

TRAVEL TIPS for Persons in Wheelchairs

Kentucky Parks: Part I



Many people love to enjoy the sights and sounds of our Kentucky State Parks and recreation areas. There is no difference in the wish to appreciate nature whether you are able bodied or require the use of a wheelchair. However, individuals who do require the use of a wheelchair many times are unable to fully enjoy our state parks and recreational areas due to multiple barriers. Often times park personnel are under the impression that an area being “handicap” accessible also makes it wheelchair (WC) accessible, when that is often not the case. Thus, the material compiled here is designed to aid persons traveling in a wheelchair on common barriers they may face, questions to ask prior to traveling to a location, and travel tips for combating some of the commonly encountered dilemmas once they reach their destination.

Common Barriers to Accessibility

Inaccessible bathrooms: Bathrooms may be inaccessible for a variety of reasons including inadequate: stall size, door width, toilet seat height, sink height, shower bench seat, hand rail height, and ramp slope.

Unable to access water: Lakes and pools are often inaccessible due to lack of a chair lift, inappropriate ramps, and lack of available off-road wheelchairs. Also, water level often plays a role in whether or not a lake will be accessible due to ramp steepness and flooding issues.

Inability to reach trails and certain park areas: Unfortunately many parks and recreational areas trails follow the layout of the land and make them inaccessible to the wheelchair user. Occasionally parks will have accessible trails or trails and/or lookouts listed as accessible with assistance.

Lack of recreational activities accessible to persons in wheelchairs: Activities such as boating, fishing, camping, canoeing, rafting, and trail hiking are often not made to accommodate those that use a wheelchair. Therefore, it is important to call ahead, utilize publications about accessible parks, and use the travel tips listed below before traveling to a destination.

Too few and/or inaccessible parking spaces: Parking may be inaccessible for a variety of reasons including: narrow space width, narrow aisle width, gravel or dirt surfaces, too few spaces in lot, and poor proximity to

entrance. At times a facility may have accessible spaces that are not marked by signage, making it difficult to obtain these spots due to others unknowingly parking in the spaces.

Ramp heights non ADA compliant: Ramps are often too steep, too narrow, or unsafe for wheelchair users due to lack of railings.

Specific Questions to Ask

1. Are there WC accessible bathrooms in the park? Are the bathrooms ADA compliant? Do the bathrooms have accessible, ADA-compliant toilets, showers and sinks?
2. Are all parking lots paved?
3. Does the campground have paved and level sites or is some gravel present? If the site the camper is placed is paved, but the surrounding area is gravel this will be important to know and plan around using plywood.
4. Does the campground site have water and electric hook-ups for those traveling in campers? Thus, even if the campground bathroom is inaccessible, the camper bathroom can be utilized.
5. Are the lake's docks floating or stable? Floating docks are easier to maneuver when transferring from the dock to the boat. If dock is floating, what are the water levels currently? This is important because ramp slope will vary with water level.
6. Is there a chair lift for entering the water at the lakes and pool? Make sure that if the chair is present that it is currently in working condition.
7. Are there WC accessible paths down to the water if on a man-made beach? Or does the headquarters offer available off-road wheelchairs to reach the water?
8. Are hiking trails WC accessible? Trail surface, steepness, and length are important dimensions to consider.

Creative Solutions

- Utilize commercially available or self-built modified wheelchairs for “off road” usage or for shower stalls without seat benches
- Bring along a commercially or self-made Port-O-Potty that can accommodate wheel chairs
- Bring along collapsible ramps that are commercially available
- Make sure that you bring plenty of handi-wipes and hand sanitizers, especially for personal hygiene in the absence of accessible bathrooms/sinks
- Bring plywood to cover gravel surrounding campsite

State Parks Covered in this Edition

- Bad Branch Falls
- Barren River State Park
- Breaks Interstate Park
- Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park
- Carr Creek State Park
- Cumberland Gap National Historical Park
- Cumberland Falls State Resort Park
- Grove Marina at Laurel Lake
- Holly Bay Marina at Laurel Lake
- Levi Jackson State Park
- Mammoth Cave National Park
- Natural Bridge State Resort Park
- Old Mulkey Meeting House State Historical Site
- Pine Mountain State Resort Park
- Trace Branch Campground and Recreation Area

Additional Resources

Kentucky Department of Parks www.parks.ky.gov

(800) 255-PARK

KARRN

www.karrn.org

Wheelchair accessibility of Kentucky state parks and recreation areas

See accompanying charts and descriptions for Kentucky State Parks and recreational areas.


1. Mammoth Cave National Park

Mammoth Cave is a very unique park that presents easy accommodations for individuals that are handicapped and persons in wheelchairs alike. The headquarters are fully compliant with ADA guidelines and there are several trails that could be traveled with a wheelchair, however several of these are boardwalks and not paved/gravel/etc. The campgrounds are both paved and gravel, presenting easy accessibility for wheelchairs. There is no boating or fishing directly available at Mammoth Cave.

 **Phone:** 270-758-2180

2. Barren River State Park

Barren River State Park is an exceptional area for taking in beautiful scenery, camping, overnight stay, and boating/fishing. The lodge has three handicap accessible rooms with specific accommodations to aid that population as well as access to a paved biking/jogging trail that is fully accessible by those individuals using wheelchairs. The boating docks have wheelchair ramps leading to them, however the slips and docks themselves are not railed nor do they have edge protection. Since the docks and ramps are floating, when the water levels are high, it may be difficult to access. Therefore, you may want to call ahead to check water level. The campgrounds present both paved and gravel surfaces, which a person in a wheelchair should have no problems maneuvering. The bathrooms at the campgrounds are displayed as handicapped accessible with adequate space in the showers and all faucets, toilets, etc meeting ADA guidelines.

 **Phone:** (270) 646-2151 or (800) 325-0057

Park Manager: Lisa Davis

3. Natural Bridge State Resort Park

Hemlock Lodge is an overnight lodging available with accessible restrooms in the headquarters and restaurant. There were several rooms that are considered handicap accessible by the lodge itself, but they were booked at the time of our visit, therefore we could not assess them personally. The desk personnel indicate that the bath tubs are wider and had a bench with handrails, a sink that is open underneath to allow a wheelchair to fit underneath, and the bathrooms themselves are wider. There is also a pool that had a ramp into the pool. There are also accessible cabins available.

Koomer Ridge is a federal camp ground that has wheelchair accessible restrooms and showers. There are paved surfaces and picnic tables that have the ends open for wheelchairs to fit underneath.

Natural Bridge has many trails up it to it, none of which are wheelchair accessible. However, they do have lifts to take persons up, and when asked about wheelchair accessibility the employees indicate that persons in wheelchairs ride the lift often.

 **Phone:** (606) 663-2214 or (800) 325-1717

Park Manager: Ron Vanover

TRAVEL TIPS for Persons in Wheelchairs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	ADA GUIDELINE
BATHROOMS																
Entry/Exit Ramp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓				1:10-1:12 slope, max rise of 6 in or 1:8-1:10, max rise of 3 in.
Door width	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓				Min 32 in.
Sink height	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				Max 34 in.
Commode height	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	*	*	17-19 in.
Shower accessibility	*	*	*	*	*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	Door width min 32 in. and clear floor space 30 in by 48 in
Padded shower chair												*	*	*	*	Present or not present
Handle barriers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*	*	*	36 in. min. height
Mirror height	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	*	40 in. max from floor
Flush control	✓	H	H	H	H	H	H	A	A	H	H	H	H	A	H	Hand Operated, Automatic, or Neither
Toilet Stall Size	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	*	*	Min. depth of 56 in.
Urinal Height	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	Max 17 in. height
Light switch height	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	✓	*	*	*	*	*	Min. height 15 in.
Faucet type	P	L	L	T	P	T	L	E	L	L	H	L	LE	L	L	lever, electronic, push or touch
Sign/Symbol of accessibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				Present or not present
PARKING																
Space width	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	96 in. wide
Parking surface	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	G	G	G	Dir., Gravel, or Paved
Parking patrolled	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yes or No
Adequate number of spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ratio of 1:25
Access aisle width	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	96 in. min.
Closest proximity to entrance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Accurate or not accurate
Entry/Exit Ramp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1:10-1:12 slope, max rise of 6 in or 1:8-1:10, max rise of 3 in.
Sign/Symbol of accessibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*	*	*	Present or not present
FOOD AND DRINKING ACCESS																
No. of accessible water fountains	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓		*	*	*	1:1 Ratio
Water fountain spout height	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓		*	*	*	max 36 in.
Door width	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	32 in at a point AND 36 in continuously

The number on the top of each table corresponds to the number listed in the park description. *Eg., #7 is Mammoth Cave.*


Key

- * please see description, further explanation required
- ✓ met ADA guidelines
- P paved
- E electronic
- G gravel
- P push
- D dirt
- T touch
- F floating
- H hand-operated
- S stable
- A automatic
- L lever
- N neither

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	ADA GUIDELINE
Entry/Exit Ramp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓						1:10-1:12 slope, max rise of 6 in or 1:8-1:10, max rise of 3 in.
Sign/Symbol of accessibility	✓															Present or not present
BOATING/FISHING																
Adequate number of boating slips		*				*										Ratio of 1:25
Pier slip width		✓				*										60 inches minimum
Edge protection																2 inches min. height
Railings														*		At least 25% must be 34 in. max height
Entry/Exit Ramp		*				*		✓						✓		1:10-1:12 slope, max rise of 6 in or 1:8-1:10, max rise of 3 in.
Dock type		F				F		F						F		Floating or Stable
Sign/Symbol of accessibility								✓								Present or not present
TRAILS																
Accessibility	✓	*	*	*				*								Able or not able to get to trails by WC
Surface	*	P						P	D.G							Dirt, Gravel, or Paved
Bench accessibility	✓										*					Size, back support, ht (see p. 43)
Sign/Symbol of accessibility	✓			✓												Present or not present
CAMPING																
Surface	P.G	P.G	P.G	P.G	P.G	P.G	P.G	P.G	P.G		P.G	P	D.G	P		Dirt, Gravel, or Paved
Concrete pad for camper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		*	✓		✓		Present or not present
Sign/Symbol of accessibility	✓			✓	✓	✓							✓			Present or not present
LODGING																
WC access: Room and restroom		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓								
HEADQUARTERS																
Entry/Exit Ramp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	1:10-1:12 slope, max rise of 6 in or 1:8-1:10, max rise of 3 in.
Door Width	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	32 in at a point AND 36 in continuously
Check-in Counter Height	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							min 36 in length and max 36 in height
POOL																
Entry/Exit Ramp		✓	✓	✓							✓					
Chair Lift		✓	✓	✓				✓		*						
Sign/Symbol of accessibility		✓		✓				✓		✓						

4. Cumberland Falls State Resort Park

Cumberland Falls is a great park to visit for scenery, dining, and overnight accommodations. There are currently 2 rooms in the lodge and 3 cabins that are wheelchair accessible. However, this park's campground is currently in the process of remodeling to make it wheelchair accessible. Therefore call ahead before making reservations. This park does have a few level concrete slots with electric and water hook-ups if your camper has a bathroom. The park's pool has wheelchair accessible parking with a level entry, a chair lift to enter the pool, and accessible showers. Most trails are inaccessible but the overlook to the falls is wheelchair accessible with assistance.

 **Phone:** (606) 528-4121 or (800) 325-0062

Park Manager: Dave Jordan

5. Grove Marina at Laurel Lake

The Grove has a wheelchair accessible ramp at both the marina and boat loading areas. The ramp incline varies with water height, thus you may want to call ahead to check water levels. The boat slips at the marina are not wheelchair accessible. The campground has a few level concrete pads for campers, but the surrounding areas are gravel. The bathrooms are wheelchair accessible at the campground. Unfortunately, none of the trails in the Laurel Lake vicinity are wheelchair accessible.

 **Phone:** (606) 523-2323

6. Holly Bay Marina at Laurel Lake

Holly Bay consists of a marina, camping/picnic areas, and a beach area (The Spill Way). The marina has a ramp from the parking lot, but it is attached to a floating dock. Therefore, when the water is low the steepness of the ramp can increase dramatically – you may want to call ahead to check the water level. The boat loading area has wheelchair accessible parking, but there is not a wheelchair accessible access ramp to the water. Thus, most boaters in a wheelchair transfer into the boat from the marina. At the marina there are no designated wheelchair accessible boat slips. When a boater is in a wheelchair they are given a slip on the first row, which has the appropriate dock width for transfers. The Spill Way has wheelchair accessible parking, but a steep entry hill and no paved path through the sand to the water. Additionally, there is no chair lift for water entry. The campground has a few level concrete spots and wheelchair accessible bathrooms. The entry door into the bathhouse is heavy and may impede independent entrance and exit.

 **Phone:** (606) 864-6542

7. Pine Mountain State Resort Park

Pine Mountain offers lodging with handicap accessible rooms and restrooms including accessible showers. They also have a restaurant that is accessible by elevator. Unfortunately, none of the trails are wheelchair accessible, although there is a pool that has a chair lift.

 **Phone:** (606) 337-3066 or (800) 325-1712

Park Manager: Stephen Eastin

8. Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

The bathrooms are wheelchair accessible. The mirror height is high, but it is angled downward making the floor visible, and the lights are automatic. There is one trail that takes you into the town of Middlesboro, KY that is ½ mile long and paved. However, the slope may be too great at certain points to manage independently. There is also a paved walk to the pinnacle lookout point, but the slope maybe too great to manage independently as well. Cumberland Gap also offers a camp ground that has excellent, clean restrooms, with wheel-in shower facilitates, handle-held shower head and bench seat.

 **Phone:** (606) 248-2817

9. Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park

The beautiful and secluded Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park is located in Buckhorn, Kentucky. Buckhorn offers a lodge, cottages, a restaurant, a conference center, boating, fishing, miniature golf, nature trails, swimming, and more. The Buckhorn Lodge offers two accessible rooms that each feature one king-sized bed, an accessible bathroom and a step-in bathtub with a mobile shower head, but no shower chair. The hotel office staff reported that two cottages, (a three bedroom and a two bedroom) were accessible. The lodge restaurant is accessible via elevator from the lodge's lobby. The beach area is accessible, but requires assistance due to the steepness of the entrance ramp. The water at the beach and the bathrooms at the beach are not accessible. The accessibility of the Marina depends on the water level. With heavy rainfall, the accessible ramp to both the Marina and the Courtesy Dock becomes completely submerged under water. However, the Marina manager indicates that all boating slips are accessible under normal circumstances. So be sure to ask about the weather and water levels before making your trip. The Upper Picnic Area is not accessible, but the Lower Picnic Area is accessible. However, there is no access to bathrooms. Unfortunately, both the trails and the miniature golf course are inaccessible. The pool is accessible via use of an electronic chair lift.

 **Phone:** (606) 398-7510 or (800) 325-0058

Park Manager: Greta Reynolds

10. Old Mulkey Meeting House State Historic Site

While Old Mulkey is famous for its historical relevance, it is not highly wheelchair/handicapped compliant. There are no trails, no campgrounds, nor any boating available at this location. The historical meeting house has no ramps leading to its entrances and this is a decision made by the counsel overseeing the site, according to information provided at the headquarters. They wish to preserve the site as much as possible and utilizing handicapped accessibility would not allow this. However, the bathrooms at the site are accessible as well as the picnic areas and playgrounds. Parking is easy and available with handicapped spots in closest proximity to the meeting house.

 **Phone:** (270) 487-8481

Park Manager: Sheila Rush

11. Levi Jackson Wilderness State Park

The wheelchair accessibility of Levi Jackson State Park varies throughout the grounds. There are a clubhouse and multiple shelters that can be rented for events. The clubhouse and shelter 2 are both wheelchair accessible. Shelter 1 and the campground do not have bathrooms meeting ADA guidelines. The campground does have some flat concrete slots with water and electric hook-ups if your camper has a bathroom. The pool is accessible; however, the chair lift is currently broken. Please contact the park to check on its current status. At the Mill, which is a working mill surrounded by millstones and a pond, there is accessible parking and a path around the pond, but the Mill itself has several entry steps and no ramps.

 **Phone:** (606) 330-2130

Park Manager: Bill Meadors

12. Trace Branch Campground and Recreation Area


Trace Branch Campground and Recreation Area is located at Buckhorn Lake. Trace Branch may be small, but the facilities are clean, modern and “top-of-the-line.” The Campground area includes concrete pads, electric and water hook-up, and bathrooms. The bathrooms were clean, but the toilet height was too low to meet ADA guidelines. The Picnic Area is accessible and includes bathrooms and an accessible bench to sit on. The Picnic Area bathrooms were lit by sky light and therefore would be inaccessible at night. Also, the urinal is too high in the men’s bathroom, but the toilet height was accessible. Heavy rainfall results in flooding of the boat loading area, so be sure to ask about the weather before making your trip.

 **Phone:** (606) 398-7251

13. Breaks Interstate Park

The Breaks is a beautiful park located on the Virginia-Kentucky state line in Breaks, Virginia. It has several exciting activities, lodging choices, and beautiful scenic overlooks. Activities include horse-back riding, camping, rafting, paddle boating, boating/fishing, and more. The horses are accessible to those using a wheelchair, but only if the user is able to maintain balance on the horse. Unfortunately, no special saddles are available. The designated area for loading a boat is not accessible due to the steepness of the access ramp. Basketball courts at Campground Area B are accessible, but users with mobility impairments may require assistance due to the dirt and gravel parking area surrounding the court. The River Access and Recreation Area does not provide access to the water and the camping area is inaccessible. Paddle boating is accessible with the physical assistance of the park’s staff. Unfortunately, none of the trails at the Breaks are inaccessible. However, the “Stateline Overlook” which exhibits a beautiful scenic view, is accessible. The Campground Office/Store is accessible by drive-up window. Camping sites have electric and water hookup and two sites (#38 and #86) had accessible signage present and were closer to the bathrooms. The Motor Lodge had one accessible room per lodge building (3 total lodge buildings), and each room included a high rise toilet with rails. One of the three rooms had a regular step-in bathtub with a seat, while the other two rooms have roll-in showers with

removable shower heads (per hotel office staff). Cottages A, B, C, and E were inaccessible. Cottage D appeared accessible from the outside, but would require the use of a small/portable ramp for entry. Signage for parking varied throughout the park, but did exist at the Conference Center, the Visitor's Center and the Stateline Overlook. The presence of access aisles also varies and they are not found at the Visitor's Center or the River Access and Recreation Area. There was only one accessible water fountain and it is found at the Cabin Area. Bathroom accessibility varied greatly throughout the park with most exhibiting hand rails that were too low, mirrors that were too high, urinals that were too high, appropriate stall depth, appropriate light switch height, accessible showers with an unpadded seat, and appropriate toilet height.

 **Phone:** (276) 865-4413
Website: Breakspark.com

14. Carr Creek State Park

Carr Creek State Park is located in Hazard, Kentucky, and features Carr Creek Marina located on Carr Fork Lake. Another wonderful feature of the park is the Beach Area. The Beach Area, which is open from 10am-5pm daily, includes accessible parking with appropriate aisle width and signage present. The Beach is accessible by ramp, but with heavy rainfall may be flooded in certain areas (be sure to ask about the weather before making your trip). Reaching the lake at the beach is an achievable task, but may require the use of a "beach" wheelchair or minimal physical assistance. The Beach also provides accessible showers, but no chair, curtain, or rails are present. The Camping Area bathrooms had no signage, no access aisles for parking, the bathroom stall door was too narrow for access, and the showers are inaccessible. The Marina Area includes Holly Shelter, Laurel Shelter, and Carr Creek Marina. Holly Shelter includes a grill and picnic tables and is accessible. Laurel Shelter is also accessible and includes an accessible water fountain. Unfortunately, the Marina is not accessible and parking aisle width did not meet ADA guidelines. However, there is an accessible Courtesy Dock in which the Marina manager states is in alignment with several pontoon boats. Adequate edge protection is present on the ramp leading to the Courtesy Dock, but is not found on the dock itself. The protective railing is too high on the ramp leading to the Courtesy Dock, but is acceptable on the "Fishing Pier."

 **Phone:** (606) 642-4050
Park Manager: David Richardson

15. Bad Branch Falls

Bad Branch Falls is a recreational area located in Letcher County, Kentucky. This area includes two hiking trails, one of which leads to a natural waterfall, and the other which leads to a scenic overlook. The trails are surfaced with dirt and gravel and unfortunately are not wheelchair accessible.

THESE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS WERE DEVELOPED BY

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