



- Your Premier Regional Magazine -

## Plan Ahead for Travel with Individuals Who Are Disabled

By Nelli Tokleh

***With summer in full swing, vacation planning may already be on your mind. If traveling with persons with disabilities this season, some extra planning can be involved.***

### Maintaining Routines

“Expect the unexpected, but that’s OK,” said Julie Trbovich, director of Exceptional Adventures. She brings more than 20 years of experience in the intellectual & developmental disabilities support field. Exceptional Adventures is a nonprofit organization providing vacation opportunities, events, social gatherings and lifelong friendships for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism in Western Pennsylvania.

Trbovich advised the importance on mainlining routines. “Be aware of the person’s normal routine (mealtimes, medicine schedule), and try to keep it as close as possible. Carry snacks and drinks in case of any delays or unforeseen circumstances. It’s also wise to print out menus in advance from the restaurants where you may order. This allows for conversation and the ability for choice, as well as saving time.”

### Accessible Travel by Air and Car



Photo courtesy Exceptional Adventures



Photo courtesy Exceptional Adventures

If traveling by plane, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) offers three tips for passengers with disabilities. First, make plans ahead of time to ensure a smooth flight. Contact the airline in advance to arrange for a wheelchair or other guided assistance on a flight, seating accommodations that meet your needs and loading/stowing of an assistive device. Second, be informed and prepared on the flight date. Arrive early to make time for the security screening, find the gate and board the plane. Finally, DOT advises to call them for help to assist with access-related issues on the spot.



- Your Premier Regional Magazine -

## Plan Ahead for Travel with Individuals Who Are Disabled

By Nelli Tokleh *continued*

Further, travelers are encouraged to inform TSA officers of a disability or medical condition verbally, by using the TSA Notification Card or by providing medical documentation. This also includes one's ability to walk or stand with support before an X-ray screening. If someone has difficulty standing, they can ask for a chair or request to be screened while seated in the wheelchair or scooter.

Trbovich noted important considerations when traveling by a vehicle. If the car is not a typical height, make sure there is an open-air parking lot available at the destination. Many garages have height restrictions that can then throw off an entire itinerary.

You should never assume a location claims to be accessible for persons with disabilities, said Trbovich. "Be sure to ask about the bathrooms, whether there are walk-in showers and if showers have grab bars. Also, be sure to find out how close the entry door is to where the vehicle must park."

### Helpful Items to Pack

"Legs tire easily," said Trbovich. "If someone uses a cane but also has access to a portable walker, bring it. This is especially important when any trip includes a museum or sightseeing." She also added that if someone is used to certain sounds, like a sound machine when sleeping, to pack that as well.

### Stress-Free Outings with the Access Card

"If a person with a disability has an access card, there are many locations such as museums that are free of charge for them," said Trbovich.

The card can be used to easily communicate your access requirements upon arrival to an event or venue. The card acts like a photo ID and also conveys a person's disability or impairment into symbols, so the venue can make the reasonable adjustments. Another benefit of the access card is a personalized directory of attractions showing each one's accessibility information to help plan your trips.



Photo courtesy Exceptional Adventures



- Your Premier Regional Magazine -

## Plan Ahead for Travel with Individuals Who Are Disabled

By Nelli Tokleh *continued*

Trbovich recommended Oglebay Resort in West Virginia, a destination with wonderful cabins that are accessible for persons with disabilities.

Disney World Resort is another excellent spot for those traveling with disabilities. It has extensive systems to help guests, and it is known as one of the most accessible destinations in the nation. For example, their Disability Access System (DAS) offers guests with mobile and cognitive disabilities a virtual pass for waiting in line at the attractions. The park offers additional services for those who are hard of hearing such as sign language interpretations, handheld and video captioning and more.

Mobility devices such as strollers, wheelchairs and Electronic Conveyance Vehicles (ECVs) are available for rent and are well worth the costs as you cover a lot of ground throughout the parks.

“Disney has done a great job making the parks accommodating for everyone,” said Katie Kubis, owner of Wonderland and Beyond Travel. “Working with a travel agent can help you plan ahead and will ensure that your trip will be nothing short of magical.”

