arrangements when applicable. Print confirmation records and keep them with you when traveling. Take extra care when traveling with hearing aids. Keep hearing aids with you and don't place them in checked luggage. Bring extra batteries and prepare for climate changes that may spell trouble due to increased humidity. Dry hearing aids regularly when visiting humid climates. It is imperative that workers, managers and officials know you are hearing impaired should an emergency arrive.* [Deaf Travel Resources: Federal Laws](http://www.deaf-rights.state.mn.us/content.do?term_id=19&level=1)
* [Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Travel Tips for People with Hearing Loss](http://www.hearingloss.org/sites/default/files/docs/Travel_Tips_forPeoplewithHL.pdf)
* [Transportation and Travel: National Association of the Deaf](http://www.nad.org/issues/transportation-and-travel)
* [Travel Tips for the Hearing Impaired](http://www.entnet.org/HealthInformation/Travel-Tips-for-the-Hearing-Impaired.cfm)
* [Tips for Deaf Travelers](http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/tips-for-deaf-traveler)

**Wheelchair Travel Resources**Planning a vacation for those in wheelchairs requires plenty of research in advance. Determining which mode of transportation, choice of lodging or vacation destination is wheelchair accessible is of the utmost concern. A computer is invaluable when determining travel plans and ensuring that a company is accessible for those in wheelchairs. There are federal laws in place to ensure the travel and tourism industry does not discriminate against those in wheelchairs. When planning a vacation, consider more than what the company, airline or hotel chain says about their policies. Look for complaints filed by other members of the disabled community and weigh all information. When leaving for a destination, arrive early, as many companies prefer those in wheelchairs to pre-board and are given seats with easy access to restrooms and exits. Always have wheelchairs serviced, repaired or upgraded before embarking on a vacation or other travel destination.* [Airlines Tackle Wheelchair Needs](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/travel/flights/2008-03-12-wheelchair-travel_N.htm)
* [Have Wheelchair Will Travel](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/stoi/Have-wheelchair-will-travel/articleshow/25532386.cms)
* [Airline Travel Tips for those using a Wheelchair](http://sci.washington.edu/info/forums/reports/Airline%20Travel%20tips.pdf)
* [Traveling with your Wheelchair](http://www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.6076283/k.3E81/Traveling_with_Your_Wheelchair.htm)
* [Tips for Travelers with Disabilities](http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2011/01/07/tips-travelers-disabilities/)

**Accessibility Resources**There are state, federal and local resources that members of the disabled community may access for further information regarding travel and tourism. Determining current laws, regulations, rules or policies that oversee the travel and tourism industry helps the disabled community protect their civil rights. When traveling out of state or overseas, check with the official travel and tourism board for their policies and make certain they coincide with U.S. laws. Technology has created greater access to shared accessibility resources, wheelchair accessible routes and lets members of the disabled community know the best places to visit.* [A Guide to Disability Rights Laws](http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm)
* [Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Air Travel](https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/11/12/2013-26749/nondiscrimination-on-the-basis-of-disability-in-air-travel-accessibility-of-web-sites-and-automated)
* [Disability Laws and Regulations](http://www.fcc.gov/disability)
* [GeoAccess: Accessibility Apps News](http://www.geoaccess.org/content/about)
* [United States Access Board: Transportation](http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/transportation)

**General Handicapped Travel Resources**Disability does not mean that a person may never travel again. Every disability is different and individuals have various needs. When preparing a vacation or trip, one must ensure there are no hidden dangers and that an individual will have his or her needs met, regardless of what they are. Taking the time to research, carefully preparing for difficulties and ensuring the destination is accessible can prevent frustration, disappointment and a disastrous trip. Utilizing preventative measures can keep the disabled person mobile, independent and safe during their journey.* [Accessibility: Department of Transportation](http://www.dot.gov/accessibility)
* [Travelers with Disabilities](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2014/chapter-8-advising-travelers-with-specific-needs/travelers-with-disabilities)
* [Medical Guidelines for Airline Travel](http://www.asma.org/asma/media/asma/Travel-Publications/medguid.pdf)
* [Wheelchair (in) Accessible: App Maps Obstacles for Disabled](http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/17/health/axs-map-app-guides-disabled/)
* [New Rules for Travelers with Disabilities](http://www.nbcnews.com/business/travel/new-rules-issued-travelers-disabilities-f8C11529125)
 |

V1