



Princess Access Makes Cruise Vacations Accessible For Passengers With Disabilities

Award-Winning Program Addresses Special Needs at Sea

Princess has long placed a high priority on making [cruise vacations](#) accessible for all passengers, including those with special needs. The company initiated its award-winning Princess AccessSM program in 1992 to raise the standards of cruise ship accessibility across the fleet, while keeping in mind the constraints and special considerations inherent to a ship at sea. Even before this time, however, Princess' well-recognized passenger service extended to accessible cruising. In 1984, Royal Princess debuted as the line's first ship designed with facilities specifically for passengers with physical disabilities and between 1989 and 1992, three more ships debuted with accessible staterooms.

Experts and Honors

In recent years, as the Princess fleet has continued to expand, the company has continued to focus its efforts on passenger accessibility. Princess was the first cruise line to employ a manager of access compliance -- who was appointed in early 2002 by President George W. Bush to the U. S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board, and who has twice served as chair of the group, which helps create legislation to enhance accessibility programs across all passenger vessels.

Princess' efforts on behalf of passengers with disabilities have received recognition from several organizations. In 2002, The Western Law Center for Disability Rights honored Princess as the first organization in the travel industry to earn its prestigious annual Corporate Award, which recognizes a company's commitment to making its services accessible to people with disabilities. And in 1999 Princess received the National Business & Disability Council's "Valued Customer Silver Award of Honor" in recognition of the line's program to improve shipboard access and accommodations for all passengers. Princess again led the way as the only cruise line ever to be honored by this organization, which is the leading national resource for the successful integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace and consumer marketplace.

Wheelchair-Accessible Cabins

Today, the Princess fleet offers more than 350 wheelchair-accessible cabins. Each vessel features up to 31 accessible cabins, across a variety of stateroom categories. These rooms all follow guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and are designed for wheelchair maneuverability, with widened doorways into both the cabin and its bathroom; wheel-in showers, hand-held showerheads and bath distress alarms; as well as lowered closet railings, sinks, and handrails; and removed or revamped thresholds. Additional equipment is also available on request, such as toilet seat raisers, shower stools and bedboards.

Wheelchair users will find access-friendly design across most of the Princess fleet, making it easy to enjoy each vessel's restaurants, theaters, spas, lounges and open deck space. Elevators have generous 36- to 42-inch doorways, and wheelchair seating is available in show lounges and other public spaces. Princess' renowned customer service efforts ensure that guests with disabilities not only receive the assistance they need, but also offer plenty of opportunities for independent exploration.

Sight and Hearing Disabilities

Guests with sight and hearing disabilities will find vessels equipped with such helpful features as Braille elevator call buttons, audible arrival sounds and infrared listening assistance systems in the Princess theaters. ADA "all in one" kits are available upon request -- featuring telephone amplifiers, visual smoke detectors, door knock sensors, text telephones (TDD) and other aids. In-cabin movies feature close captioning, and ship libraries feature a selection of books on tape.

Princess ships also welcome [service animals](#), and have hosted a variety of such special helpers, including seeing-eye dogs, hearing-assistance dogs, and even a "helping hands" monkey.

On Shore

On shore, Princess continues to innovate accessibility for passengers. Special gangway mechanisms on most ships simplify embarkation and disembarkation for wheelchair passengers in many world-wide ports. While onshore facilities and levels of access vary, Princess has made efforts to expand accessible offerings by working with local service providers. In St. Thomas, for example, Princess was instrumental in developing tours featuring the island's only accessible trolley. The line's own private beach club in the Bahamas, Princess Cays, features ramps for easier access. Passengers will find guidelines in Princess' shore excursion listings to indicate the level of access for each tour.

Alaska cruise passengers will find their vacations accessible as well. All of Princess' custom-built Alaska wilderness lodges meet ADA guidelines, with accessible rooms and public spaces. The company's exclusive Midnight Sun Express® railcars also offer access to the lower levels of the car, including dining areas and outside observation platforms.

Scroll down for photos:



ROYAL PRINCESS Inside Handicap Stateroom.

Inside Wheelchair Accessible staterooms are 240-square-feet to accommodate wheelchairs and have wider doors and no sills. There are handicap access staterooms in all categories of accommodation.



Accessible Bathroom with Large Fold Down Shower Seat (improved wrap around drains prevent bathroom flooding). Accessible bathrooms could use more storage space (there isn't any) and a few more hooks on the wall for wet bathing suits, etc.

Next picture shows standard scooter on Balcony of Accessible Cabin. This is the main negative of this ship...balconies are not as spacious as I would like. As you can see below, scooter barely fits but it doesn't take away the pure joy of the fresh air and amazing views!



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