

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Accessible Travel

Travelling with SCI

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20

Accessible Travel



FLYING



Flying for the 1st time after your injury can be a daunting prospect but with the right planning there is no need to worry. In the EU the airport operators are responsible for providing additional assistance for those passengers who need it – this is available from the moment that you arrive at the airport to boarding the aircraft, and on your return disembarking the aircraft to leaving the airport. This also applies to the US.

Booking

BRITISH AIRWAYS

virgin
atlantic

Jet2.com

easyJet

IBERIA

Aer Lingus

Disabled
Access
Holidays

Enable
Holidays

DisabledHolidays.com
travel without limits

You may book with a travel agent or directly with the airline. There are a number of specialist travel agents more familiar with the requirements of accessible travel some are shown here.

Additional Assistance Notification



If you book with an agent you need to tell them of the additional assistance that you will need at the time of booking so that notes can be made in your booking request. If you book directly with an airline you will need to inform them on line or by contacting their special assistance customer service unit.

It is always advisable and recommended by the airlines that if you book through an agent that you also contact your airline directly to let them know what additional assistance you will require.

You will be asked if you will be taking additional disability equipment with you. Most airlines allow an additional item of disability equipment to be carried free of charge in addition to your wheelchair.

You need to have ready the dimensions of your wheelchair Length / Height / Width / Weight and if a power chair what type of batteries it uses.

You will be asked

- if you can walk
- Manage steps

All of this information is used for airport and airline planning purposes to ensure that they have the right resources in place on the day to make your journey as easy as possible.

If you have a very large electric chair you should know that certain small aircraft types may not be able to carry it due to the size of the aircraft hold doors so it is worth first checking with the airline.

The official notification period is at least 48 hours before you fly but I would recommend that you do this as soon as you know your flight details so that you can tick it off your list in case it gets forgotten nearer the time.

With Heathrow Airport providing additional assistance to over 2000 customers each day over 5 terminals you can see why the planning is needed to ensure that they have enough staff to help you. If you do not book your assistance in advance it should still be provided but those customers pre booking will receive priority.

Pre departure planning



Now that you have registered your additional needs you need to think about what you should do in preparation for your holiday. Make sure that you have enough medical supplies for your trip – I always take a couple of days extra just

in case there should be any delay or disruption on your return journey. It is advisable that you take a copy of your prescription in case you run out of supplies for any reason.

For me this includes night bags, leg bags, sheaths colostomy bags and wipes. I also speak with my doctor before I go and have an emergency supply of antibiotics just in case I get a urine infection and also take the usual bits from the medicine cabinet ibuprofen plasters etc.

You should pack your medical supplies in your hand luggage at least enough for your journey and 2/3 days should your luggage get delayed.

Personally, I take a wheelchair toolkit and spare inner tube / puncture repair outfit in my hold luggage as I have found in the past you can get into a lengthy debate at security with increased security measures these days.

If you have an electric chair it will need to be disabled/isolated before loading on to the aircraft and removable bits removed. You should carry a copy of the relevant pages of your owner's manual telling you how to do this and it is also recommended that you have step by step pictures of how to do this for any overseas ground staff to look at who do not speak English.

If you are driving to the airport it is worth considering one of the many collect and deliver car parking services which allows you to drive right up to the terminal unload your baggage and drop your keys with a driver to park your car – when you return home you phone them from the baggage hall and your car is delivered back to you – if you look online it really does not cost much more and avoids getting on and off of buses with your luggage. It is advisable to check your departing airport's website which will tell you all about their accessible facilities, and distances to the departure gates.

Once your flight is booked many airlines will allow you to choose and reserve your seat in advance free of charge. Once you know your airline and aircraft type you can use Seat GURU to look at the aircraft layouts and see which seat would be best for you.

Remember by law you are NOT allowed to sit in an Emergency Exit row.

At the Airport



You should arrive at the airport a minimum of 2 hours (3 hours would be less of a rush at the airport and more advisable) before your flight – remember it will take time to check in – get through security and then down to your boarding gate. Passengers requiring additional assistance are usually pre-boarded 1st to allow you to get comfortable. Short haul flights are pre boarded about 30mins before take off and long haul flights about 1 hour before take off.

Help Points



When you arrive at the airport you will find help phones located in the car parks and entrances to the terminals if you need them and by using a help phone one of the special assistance team will come and meet you to help you to check in with your luggage. Alternatively, you can make your own way to one of the designated Special assistance check in desks.

Assistance at the airport



Check In



At check in you will be asked if you wish to take your own chair to the aircraft, and they may confirm details that you previously gave when booking your flight.

You will be asked when you would like the assistance. If you can walk a little way it is worth remembering that distances to the gates can be great these days and it might be worth considering additional help in the form of a wheelchair or buggy so that you arrive refreshed for your flight.

Help is available from the check in to the aircraft or you can choose to make your own way to the gate.



It is advisable to make use of the toilet facilities in the terminal before boarding as aircraft lavatories are not the most user friendly. It is also advisable to check with your airline if they carry an onboard aisle chair.

At the gate – aircraft on a jetty



At the boarding gate you will be met by the airport assistance team and the airline will call for passenger requiring assistance to pre board. You will be taken to the aircraft side by the special assistance team if you are unable to walk and need to get to your seat in an aisle chair. You can either transfer yourself on the jetty or the special assistance team will transfer you.

At the gate aircraft on stand - Ambulift



If your aircraft is not on a jetty known as a coaching gate you will be taken to the aircraft in an Ambulift this is basically a lorry with a lift at the back and

door at the front of the cab and rises up to take you in through the back door of the aircraft. Some airports will transfer you in a bus and use an Aviramp which is a zigzag ramp that the assistance team will wheel you up.

Aisle Chairs Slings and Lifts



Aircraft aisles are too narrow for a standard wheelchair and so you will need to transfer into an aisle chair, some examples pictured above. The special assistance staff are trained to lift you if you require it and often have the use of Promove sling or Eagle lifter to transfer you or you can use your own EasyTravel Seat which you can purchase or hire for the duration of your holiday. Alternatively you can self transfer using a sliding board if that is your usual method of transfer. They will also put your hand luggage in the overhead locker for you.

Your wheelchair will be taken down to the apron area and loaded into the hold.

Remember to remove all 'loose' items and take with you into the cabin



Remember to

1. Disable the power on your power chair if you have one
2. Remove all removable parts from your chair manual or electric and take into the cabin with you

3. Take your cushion – very important to sit on your cushion in the aircraft. You do not want to arrive with a pressure sore – if it is an air based cushion i.e. a ROHO or Verilight you will need to adjust throughout the flight due to the varying cabin pressure.

Airlines do not deliberately lose mobility aid bits but they could fall off during transfer into the hold or if there is turbulence in flight and get missed.

In Flight

The crew are not allowed to feed you – give you medication – or help you in the toilet.

Many aircraft these days have on board aisle chairs and if you can transfer on to the aisle chair the crew will push the aisle chair to the toilets.

Keep hydrated – you cannot take a full water bottle through security but if you take an empty bottle you can fill at a water fountain once airside



It is very important that you keep hydrated throughout your flight so as not to risk getting a urine infection.

It is worth considering using a sheath/indwelling catheter with a leg bag and taking a supply of night bags especially on a long haul flight so that you do not have to worry about not drinking enough. You can seal and place in a carrier bag which can be disposed of in the aircraft toilet by your companion or if travelling alone in the airport toilets on landing.

Disembarking

Will be a similar experience to boarding. You will be asked to wait until everyone has got off the aircraft and your wheelchair should be waiting for you at the aircraft side.

If it is one of the rare airports which does not facilitate this or a country such as India which does not allow this facility you will be taken in an airport wheelchair to the baggage hall to collect your own wheelchair and baggage. The special assistance team will help you collect your baggage and exit the airport.



If you would like to familiarise yourself with an aircraft cabin, The Queen Elizabeth Foundation have 3 Tryb4uFly centres in the UK –

QEF Mobility Services in Carshalton in Surrey
The William Merritt Disabled Living Centre in Leeds
RDAC in Birmingham

They have mock-up of aircraft cabins and you can book an assessment with an occupational therapist and experience various transfers within an aircraft cabin prior to your flight.

TICK LIST

✓ Request Assistance

Notify Travel Agent / Airline at least 48hrs before your flight
You will need height / width / length / weight and if a power chair type of battery

✓ Medication

Ensure that you have all the medication and medical supplies that you need for your trip

Take a copy of your prescription
Pack in your hand luggage

✓ **Wheelchair**

Know the dimensions weight and if a power chair what type of battery it uses
Always a good idea to check it over a few days before you travel
Take a toolkit with you and a puncture repair outfit pump and if possible spare inner tube

✓ **At the Gate**

Remove all loose / removable parts from your chair
Skirt guards / armrests / foot plates & Cushion – take into cabin with you
If you have a power chair it needs to be disabled – have relevant pages of manufacturers user manual with you and have pictures of each step
Decide how you wish to reach your seat – self transfer or assisted transfer

✓ **In Flight Preparation**

Have any medication and medical supplies easily available in handbag or rucksack additional to your hand luggage
Make sure that you have your wheelchair cushion placed on your seat to protect you inflight

✓ **The Flight**

Keep well hydrated do seated exercise if possible to stop becoming stiff
If it is possible for you use the armrests to lift every now and then to relieve pressure
If you are able to transfer to an aisle chair to use the toilet leave time it may not always be instant and be fully aware the toilet facilities are very compact.
If you have an air cushion remember to adjust inflight to account for changes in cabin pressure

✓ **Disembarking**

Make sure you have all of your hand luggage including the wheelchair parts you removed prior to take off

WHAT THE AIRLINE WILL DO FOR YOU

Depending on your individual needs and circumstances, it can arrange:

- assistance or an escort to and from the aircraft
- help with stairs where necessary
- transport for wheelchairs and mobility aids

When you reach the aircraft, cabin crew can help you:

- find your seat and familiarise you with the seat and surrounding area
- store and retrieve your hand baggage
- move between your seat and the washroom
- open any packaging of your on-board meal, identify your food and layout on the tray
- They will also be able to provide you with essential flight information. On flights to/from the US, they will provide you with all flight information in a way that meets your needs.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO TAKE CARE OF

During your journey you will need to look after:

- personal care during the flight, such as eating and taking medicine
- personal care in the washroom
- the needs of your assistance dog

You will need to travel with a safety assistant if you need help to do any of the following:

- lift yourself, for example in or out of your seat
- reach an emergency exit unaided (being able to get onto the floor and drag yourself to exit counts)
- communicate with the crew on safety matters
- unfasten your seat belt
- retrieve and fit a life jacket
- fit an oxygen mask

Enjoy your Holiday

RAIL TRAVEL



Whilst London has a turn up and go facility most services require you to book assistance 24hrs in advance. This is done at the time of ticket purchase either on-line or by contacting your local/departing station rail operator. The departing rail operator is responsible for arranging the required assistance for your entire journey including any transfers to other rail operators to your destination. Boarding the train is usually via a ramp provided by station staff at either end. The departing assistance staff should inform your destination station of where you are in the carriage and which carriage you are travelling in. All trains have a dedicated wheelchair space and some have accessible toilets. You can check station facilities on-line with Network Rail. There are good and bad reports of service with some operators better than others. The DFT are in the process of ensuring additional training standards are met and performance improved.



RiDC
Research Institute for Disabled Consumers
Experts in user-centred research involving disabled and older people

<https://www.ridc.org.uk/content/trains>



<http://orr.gov.uk/info-for-the-public/passengers-with-disabilities>

National Rail Enquiries

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx

TICK LIST

✓ Request Assistance

Notify the Train Operator at least 24hrs before your Journey

BUS TRAVEL



Buses have ramps to board and a single wheelchair/buggy space, laws have recently changed to make wheelchairs a priority over buggies and should the space be occupied by a buggy they would have to move. If however there is another wheelchair user in the space you would have to wait for the next bus.



Research Institute for Disabled Consumers

Experts in user-centred research involving disabled and older people

<https://www.ridc.org.uk/content/buses>

UK GOVT Information

<https://www.gov.uk/transport-disabled/cars-buses-and-coaches>

CRUISES



Cruise ships are accessible and have very good accessible cabins and facilities on-board. Similar planning and preparation to that of air travel should be made when planning your cruise. It is worth checking with your agent the ports of call as some may NOT be serviced by a jetty which would mean a tender transfer i.e. a small boat and therefore going ashore may not be possible or feasible especially if the sea is a bit choppy.

TICK LIST

✓ Request Assistance

Notify Travel Agent at time of booking and ensure accessible cabin is available
You will need height / width / length / weight and if a power chair type of battery

✓ Medication

Ensure that you have all the medication and medical supplies that you need for your trip

Take a copy of your prescription

✓ Wheelchair

Know the dimensions weight and if a power chair what type of battery it uses

Always a good idea to check it over a few days before you travel

Take a toolkit with you and a puncture repair outfit pump and if possible spare inner tube

USEFUL Links

MOBILITY EQUIPMENT HIRE

<https://www.mobilityequipmenthiredirect.com/>

ABLE MOVE / EASY TRAVEL SEAT – Specialist travel seat and sling

<https://www.ablemove.co.uk/?product=able-move-pro>

PLANES



<http://tryb4ufly.co.uk/>

QEF Accessible Aviation

<https://qef.org.uk/our-services/accessible-aviation>

Video Guide for Power Chair Users

<https://qef.org.uk/our-services/qef-accessible-aviation/flight-video-guides>



<https://www.disabledholidays.com/>



<https://www.enableholidays.com/brochure>



http://www.disabledaccessholidays.com/disabled-holidays/accessible-holidays/Spain.asp?gclid=Cj0KCQjwzK_bBRDDARIsAFQF7zMa3Lt8K_ZIBFp8wdprAPmfvVVn_oiMiiy1U_u9i9kP0ObvuO9ILwGwaAqgGEALw_wcB



http://www.limitlesstravel.org/?utm_source=google-ads&utm_medium=lead-gen&utm_campaign=disabled-holidays&utm_content=test-website&utm_term=disabled%20holidays&gclid=Cj0KCQiAvebhBRD5ARIsAIQUmnnwiXk9IU0bHIZ7YQDz3JJtbb-r-t9xNZqtwp6FlxHuco4wbx7QnTeAaAsakEALw_wcB

Heathrow

<https://www.heathrow.com/airport-guide/special-assistance>



CAA General Information

<http://www.caa.co.uk/Passengers/Before-you-fly/Making-a-booking/Arranging-special-assistance/>

Contact Details for UK Airports and Airlines Special Assistance units who fly out of the UK

<http://www.caa.co.uk/Passengers/PRM/Special-assistance-guidance-from-airports-and-airlines/>



<https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/wheelchair-and-guided-assistance>



<https://www.caa.co.uk/passengers/>



<https://www.seatguru.com/>

Flying with an Electric Chair

<https://qef.org.uk/our-services/qef-accessible-aviation/flight-video-guides>

Manchester Airport Assistance

<https://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/help/special-assistance-home/>