



# The Physically Challenged Traveler

*Kathryn N. Suh and Jenny Visser*

## KEY POINTS

- The physically challenged have the same rights to travel as the able-bodied, but restrictions or conditions may apply where safety is an issue.
- Specific needs and attention that may be required should be arranged ahead of time whenever possible.
- A repair kit, extra batteries, and voltage adaptors (if necessary) for medical devices can save time and aggravation while traveling.
- Travelers dependent on battery-operated devices should try to use dry-cell batteries, as these are easier and safer to transport.
- Service animals should be certified and properly prepared for travel, and any restrictions for their travel clarified prior to departure.

## INTRODUCTION

In the United States alone, almost 60 million people live with disabilities, the majority of whom are able to travel. Like advancing age, physical or cognitive disability poses less of a hurdle to international travel today than ever before. Travel companies and carriers have become more aware of the growing number of travelers with disabilities. Furthermore, legislation has been enacted to protect the traveler with special needs against unfair treatment. The US Air Carrier Access Act,<sup>1</sup> the Canada Transportation Act,<sup>2</sup> the UK Code of Practice for Access to Air Travel for Disabled People,<sup>3</sup> and Regulation (EC) 1107/2006 of the European Parliament<sup>4</sup> were enacted to allow travelers with disabilities to travel safely and without discrimination on commercial aircraft. Legislation also exists to ensure that travelers with disabilities have improved accessibility to rail and ferry transport. Note that although physically challenged travelers must not be refused transportation because of a disability, some very small commuter aircraft (e.g., those traveling to smaller cities) may be unable to accommodate the traveler with severe physical limitations.

Physical or cognitive limitations should not prevent most affected individuals from traveling. Advanced planning can reduce or eliminate many of the hassles of travel for the individual with a disability and contribute to a positive experience.

## GENERAL ADVICE

General advice for the physically challenged traveler is similar to that recommended for other travelers. Issues relevant to specific disabilities will be discussed throughout the chapter. One excellent source of travel information is the Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality website ([www.sath.org](http://www.sath.org)), which provides an extensive list of resources for the physically challenged traveler. Some additional resources for travelers with disabilities are listed in [Box 25.1](#). An Internet search using any widely available search engine can generate many other useful resources.

An assessment by the traveler's personal physician or physiatrist should precede any trip, to determine overall fitness to travel, to decide whether the specific disability will impose certain travel restrictions (e.g., on the mode of transportation or the need for specific accommodations or accompaniment), and to identify other health issues that could pose problems during the trip. Specific recommendations about safe eating and drinking, prevention and self-treatment of travelers' diarrhea and malaria, and immunizations do not differ from those for other travelers, and advice regarding these issues should be sought from a travel medicine specialist.

Careful attention should be paid to health and cancellation insurance: purchase of a supplemental health insurance policy may be prudent. It is important to ensure that the traveler will be covered in spite of the disability. Travelers requiring medical equipment, including mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, prostheses) and hearing and visual aids, should check whether their insurance policy covers theft, loss of, or damage to these devices. Finally, if medical attention will be required while abroad, an appointment(s) arranged prior to departure (with specialists if required) can relieve the stress of finding appropriate medical attention in a foreign country.

## CHOOSING A TRIP AND MAKING TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The nature and severity of disability and the need for physical assistance, special accommodations, or mobility devices obviously have some bearing on the type of trip that the traveler with a disability can enjoy. Some travel agencies have expertise in arranging trips for the physically challenged, and some organizations specialize in providing group tours or cruises for individuals with particular needs (e.g., dialysis cruises, group travel for the developmentally disabled, or trips for wheelchair users) (see [Box 25.1](#)). These trips, offered to a variety of destinations, provide the traveler with a predetermined itinerary at a suitable pace, companionship, professional supervision, and medical services where necessary.

**Abstract**

Most individuals with physical disability can travel safely with appropriate planning. As with other travelers, routine travel advice should be sought well in advance of travel. Consideration should be given to the specific needs of the physically challenged traveler, including travel with mobility aids, other medical aids and service animals, and special needs at the travel destination. Plans should ensure adequate time for transfers and for addressing the needs of a service animal. Pretravel maintenance of mobility aids, such as packing extra batteries, travel adapters, and emergency repair equipment, can prevent annoying travel interruption. Specific restrictions for service animals, including quarantine requirements at the destination and on return, should be clarified prior to travel. A travel companion may be required if the needs of the traveler or safety concerns dictate. While safety concerns may on occasion impose some restrictions or conditions on travel, travelers with physical disability share the same rights as able-bodied travelers.

**Keywords**

Cognitive impairment  
Hearing impairment  
Mobility aids  
Physical disability  
Service animal  
Speech impairment  
Travel health  
Visual impairment

**BOX 25.1 Resources for Disabled Travelers****Contact Information Current as of October 15, 2017****General Information**

Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality

[www.sath.org](http://www.sath.org)email: [sathinfo@sath.org](mailto:sathinfo@sath.org) or [sathtravel@AOL.com](mailto:sathtravel@AOL.com)

347 Fifth Avenue

Suite 605

New York, NY 10016, United States

Tel: (212) 447-7284

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) (United Kingdom)

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee)email: [dptac.enquiries@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dptac.enquiries@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

Great Minster House

33 Horseferry Road

London SW1P 4DR, United Kingdom

Canadian Transportation Agency (Canada)

[www.cta-otc.gc.ca](http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca)email: [info@otc-cta.gc.ca](mailto:info@otc-cta.gc.ca)

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N9, Canada

Tel: (888) 222-2592

TTY: (800) 669-5575

US Department of Transportation (United States)

Federal Aviation Administration

[www.faa.gov/travelers/](http://www.faa.gov/travelers/)

800 Independence Avenue SW

Washington, DC 20591, United States

Tel: (866) 835-5322

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States)

Advising travelers with specific needs. Travelers with disability. In: CDC

Yellow Book 2018: Health Information for International Travel. New York:

Oxford University Press; 2017. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/yellowbook-home>

Rosen F. How to Travel: A Guidebook for Persons with a Disability. Chesterfield, MO: Science and Humanities Press; 1997.

<http://sciencehumanitiespress.com/books/preprtrav.htm>

Science and Humanities Press

PO Box 7151

Chesterfield, MO 63006-7151, United States

Tel: (636) 394-4950

Also available through Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))**Physically Disabled Travelers**

Mobility International USA

[www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org)

132 E. Broadway

Suite 343

Eugene, OR 97401, United States

Tel: (541) 343-1284

TTY: (541) 343-6812

Accessible Journeys

[www.disabilitytravel.com](http://www.disabilitytravel.com)email: [sales@accessiblejourneys.com](mailto:sales@accessiblejourneys.com)

35 West Sellers Avenue

Ridley Park, PA 19078, United States

Tel: (800) 846-4537 or (610) 521-0339

Tourism for All

[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)email: [info@tourismforall.org.uk](mailto:info@tourismforall.org.uk)

Tourism for All UK

7A Pixel Mill

44 Appleby Road

Kendal, Cumbria LA9 6ES, United Kingdom

Tel: 08451249971 or International: +44 1539 726 111

Moss Rehab Travel Resources

<https://www.mossrehab.com/patients-and-visitors/information-for-out-of-town-visitors/travel-resources>

Information website only

**Hearing Impaired Travelers**

Canadian Association of the Deaf

<http://cad.ca>email: [info@cad.ca](mailto:info@cad.ca)

251 Bank Street

Suite 606

Ottawa ON K2P 1X3, Canada

Tel: (613) 565-2882

National Association of the Deaf

[www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org)

email: available on website

8630 Fenton Street

Suite 820

Silver Spring, MD 20910-3819, United States

Tel: (301) 587-1788

TTY/TDD: (301) 587-1789

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly the Royal National Institute for Deaf People)

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)email: [informationline@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:informationline@hearingloss.org.uk)

1-3 Highbury Station Road

London N1 1SE, United Kingdom

Tel: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

World Federation of the Deaf

[www.wfdeaf.org](http://www.wfdeaf.org)email: [info@wfd.fi](mailto:info@wfd.fi)

PO Box 65

FIN-00401

Helsinki, Finland

**Visually Impaired Travelers**

American Council of the Blind

[www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)email: [info@acb.org](mailto:info@acb.org)

1703 N. Beauregard St., Suite 420

Alexandria, VA 22311, United States

Tel: (800) 424-8666 or (202) 467-5081

Canadian National Institute for the Blind

[www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca)email: [info@cnib.ca](mailto:info@cnib.ca)

1929 Bayview Avenue

Toronto, ON M4G 3E8, Canada

Tel: (800) 563-2642

National Federation of the Blind

[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)

email: available on website

200 East Wells Street

Baltimore, MD 21230, United States

(410) 659-9314

**BOX 25.1 Resources for Disabled Travelers****Contact Information Current as of October 15, 2017—cont'd**

Royal National Institute for the Blind  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
 email: available on website  
 105 Judd Street  
 London WC1H 9NE, United Kingdom  
 Tel: 0303 123 9999 (helpline) or 020 7388 1266

**Guide Dogs**

Guide Dogs for the Blind  
[www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com)  
 email: available on website  
 PO Box 151200  
 San Rafael, CA 94915-1200, United States  
 Tel: (800) 295-4050

Guide Dogs for the Blind (Canada)  
[www.guidedogs.ca](http://www.guidedogs.ca)  
 email: [info@guidedogs.ca](mailto:info@guidedogs.ca)  
 PO Box 280  
 4120 Rideau Valley Drive North

Manotick ON K4M 1A3, Canada  
 Tel: (613) 692-7777

**Developmentally Disabled Travelers**

The Guided Tour Inc.  
[www.guidedtourtour.com](http://www.guidedtourtour.com)  
 email: [director@guidedtourtour.com](mailto:director@guidedtourtour.com)  
 7900 Old York Road  
 Suite 111-B  
 Elkins Park, PA 19027-2310, United States  
 Tel: (215) 782-1370

Sprout  
[www.gosprout.org](http://www.gosprout.org)  
 email: [info@gosprout.org](mailto:info@gosprout.org)  
 270 West 96th Street  
 New York, NY 10025, United States  
 Tel: (212) 222-9575  
 Specializes in tours for the developmentally disabled

Author's Note: Reference to or listing of selected organizations does not necessarily signify endorsement by the author. All websites, addresses, and phone numbers were verified at the time of writing.  
 TDD, Telecommunication device for the deaf; TTY, teletypewriter.

The specific needs of travelers with disabilities that are likely to arise during travel and at the destination(s) should be discussed with a travel agent, and their availability confirmed prior to booking travel. These arrangements should be verified again at least 48 hours prior to departure and at check-in. Written confirmation of arrangements for special services may also be useful. Because assistance with preboarding and disembarking is often required, travelers with disabilities are often the first on and last off the aircraft. This should be taken into account when booking connecting flights, and adequate time should be scheduled between flights. Airlines are responsible for providing help for the traveler with a disability to reach connecting flights. Special seating requests should also be made at the time of booking (e.g., aisle or bulkhead seats may facilitate wheelchair transfers, and seats closer to the washroom may be more convenient for the mobility-impaired traveler). Airlines may not be able to guarantee such requests but should be able to tell the traveler which seats are most accessible.

When a traveler requests assistance, the airline is obliged to provide access to the aircraft door (preferably by a level entry bridge), an aisle wheelchair, and a seat with removable armrests. Aircraft with <30 seats are generally exempt from these requirements. Physically challenged passengers who cannot transfer themselves should travel with a companion or attendant, but carriers may not without reason require a person with a disability to travel with an attendant. Only wide-bodied aircraft with two aisles are required to have fully accessible lavatories, although any aircraft with >60 seats (with rare exception) needs to have an onboard wheelchair, and personnel must assist with movement of the wheelchair from the seat to the area outside the lavatory. Airline attendants should assist with managing carry-on baggage, transferring to and from a wheelchair, getting to the washroom (unless lifting or carrying the individual is required), and opening food packages and identifying food. Although they may help with eating, they are not required to do so, nor are they required to help with administering medications or providing assistance in washrooms. A useful source of information for air travelers with disabilities is a publication entitled *New Horizons*,<sup>5</sup> produced by the US Department of Transportation.

Passenger trains, buses, and ferries in developed countries can usually accommodate the needs of most physically challenged travelers, but these standards are often not the same in the developing world. The transportation company should be notified and any special services requested well in advance. Travelers (or their travel agents) should ensure that hotels, restaurants, and attractions of interest can accommodate their needs. Inquiries about accessible ground transportation to the departure terminal and at the destination(s) (if required) should be made in advance and reserved well ahead of time if possible. It is best to use a travel agent that is experienced in the unique travel issues of individuals with special needs.

The travel schedule should be confirmed prior to departure. Ample time must be allowed for transportation to the terminal, taking into account the time required for any transfers. Adequate time should also be allowed at the terminal for check-in and for transportation to the departure gate. Any physical assistance, assistive devices required at the terminal (e.g., wheelchairs or motorized transportation within the terminal), or help with boarding or disembarking should be requested at the time of booking and again at check-in.

**TRAVELING WITH AN ATTENDANT**

Some individuals with disabilities may prefer or need to travel with a companion who can assist with their personal needs. The level of assistance required by the traveler should be discussed with the carrier at the time of booking. If the carrier is unable to provide the degree of assistance that it feels the traveler requires, it may request that the individual travel with an attendant. Airlines and other carriers may offer significant discounts for a medically necessary travel companion; proof of disability (medical documents) may be required for this discount to apply.

Circumstances in which the safety of the traveler or fellow passengers can be jeopardized may prevent an individual with a disability from traveling unaccompanied. Examples include cognitive or developmental impairment, severe physical disability impairing mobility, or combined

visual and hearing impairments, any of which may prevent the traveler from understanding instructions or taking appropriate action in the event of an emergency. In such cases the carrier may require an attendant (safety assistant) to accompany the traveler, but is not responsible for finding or providing this attendant. Occasionally an off-duty employee traveling on the same flight or a kind-hearted fellow traveler will assume this role. In contrast to a personal travel attendant, the safety assistant is only required to help in the event of an emergency and is not obliged to provide personal assistance to the traveler. If a traveler is denied transportation because a safety assistant is unavailable, compensation should be provided by the carrier.

### The Physically Disabled Traveler

Physically challenged travelers may require assistance with boarding and disembarking, and this can be requested at the time of booking and check-in. Most airline carriers will announce preboarding and disembarking assistance for those who require it.

### Air Travel With a Wheelchair or Scooter

Tips for the wheelchair or scooter traveler are listed in [Box 25.2](#). Wheelchair or scooter rental may be an option for some travelers, particularly short-term travelers or those who depend on these devices only for distance travel. Airlines will transport wheelchairs and scooters at no extra cost to the traveler. Those traveling with a wheelchair or scooter should notify the carrier at the time of making reservations and ask how these can be transported, and should specify whether the device is manual or electric; this should be confirmed with the airline at least 48 hours prior to departure. A smaller or lightweight manual wheelchair may be preferable for travel, being easier to transport and less prone to damage. If airport or overnight layovers are scheduled, the traveler can request that the wheelchair or scooter be returned to him or her; this will not only be more convenient for the individual but will also minimize the risk of loss or damage to the device.

The traveler should verify whether the wheelchair or scooter is covered by (or can be added to) an existing insurance policy. Prior to departure, proper functioning of the device should be ensured, and consideration given to having it serviced if this has not been done recently. This might prevent unforeseen mechanical problems that could result in wasted time during the trip. Locating a wheelchair or scooter service agency in the destination may prove useful, just in case. Electric wheelchairs or scooters will require occasional recharging—an appropriate voltage

adaptor should be brought along if necessary. The device and any removable parts should be labeled with proper identification prior to travel. Finally, a small repair kit should be carried, including repair equipment for pneumatic tires.

Manual wheelchairs may be stored in the aircraft cabin, depending on their size and the cabin space available. Some smaller aircraft may not allow these items to be stored in the cabin, but the carrier should inform the passenger of this. Newer aircraft (those delivered after 1992 in the United States, or after May 2010 for other airlines) must be able to accommodate one folding wheelchair in the cabin, usually on a first-come, first-served basis; if the wheelchair traveler preboards, the wheelchair should take priority over carry-on luggage of other passengers boarding at the same terminal. Wheelchairs that are brought on board should not be counted as carry-on baggage. If a wheelchair cannot be brought on board, or if a scooter is used, it can be gate-checked and a baggage claim check obtained for the item; this will allow the traveler to use the device within the terminal and up to the aircraft door. Removable parts (seat cushions, baskets, etc.) should be removed before checking the item. If equipment is battery powered, dry-cell (nonspillable) batteries are preferable; wet cells (spillable), which contain battery acid, must be removed and packed separately in special containers (another item to lose). In some countries, however, removal of dry-cell batteries may also be required. Some wheelchairs may need to be disassembled to fit into the baggage compartment of certain aircraft but should be returned to the traveler fully assembled; attaching instructions for disassembly and disconnection of batteries (and reassembly and reconnection) may be helpful for airline personnel. Mobility aids should be returned to the traveler either at (or as close as possible to) the aircraft door or at the baggage claim area, as specified by the traveler.

The carrier is responsible for the intact transportation of any mobility aid to the traveler's destination, including proper disassembly and reassembly. The traveler should not be required to sign any waiver of liability, except when preexisting damage to the device is present. Damage to (or loss of) wheelchairs, scooters, and batteries does occur during transport, especially in baggage compartments. Damage during flight is the airline's responsibility, and the carrier is obliged to provide a suitable replacement at no cost to the traveler until the damaged item is repaired or replaced. Coverage for loss may vary, depending on the country of travel. For example, during domestic travel, loss (or irreparable damage) of a device by a Canadian carrier requires the carrier to replace it with an identical unit or reimburse the replacement cost, whereas in the United States compensation is based on the original purchase price of the device. Liability for loss during international travel is stipulated by the Montreal Convention 1999<sup>6</sup> (an update of the 1929 Warsaw Convention<sup>7</sup> and earlier amendments), in which assistive devices are not distinguished from other baggage; compensation in these instances may not cover the cost of replacing the device.<sup>5</sup>

The traveler may need to transfer to a wheelchair to board the aircraft. In the United States, new wide-bodied aircraft must have one wheelchair on board. Smaller aircraft may require the use of a smaller "aisle" wheelchair, which the airline should supply. In cases where a ramp to the aircraft door cannot be used, the traveler may need to board the plane by a mechanical lift or use of a "boarding chair." Airline personnel are not required to transfer passengers from wheelchair to wheelchair, wheelchair to aircraft seat, or wheelchair to lavatory seat. Washrooms in older aircraft may be unable to accommodate even aisle wheelchairs, whereas those in newer or remodeled aircraft generally can; new wide-bodied aircraft are required to have a wheelchair-accessible washroom. If an aisle wheelchair will be required on board (e.g., on long flights, where a trip to the washroom may be necessary), it should be requested ahead of time. In addition, travelers should be aware that washrooms are often too small to allow an assistant to accompany them into the

#### BOX 25.2 Practical Tips for the Wheelchair (or Scooter) Traveler

1. Request any special services well in advance, including accessible ground transportation if necessary.
2. Consider insuring the wheelchair or scooter.
3. Have the wheelchair serviced prior to travel.
4. For electric wheelchairs, bring a voltage adapter if necessary; for battery-operated chairs, try to use dry-cell batteries (they do not have to be removed).
5. Label the wheelchair and all removable parts with your name and address.
6. Attach instructions for disassembly and reassembly of your chair, and for disconnection and reconnection of batteries if necessary.
7. Arrive early at the terminal.
8. Use your chair within the terminal, then check it at the gate. Remove any removable parts and take them with you before checking it.
9. Make sure the carrier is clear about where the wheelchair is to be returned to you.
10. Bring a repair kit, including tire repair equipment.



washroom. The carrier should provide details about washroom space if this information is requested.

### Air Travel With Canes, Crutches, Walkers, and Other Medical Devices

Travelers requiring canes, crutches, walkers, and other medical devices can travel with these at no extra charge. These devices are not included in the carry-on baggage limit and can generally be stored in the aircraft cabin. The airline's policy regarding replacement of a device in the event of damage or loss should be the same as that for wheelchairs and scooters.

### Cruising With a Wheelchair or Scooter

Cruising is an attractive and convenient form of travel for many physically challenged individuals. Newer cruise ships are more user friendly for the disabled, with features such as wheelchair-accessible washrooms and roll-in showers. In addition, some cruise lines offer cruises specifically for the disabled and are accustomed to the needs of wheelchair-bound travelers.

An appealing feature of most cruises, apart from the all-inclusive nature of travel, is the opportunity to visit many countries by disembarking at several ports of call. Ships can dock if the pier is large enough and in sufficiently deep water to allow this. For wheelchair and scooter travelers, disembarking to a pier may mean that they and their device have to be carried separately onto the pier; alternatively, the traveler may be seated in the wheelchair or scooter and be "walked" onto the pier by means of a specialized mechanical contraption which transports both together.

If water is too shallow to permit the ship to dock at shore, the ship will anchor a short distance from land and, weather permitting, passengers must transfer to a smaller ship to go ashore, a process known as tendering. Most cruise lines will provide physical assistance to allow the wheelchair traveler to tender.

Ports of call may have many sights to visit in a relatively short period of time. Travelers can usually access these by taxi or other tour company. It may be helpful to inquire about special excursions or services that are available at the different ports when booking the cruise.

## THE HEARING-IMPAIRED TRAVELER

Deaf and hearing-impaired travelers may encounter difficulty with many aspects of travel that others take for granted, such as hearing announcements and using telephones. Hearing impairment may also subject the traveler to potential safety risks, particularly in emergency settings, where verbal or overhead instructions are provided or where alarms are sounded. Travelers who use hearing aids should bring extra batteries.

Reservations should be made ahead of time when possible; the travel agent, tour company, transportation carriers, and hotels should be informed about hearing difficulties ahead of time. A written confirmation of travel arrangements and a written agenda can help to ensure that travel plans are correct. Travelers should inform the agents at check-in, at the boarding gate, and on the carrier of their impairment. Since information on overhead announcements may go unheard, travelers should request that this information be given to them individually.

Hotel staff must be made aware of a traveler's hearing impairment. Some hotels will provide visual aids for the hearing impaired so that they can be alerted to alarms or phone calls. If these are unavailable, knowledge that a traveler is hearing impaired is essential in the event of an emergency. Teletypewriter (TTY) telephones (synonymous with telecommunications devices for the deaf [TDD], text telephones, and minicomms) allow the hearing impaired (and speech impaired) to use the telephone by typing instead of talking. Such devices may be available at hotels and should be requested when making reservations.

## THE SPEECH-IMPAIRED TRAVELER

The speech-impaired traveler may also be faced with situations in which an inability to communicate effectively could pose significant problems. As with other disabled travelers, arrangements should be made and confirmed in advance, and travel agents, tour companies, transportation carriers, and hotels notified of the traveler's impairment ahead of time. A written itinerary with details of travel arrangements and addresses of destinations can be helpful if assistance may be required during travel. Flash cards with pictures or written text, a video communicator, or other similar communication devices can also facilitate communication, and may be especially helpful for common inquiries. TTY devices should be requested if they are available.

## THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED TRAVELER

Visually impaired travelers should make advance reservations when possible, arranging any special services ahead of time. They should alert their travel agent, transportation carriers, and hotel staff of their disability. Agents should be informed at the time of making reservations, and again at check-in and at the boarding gate. Written directions and specific addresses are helpful, especially if the traveler will rely on public transportation or taxis. Carrying a white cane will make others aware of the individual's visual impairment. Traveling with guide dogs is discussed in the next section.

## SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals are specifically trained to help an individual with a disability. Travelers with disabilities must be allowed to take their service animal on air carriers; for animals that are used for emotional support, specific documentation may be requested by the carrier or the animal may be denied access. Dogs are the most common service animals, and as of March 2011 are the only animals that are recognized as such in the United States in many public settings (air carriers excluded)<sup>8</sup>; the guidance presented here, while referring to service dogs, may be applicable to other service animals as well. Foreign air carriers may not accept animals other than dogs. Although service dogs are most commonly used by the visually impaired, they may also act as guides for the hearing impaired and those with other disabilities.

Certification of service dogs is provided by some agencies but is not necessary for them to work as such; however, proof of certification will be required in some circumstances, including some air carriers, and may be valuable in others. Because service dogs are working animals, not pets, they should be allowed entry to areas where pets are normally disallowed. In the United States, the Americans with Disabilities Act stipulates that service animals be permitted to accompany their owners in all areas where the public are allowed, including taxis, public buses, airplanes, restaurants, hotels, and other public facilities.<sup>8</sup> Restrictions may apply where safety concerns take precedence. For example, an individual and his or her service dog may be prohibited from sitting in an aisle seat or at an emergency exit in an airplane, where the animal may block passage or hinder access to the exit; or a service dog may be barred if its behavior poses a safety risk to others.

Advance preparation can make traveling with a service dog easier (Box 25.3). The dog and its harness may be subjected to detailed inspection for security reasons. The traveler may need to calm the dog or refocus its attention if alarms are set off, or if other dogs are present in the terminal. The appropriate individuals and organizations should be aware of the traveler's need for a guide dog, and special arrangements made ahead of time. Some countries may quarantine imported animals; restrictions or requirements for transporting a service dog both into

### BOX 25.3 Traveling With a Guide Dog (or Other Service Animal)

1. Contact the embassy or consulate of each country you intend to visit and determine what rules or regulations may apply for entering and leaving the country.
2. Ensure that the animal will be permitted to travel with you, especially for out-of-country travel and if the animal is not a dog.
3. Have your vet examine the dog prior to travel. Make sure immunizations are up to date and obtain a record of the animal's health and immunizations.
4. Have the dog officially certified as a service dog.
5. Consider buying travel health insurance for the dog.
6. Make sure the dog has a sturdy (nonmetallic) collar; attach proper identification and date of the most recent rabies immunization to the collar.
7. Bring a harness or vest that will identify your dog as a service dog.
8. Immediately prior to boarding, make sure the dog has exercised and voided.
9. Do not feed or sedate the dog immediately prior to travel.
10. Check with your country of residence to find out what procedures must be followed to bring your dog back home after travel.

and out of a given country can be clarified by contacting the embassy or consulate of that country. Travelers should also remember to make sure the dog will be allowed to reenter the home country after travel and ask what restrictions might apply on return. Prior to travel, a veterinarian should examine the dog and ensure that any required immunizations or routine treatments are up to date. A certificate of health and a record of immunizations for the dog should be obtained; some countries will require these documents to be certified.

A vest or harness that identifies the dog as a service animal can make others aware that the dog is working and is not a pet. A secure collar with tags identifying the name of the owner, address and phone number, and date of the most recent rabies immunization can be crucial if animal and owner become separated. A nonmetallic collar and harness are preferable, as they will not set off security alarms. The dog should not be fed immediately before travel—a light meal and water 2–4 hours before departure will satisfy most dogs for up to 12 hours of travel. If additional food and/or water will be required en route, folding dog bowls come in handy; the traveler should also carry adequate food for this purpose. The dog should not be sedated before travel, but should be exercised and have voided prior to boarding. If the dog needs to void between connecting flights, it may need to be taken outside of and then brought back into the secure area of the terminal.

Maintenance and feeding of the dog during the trip are the responsibility of the owner. The traveler should remember to pack whatever essentials the dog might need while away from home. Finally, the traveler may consider purchasing health insurance for the dog prior to travel. Some policies will include or offer coverage for veterinary services required during travel, but conditions and limitations should be clarified prior to purchase.

## THE DEVELOPMENTALLY OR COGNITIVELY IMPAIRED TRAVELER

Developmental disabilities should not prevent travel. Some organizations specialize in excursions exclusively for developmentally challenged

travelers (see Box 25.1). General advice given to other travelers also applies to those with developmental or cognitive impairment. These travelers should carry an identification card with the address of their destination, in case they get lost. Any special services required should be arranged when booking travel and requested again at the time of check-in. Provided that the individual is relatively independent and can understand and follow instructions (e.g., in the event of an emergency), there is usually no need for accompaniment.

## CONCLUSION

Most individuals with disabilities are able to travel safely. Severe limitations may restrict or even preclude travel, but many physical and cognitive disabilities do not present barriers to traveling. Although some aspects of a trip may be limited, depending on a traveler's specific impairment, proper advanced planning can ensure that physically challenged individuals have a fulfilling, enjoyable, and healthy travel experience.

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