



Muscular Dystrophy New Zealand

Holiday Travel Tips for Families with Disabilities

Holiday travel tips are necessary, especially if you are traveling with a disabled family member. Whether you are traveling by plane, train, automobile or even ship, implement special strategies beforehand so that the trips runs as smoothly as possible. Keep in mind that surprises always occur during travel, no matter how well defined your preparation. However, if you keep an open, relaxed mind throughout the process, you'll sail through the trip like a champ.

1. PLAN AHEAD

Eighty percent of your travel success depends on how well you plan beforehand. If you plan to fly or travel by train, call the carrier ahead of time, explain your situation, and ask the representative how you can accommodate your family member and eliminate disruptions to other passengers. Ask the representative to identify bathroom and wheelchair accessible facilities along with suggestions on where you can go with your family member should they become uncomfortable or uneasy. Additionally, contact the hotel and request a wheelchair accessible room or one that permits for easy entrance and exit. For example, if your family member is autistic, they may not feel comfortable on elevators or having to make a long trip to the room. Get in touch with attractions such as museums, theme parks or theatres to ensure your family member has special accommodations when you arrive.

2. STICK TO ROUTINES

One of the most important steps that you can take to keep your disabled family member comfortable is to stick to their routine before the trip. Those who have disabilities thrive on routine because it is one area of their day that they know will always be the same.

Also, try to add pieces of your family member's daily routine into the holiday trip as often as possible. If your disabled family member always takes a nap between 2:00pm and 4:00pm, forgo sightseeing between those times and return to the hotel for nap time. Pack favorite foods and familiar items from home to make your family member feel comfortable and more at ease with unfamiliar surroundings.



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3. DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Arm your disabled family member with an identification tag that includes vital information as it pertains to their disability as well as contact information such as your cell phone number. In the unlikely event that you become separated from your loved one, you will at least have a way to find him/her easier than without identification especially if a communication issue is part of the disability. Additionally, pack comfortable, familiar clothing for your family member. Select outfits and pieces that you know they enjoy wearing and avoid introducing new items during the trip.

4. HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN

If the perfectly planned day doesn't go as hoped, have a back-up plan so all isn't lost. For example, if you plan to visit a museum that doesn't turn out to be wheelchair accessible (even though you were given information that it was), have *plan B* ready for execution. You could instead hit a local park or the zoo that day instead of the museum. Identify attractions that are within close proximity to your original destination so you don't lose time traveling from one part of the city or area to the other.

When staying at a hotel, consult with your concierge to identify alternative attractions. Your hotel concierge is an excellent resource for helping guests find appropriate activities and entertainment in the area.

Overall, allow yourself time to let go and accept that some days during your holiday trip may not go as planned. Keep in mind that the reason you took the trip was to be together as a family and to appreciate one another during this wondrous time of the year.

Source: Gina Ragusa, a freelance writer and mother from South Florida. Her 15 year experience ranges from writing about banking to tattoo parlours. Read more about her adventures at <http://blog.wahm.com/> Thanks to Disability Information Services (DIS) for this information. December 2014



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TRAVEL

Have you been on holiday recently? Was it amazing or perhaps it didn't meet your expectations or requirements. Share your holiday story, good or bad, with other members.

Getting out and about - accessible New Zealand:



Be.Accessible rates public spaces, transport, bars and restaurant on accessibility. Their website has lots of useful information about how to get around with accessible places you can stay, eat and play.



Freedom Mobility provide disabled tourist vehicle hire. Whether you are from overseas or a Kiwi touring New Zealand, if you need a vehicle with disability controls or need to travel in your wheelchair, they will have a vehicle to meet your needs.

Travel and Accommodation websites:



Weka has tips and links about local, national and international travel.



Ability Adventures is the New Zealand accessible travel company for disabled people.



CCS Disability Action have accessible holiday homes for rent. <http://www.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/services-and-advocacy/holiday-homes/>

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<http://www.access4all.co.nz/>

This contains disability travel and accommodation guide for New Zealand and the World.



Accomable

<https://www.accomable.com/>

Allows you to search for accessible accommodation worldwide.



Disability
Information
Service Inc.

Disability Information Service Inc. is a free information service that provides disability and health related information in the Otago region.

On their website you'll find information on the services and support they can offer as well as information on support groups and accessible accommodation, eateries, shops and other services in the Otago region.

International Travel

Here are some good links to international websites with information about where to travel and first hand accounts from people who experience disability:

[Apparelyzed](#): Listed by region and country Apparelyzed has first hand accounts from travellers who require disabled access for a wheelchair and also a discussion forum.

[Disabled World's](#) travel section covers reviews of accessible tours, vacations, and cruises for persons with disabilities including wheelchair accessible accommodation reviews and articles about interesting places to visit and/or vacation around the world.

[Accessible Guide to the United Kingdom](#) has everything from where to park to where to stay and good sightseeing advice.

[Disabled Online](#) An American website with some good links to specialised travel companies, cruises, safari's, flying, practical guide books for people who experience disability and more.

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Getaboutable is a website that is designed to assist people who are hearing, mobility or vision impaired. It is global and the search options are easy to use.

Disabled Holidays Website: Allows you to search internationally.

<http://www.disabledholidays.com/search/new-zealand-1585/auckland-1586/>

The local tourism offices often have good information

<http://www.tourism.net.nz/accommodation/accessible-accommodation>