

Vacation Tips for People with Disabilities

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As a person with a disability who loves to travel, I have encountered the good, the bad, and the ugly of accessibility (or lack thereof) on my vacations. To help you have the most enjoyable and accessible vacation possible, here are a few tips from my own experiences.

- 1. Go to an amusement park.** For many people with disabilities amusement parks can be a great vacation option because amusement parks often have a lot of accessibility and reasonable accommodations already built in. For example, there are usually very wide, clear paths without steps, which are great for people with mobility disabilities, instructions on how to request interpreters for live shows, which is great for sign language users, maps in large print, which can be very helpful for people with visual disabilities, and some parks even have policies to help people with sensory disabilities. While amusement parks certainly are not perfect when it comes to accessibility, they can offer a lot of accessibility options that other vacation spots may not offer.
- 2. If you're flying, know your rights!** You might be used to resorting to the Americans with Disabilities Act for most of your disability rights questions. However, if you're not familiar with the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) then you should look it up before flying. The ACAA covers the rights of people with disabilities when flying. Did you know you have the right to bring a collapsible wheelchair on most planes? Did you know you have the right to have your own wheelchair or assistive device delivered plane side instead of getting into an airport wheelchair and waiting forever for your wheelchair to magically show up? Also, while making formal complaints when experiencing a problem while flying is important, I have found that using social media results in a faster response. I often use Twitter to tweet about my good and bad experiences and always tag the airline I'm using, and airlines tend to tweet me back immediately.
- 3. Try Camping!** When I was younger camping seemed like the worst vacation ever because woods and dirt don't exactly scream "accessibility!" However, over the years National and state parks have really started focusing on making things accessible. There are now accessible hiking trails, camp sites, cabins, and even roll up picnic tables. Many parks with museums now have audio guides to

accompany the visual displays which can help people with visual disabilities enjoy the experience. Many visitor centers also offer captioning in their videos and visitors can request sign language interpreting for tours. I'd recommend going to the National Park Service website, <http://www.nps.gov>, picking the park you want to go to, and then on the left hand side click "Plan Your Visit," and then click "Accessibility." This will allow you to see the accessibility options for that particular park, so you can decide if it will meet your needs!

As always, if you do run into an accessibility problem that you think may be a violation of your rights, you should feel free to contact us because the Disability Independence Group is here to help!