

Travel tips for people with mobility challenges

■ Question: How should travelers with mobility challenges find accessible options?

■ Answer: Plan ahead and clarify ability level in advance.

Travel can be stressful for anyone, but it is particularly frustrating for individuals with disabilities.

"Lots of people [with disabilities] say, 'It's easier to stay home,' but there are plenty of options," says Jani Nayar, executive coordinator for the Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH), which offers a wealth of information to travelers with special needs.

When selecting accommodations, Nayar suggests Microtel Inn & Suites, which provides bigger bathrooms and more accessible rooms. Microtel specially trains its staff about helping guests with disabilities as well.

It's easier than ever before to rent scooters to avoid the hassles of traveling with one's own equipment. "Nowadays scooters are much more appealing and sleek," says Gerald Adams, manager of online resources

"Tell (the booking agent) ahead of time what you're able to do and not able to do, so they can provide the right service for you."

Jani Nayar
Executive Coordinator,
Society for Accessible Travel
& Hospitality

for Scootaround, Inc., a national company that rents scooters and power wheelchairs to travelers.

Making local trips are easier as well. More vans have ramps, some of which allow a person in a wheel chair to sit in the front seat. Manual wheelchairs are now easier to maneuver due to geared wheels allowing the user to explore uneven terrain.

Plan in advance

A travel agent who is experienced in serving people with disabilities is a great asset. They can help find the best accommodations to match the person's ability level, for example, beds that are ADA-height and wide bathroom doorways for individuals in wheelchairs.

When you make a reservation, call the hotel directly. "Don't just say you're in a wheelchair," says Nayar. "Tell (the booking agent) ahead of time what you're able to do and not able to do, so they can provide right service for you."

Provide at least 48-hour advance notice prior to boarding a plane, train, or bus, so they can better assist you. Typically, public transportation options offer a disability travel assistance line to call directly. To rent a car with hand controls or other accessibility features, book well in advance to ensure availability.

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