

TRAVEL TIPS for Persons in Wheelchairs



A RESOURCE MADE AVAILABLE BY THE
KENTUCKY APPALACHIAN RURAL REHABILITATION NETWORK

Tips for Finding an Accessible Hotel and Making Travel Less of a Hassle

Getting the right information about the accessibility of a hotel can be difficult and sometimes frustrating. With so many places to choose from, travelers with disabilities need a quick way to compare hotels and find one that can accommodate their special needs.

Here is a list of tips to make traveling with a wheelchair, or other mobility disabilities, less frustrating:

1. When making any type of reservation, whether it be for a hotel, medical equipment, a van, or an attraction, ask VERY SPECIFIC questions. Don't let someone get away with answering you with a quick "yes, we are wheelchair accessible," because a lot of times they really aren't. Let them know exactly what requirements you require.
2. Always talk directly to the property. Central reservations services for hotel chains have limited information in their systems. When you get someone on the line the first question to ask is, "Have you been in these rooms?" If the answer is no, ask to speak to someone who has.
3. The best sources of information about a hotel are the property owner, general manager, and head of housekeeping.
4. A word of caution; never assume anything. Just because the room is accessible does not mean the rest of the hotel is accessible.
5. Plan ahead and book early; several months in advance if possible.
6. Once you determine that the hotel will suit your needs, confirm that the reservation is guaranteeing an accessible room and not just a room with a request for an accessible room. It also is a good idea to reconfirm your reservations a day or two before your arrival.
7. Listen "between the lines": be wary of a hotel manager who seems to promise too much. If the hotel seems too good to be true... it probably is.

- 8.** Knowing your rights can be helpful. Many hotels offer free airport shuttle to their guests. Many of these shuttles are not accessible, which they are often not required to be. However, the hotel is required to provide wheelchair users with alternate accessible transportation at no charge. What often happens when you ask if their shuttle is accessible, they will respond “I’m sorry our shuttle is not accessible.” Your next question should be is “What alternative arrangements has the hotel made?” This is one of those situations that if you aren’t getting the right answers, ask to speak to a manager or supervisor.
- 9.** If you like to take road trips and not make reservations along the way, here are some tips that might save you some headaches.

 - Always stop early, preferably no later than 4-5 o’clock.
 - If possible, stop at highway interchanges where there are several hotels located.
 - If the first hotel doesn’t have a suitable accessible room, ask if they know which of the others might. Often, they will even call around for you.
 - When you find an accessible room, always take a look at it before you check in.
- 10.** When you arrive in your hotel room don’t be afraid to rearrange the furniture to a configuration that better suits you and to maximize the space in the room(or have the staff do it for you).
- 11.** If possible, book your travel through an agency that specializes in helping people with disabilities. Agents can check with hotels for inner and outer door widths to accommodate your wheelchair, ADA-approved handicap bath tubs, grab bars, or for roll-in showers. Just tell them your needs.
- 12.** When traveling to another city, check out the local health and medical facilities before you go. Bring a list of emergency contacts, medications, and your primary care provider’s phone number.

Specific Questions to Ask

By asking a few questions, a traveler with disabilities can quickly determine if the hotel is disability-friendly:

- Does the hotel provide any special disability services? Make this the FIRST QUESTION asked. Let the hotel staff explain what they have to offer. Their response will let you know their level of experience and their desire to assist travelers with disabilities.
- On what floor are the wheelchair accessible rooms? It is important to be on or near the first floor in case an emergency disables the elevators.
- Are the rooms ADA compliant?
- Can the beds and other furniture be moved in order to make the room more comfortable and accessible?
- Does the hotel provide a wheelchair-accessible shuttle to nearby tourist attractions and public transportation?
- Is disabled or handicap parking available for your car or van? How many spots?
- How many accessible rooms are available?
- Are the rooms smoking or non-smoking?
- What size are the beds?
- How much space is between the beds?
- Are the beds on open frames or closed platform?
- Does the room have lowered light switches?
- Is there a roll-in shower and what are the dimensions?
- What are the dimensions of the room and doorways?
- Is there a hand-held shower and how high is it?
- Are there grab bars and nonslip mats around the toilet and shower areas and how many?
- Is there a transfer bench in the shower?
- Does the toilet have a raised seat?
- Is there enough room under the sink for wheelchair clearance?
- Are the mirrors lowered?
- Are recreational areas (swimming pool, gym, tennis courts, etc) accessible and equipped for persons using a wheelchair?

More Resources

RESOURCE	WEB ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
ADA homepage	www.ada.gov	(800) 514-0301
ADA Accessibility Guidelines	www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm	(800) 514-0301
Disability Travel and Recreation Resources	www.makoa.org/travel.htm	
Access-Able Travel Source	www.Access-able.com/graphical_index.html	(303) 232-2979
National Center on Accessibility	www.ncaonline.org	(812) 856-4422
World on Wheelz	www.worldonwheelz.com	(519) 745-1860 (800) 578-8958
Wheelchair Travel Tips	www.disabled-world.com/travel/wheelchair-travel-tips.php	
Disabled Travel Network	www.globalaccessnews.com	
Wheelchair Getaways	www.wheelchair-getaways.com	(800) 536-5518
National Rental Information		(800) 642-2042

Literature Resources for Travelers

▶ **Access Anything: I Can Do That (Outskirts Press 2007)**

An inspirational guide to traveling, adventuring, and sporting with a disability

Includes:

- Essential disability travel information
- Tips for traveling by airplane, car/rental car, charter bus, cruise ship, and train

To order: www.accessanything.net

▶ **Wheels & Waves: Cruise, Ferry, River & Canal Barge Guide for the Physically Challenged**

Authors: Genie and George Aroyan

Contact information: (800) 637-2256

▶ **Exotic Destinations for Wheelchair Users: Hotel Guide to the Orient**

Handy hotel guide covering Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan.

Available at: Bookmasters, (800) 247-6553.

▶ **Wheelchairs on the Go: Accessible Fun in Florida**

Covers Florida from the Panhandle to the Florida Keys

Features access to tourist attractions, beaches, state and local parks, theaters, sports stadiums, fishing piers, boat rentals, resorts, campgrounds, houseboats and more.

Available at:

www.wheelchairsonthego.com or

(727) 573-0434 or (888) 245-7300

▶ A World of Options

Highlights opportunities available to disabled people overseas with:

- personal travel accounts detailing trips to such global destinations as: Africa, China, Europe, and more.
- What ADA means to a disabled traveler
- In-depth access critiques on various airlines, rental cars, hotel/motel accommodations, cruise ships, and buses worldwide
- Adventure travel and volunteer opportunities.
- Provides the essential information a disabled traveler needs to plan an accessible journey and/or work abroad.

Available at:

Mobility International USA
PO Box 10767

Eugene, OR 97440 U.S.A.

Voice/TDD: (541) 343-1284

Fax: (541) 343-6812

E-mail: info@miusa.org

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