

ONE SCI CONSUMER'S TRAVEL PHILOSOPHY:

PACKING PHILOSOPHY

- Pack by mentally going through each portion of your trip.
- Take 2-3 copies of your itinerary and leave one on the home refrigerator.
- Pack extra supplies in case you get stuck somewhere.
- Always carry a supply of essentials on your person in case your checked bags are lost or stolen.
- Avoid hassles at security screenings by not carrying any metal, knives, tools, or spare parts for wheelchair. Carry airplane tickets, money and passports on your person for both easy access and prevention of either theft or someone mistaking your bag for theirs and going off with it to parts unknown.

TRAVEL PHILOSOPHY: AIR TRAVEL

- Have back-up plans in case things go wrong so your trip isn't ruined.
- Be prepared to wait.
- Be prepared to be patient.
- Don't expect airline employees to know what you need.
- Be prepared to be assertive and aggressive, but pick your battles so as not to lose energy fighting an issue you cannot win.
- Paper Airline tickets may be easier to transfer if you have to change airlines due to cancelled flights
- Gate-Check your manual wheelchair and make sure that it gets tagged with your destination.
- Verify with attendants that your wheelchair did get stowed. Be sure it's tagged: BRING TO GATE
- Have steward call to destination to request aisle chair if needed
- Don't rely on one person to assure you of your chair being checked and returned to you. Mention to airline staff at gate, the people taking your chair once you've transferred to aisle chair and finally to the steward on board your flight, plus remind steward before landing that you will need an aisle chair and your own chair brought up to you. You cannot be too much of a pest about this. Busy airline employees need reminding.
- Sit on your own cushion or spare seating gel when flying or driving... especially long distances.
- If you can't get to the bathroom to pee, drape a blanket over you and use a no-touch kit/empty leg bag.

TRAVEL PHILOSOPHY: CAR TRAVEL / RENTALS AND HOTEL RESERVATIONS

- Make reservations well in advance to reserve wheelchair accessible accommodations or hand-equipped car or van with a lift.
- On car trips, use your own cushion, a seating gel from a Jay cushion or an air bladder from Roho cushion.
- Just prior to leaving on your trip, call hotel and car rental to reconfirm. Get names of the employees with whom you speak, ask them to measure the width of any doors in question and call you back.
- Be prepared to find or hear many of the following in hotels, both domestic and foreign:
 - We don't have a wheelchair accessible room for you because the former guest did not check out.
 - The wheelchair accessible bathroom is in the lobby.
 - You can have either a wheelchair accessible room or a non smoking room, but not both.
 - The wheelchair accessible room is still under construction.
 - The wheelchair accessible room has a view of the parking lot.
 - We don't have any wheelchair accessible rooms in the hotel.
- None of these problems are insurmountable with some creativity and assertiveness.
- Be prepared for a wheelchair accessible room having the following problems:
 - A bathroom doorway that is too narrow
 - Hand-held showerhead placed out of reach (ask bell cab to lower before he leaves the room)
 - Lack of shower chair even after prior arrangements
 - Heat controls out of reach
 - The bed is too tall to get onto.
 - Furniture needing to be rearranged for better access

- Inaccessible mirrors (travel with hand mirror)
- If the hotel does not have a shower chair, a pool chair or a folding chair will work.
- Bring tools to take off doors; the extra inch may be all that you need.

TRAVEL PHILOSOPHY: TRAIN TRAVEL

Generally, access is limited, but this can be a wonderful way to travel.

TRAVEL PHILOSOPHY: ASSISTANCE

- It helps to have a travel companion, but you can easily travel on your own by asking for assistance.
- Assume that people want to help... often this is true.
- Be well groomed, well dressed, clean and presentable. People will be much more inclined to help you if you appear to respect yourself.
- Remember that you are an emissary for all disabled people (whether you want to be or not). People will want to help the next disabled person if their interaction with you is positive.
- Know when to tip and when to say thanks.
- Don't be unreasonable in asking for assistance... pay someone to do the heavy lifting, etc.

TRAVEL PHILOSOPHY: FOREIGN/INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

- Be prepared for complete lack of wheelchair access in hotels, restaurants, points of interest, car rentals and public transportation of all kinds.
- Do lots of research in advance... some cities and countries are more accessible and progressive than others.
- Learn to be creative in solving access issues: i.e. Use multiple chair transfers to get into inaccessible bathrooms.
- Keep ALL valuables i.e. money, passport, airline tickets, irreplaceable jewelry, ON person when away from your hotel room.
- Be prepared for your rental car to be broken into. Put bags in trunk and not in plain view.
- Carry handy-wipes for quick hand cleaning after rolling over animal messes on sidewalks, or whatever other fairly awful thing you might get into.
- Be prepared for a more prevalent smoking community in most foreign countries...as well as the east coast.
- Try to avoid overstaying your visa without prior authorization. It's easier to get permission ahead of time rather than after the fact.
- Secure your passport and visas well in advance.
- In Russia and certain other countries, be prepared to be separated from your party and held in a medical waiting room prior to your flight, to be taken to the plane in an ambulance, and to be carried up the stairs by the military guard who are unable to speak English. Don't fight with them; this is one of those battles you can't win. Save your energy.
- In Australia and certain other countries, learn to trick taxi cab drivers into stopping by using a stand-up as bait. Hide, then run out quickly and start the process of loading before they can stop you.
- Try to relax amidst the inevitable confusion and remind yourself: "It's more than travel; it's an adventure."
- And when it all becomes too much for you, stop and go have your drink (or two) of choice and let the manager go work it out.