

Traveling With A Disability: 6 Things I've Learned

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For someone with a physical disability; traveling can be a daunting, but *not* an impossible task. **The Air Carriers Access Act (ACAA)** helps to ensure that a person with a disability is treated fairly and appropriate

accommodations are made before, during and after travel, by airport staff and airline companies. Before you travel, it may be a good idea to get familiar with the laws. You can read a little about the ACAA by clicking [here](#).

As someone who has traveled a great deal throughout the years (all domestic) and require the use of a manual wheelchair, here are a few things that I learned during that time.

1. If you're able, avoid flights with a layover.

Although direct flights may be more expensive, it will give you peace of mind later on.

2. Call a few days before your scheduled flight.

Do you need an aisle chair to help you transfer to and from the plane? Do you have questions about transporting other durable medical equipment like oxygen tanks? Do you have certain allergies? Call ahead! Calling ahead allows you, the airport, and the airline company to prepare ahead – preventing any hiccups to your travel experience.

3. Arrive to the airport a couple of hours early on the day of your scheduled flight.

1 ½ to 2 hours is the recommended window for any passenger. This is especially important if you're traveling during the peak of a holiday. This gives you enough time to get through the security checkpoint, check-in, eat, and take care of any other business.

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4. Travel light and dress comfortable - if possible.

When heading to the airport, dress comfortably. When you get to the security checkpoint, you will be required to empty your pockets, take off your shoes, jewelry, belt, etc. It's probably best to keep some of those items, secured, in your carry-on bag. A t-shirt, shorts, wallet and keys work out just fine for me. **Travel light** – to avoid having to carry a bunch of stuff (especially in the airport), I pack in my carry on an outfit for 1 night (just in case my checked bag gets misplaced during travel), along with toiletry items, medical supplies, and any items of value. For everything else, I put in my check in suitcase. Might I suggest a suitcase with 4 wheels? It makes rolling so much easier for me!

5. Carry something that list medical information – in case of emergency.

Information including your diagnosis, allergies, emergency contact, medications you're currently taking, and physician contact information. Keep something in your wallet, or purchase specialized bracelets, necklaces, etc.

6. Make sure your durable medical equipment is secured.

This includes things like wheelchair, walkers, and crutches. Make sure all the screws and bolts are fastened before you arrive to the airport, and see if you can take loose items on board with you. (Ex: seat cushion) There have been a few times where parts off my wheelchair have come apart, and screws came up missing, because the chair got tossed around in flight. Save yourself the headache!

Here are some resources that can offer more information. Safe travels!

<http://www.curbfreewithcorylee.com/> – A Traveling enthusiast and blogger. Cory shares his love for traveling all around the world. Spinal Muscular Atrophy and a wheelchair will not get in his way!

<http://www.independenttraveler.com/>

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/disabilities.html>

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