

Traveling With Aging Parents

Valerie Grubb loves to travel. Not only that, she loves to travel with her mom. In the past 20 years, the author of “Planes, Canes and Automobiles: Connecting with Your Aging Parents through Travel” (Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2015) has logged more than 300,000 miles with her mother, now 85. “It’s been one of the best things I’ve ever done,” she says. You, too, can have a great trip with Mom or Dad, even if they have mobility challenges. Just follow a few of Grubb’s tips.

Watch them walk. Don’t leave home without understanding your parent’s physical capabilities. “That may actually help you decide where you want to go,” says Grubb. A parent who struggles with the porch stairs won’t be climbing the 387 steps to the top of Notre Dame Cathedral. If you can, pay your parents a visit and observe them so you can help them make the best choices for the trip.

Talk to the doc. Go with your parent for a pre-trip checkup to discuss health concerns and details about medications (including generic names) your parent is taking. Carry a list of those medications and their doctor’s contact information with you at all times. “It’s rare that something happens when you are just at the hotel,” says Grubb



Remember that things change. If you haven’t spent extended recreational time with your parent in a while, be aware that their dietary preferences may have changed, their memory may have diminished, or they may need more frequent rest stops. Grubb notes her mom was once “fearless” but became more wary of new places and of flying alone as she grew older. With patience and forethought, most issues can be overcome. “It changes the vacation a bit, but I can tell you it’s worth it,” Grubb says.

Travel puts you and your parent in a new adventure and allows you to deepen your relationship. Grubb, for instance, learned during one trip that her demure mom had been kicked out of high school for fighting. “You’re going to find out so much more about your parents when you’re with them,” she says. “New places trigger memories in all of us.”

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