



*Oh,*

*the*

*Places*

*You'll*

*Go!*



**WHETHER** driving across the state or flying to another state or country, travel is always an adventure and gives you a great feeling of independence.

Many travel agencies now specialize in travel for people with disabilities. You can rent accessible cars, vans, and RV's; and there are accessible cruise lines. Also, many travel companies offer discount rates for those with a disability. Often Amtrak and Greyhound, for example, will quote a discount rate for people with disabilities and for seniors. You can go anywhere with a little planning and creativity. While traveling, like other day to day circumstances, you have to be assertive and advocate for what you need.

When planning, think ahead:

- Will you need special accommodations at any point in your trip (seeing-eye dog arrangements, special seating, car rentals, special meals, etc.)?
- Arrange time and schedule so you will not become over-tired.
- Determine what special assistance you can expect and will need from the transportation company, hotel, tour group, etc.

Though you may need more assistance than usual because of the nature of air-line travel, you are a paying customer and deserve the same respect and consideration as any other passenger, according to the law.

Let your travel agent know any anticipated needs so they can be recorded along with your reservation.

Here are some things you may want to tell your agent before you arrive at the airport:

- If you have a disability that requires extra assistance.
- If you will need assistance on and off the plane. If you have difficulty walking, they usually use an aisle chair to push you down the narrow plane aisles. This is typically called a “carry-on” or “carry-off.”
- If you are changing planes, let the agent know if you would like assistance between your connecting flights.
- If you are unable to get to the restroom on a long flight or international flight, make sure to request an on-board aisle chair. If you need to go to the bathroom in the middle of a flight, a flight attendant can bring you an aisle chair and push you to the bathroom. Newer planes now have restrooms that are larger, but it is still a tight squeeze. If mobility is difficult, plan for how you will use the bathroom on a long flight.
- If you use a power wheelchair, make sure to tell the agent whether the battery is a wet or dry cell battery.
- If you require oxygen, there are other requirements depending on the airline, such as a doctor’s letter, advance notice, and extra charges. For more about traveling with oxygen, call the American Lung Association (800-586-4872) or The Oxygen Traveler (937-433-6007).
- The bulkhead seat gives the most room to transfer; an aisle seat is often easier to get into. Some aircraft have lift-up arms to make transferring easier. If you don’t get the seat you want when you make the reservation, the gate agent can usually switch seats for you.

### Information is the key

When traveling, Susanna Bourgeois and Kim Calabretta of the NC Department of Health and Human Services always make a point of letting the train conductor or flight attendant know they are deaf in case there are announcements about schedule changes or safety. “We also realize that there are times when the conductor/flight attendant may forget to inform us, so we use the survival technique of using the passenger sitting next to us to fill us in, in case we miss out on valuable information. That is probably our biggest concern, as many of the announcements of change of stations/times/transportation tend to be on a loudspeaker,” said Calabretta. “I have once or twice been caught in places I did not originally plan on going to!”

Susanna added, “We always carry a paper and pen, so if worse comes to worst and we can’t lip-read them well enough, we’ll communicate by writing the information down.”

Another survival technique for travelers is to give yourself plenty of time. When you check your baggage, review your needs with the ticket agent to make sure everything is clear and there will be no surprises when you reach the gate. If you use a wheelchair or scooter, you can take your wheelchair or scooter to the gate and “gate check” it so you receive it at the gate when the plane lands.

### Boarding the plane

Again, check in with the gate agent and make sure to review your needs in as much detail as you can:

- It is often easier when you are the first on the plane. Ask to pre-board.
- Reconfirm any assistance you will need. Tell them if you need assistance transferring to the aisle chair so they have sufficient staff to help.
- If you have a folding manual wheelchair, you can ask that it be stored in the closet on-board the airplane. Some planes do not have a closet and availability is on a first-come-first-served basis.
- If you have any assistive device that won’t fit in a closet or overhead bin on the airplane, make sure you get a “gate check” tag and receipt.
- Make sure your name and contact information are on all equipment.

### Getting off the plane

Before the plane lands, make sure the flight attendant knows if you need help getting off the plane. Be patient; it is likely that you will be the last one off if you need any assistance or an aisle chair.





## PUBLIC

### TRANSPORTATION

If you plan to use public transportation, always call the transit authority well in advance to determine its services. If public transportation is not accessible, you can use the para-transit system. Keep in mind that use of the para-transit system may require eligibility and advance application.

Taxis are always an option if you don't need a wheelchair lift. Most taxi drivers will put a manual wheelchair into a trunk but offer little other assistance. A few taxi companies offer accessible taxis.



### Tour and vehicle rentals

When a person who is hard of hearing or deaf wants to participate in a tour, he/she must ask in advance if there are any accommodations, either in the form of interpreters or assistive listening devices (ALD). Making the request ahead of time gives the tour agency time to secure an interpreter or get the ALD ready for the person in need of accommodation.

If you will be renting a car or van and require hand controls or a lift, find out where there are available vehicles before leaving home. Most major car rental companies now offer hand controls on their vehicles. Keep these things in mind to avoid hassles.

- Most companies require 48 hours notice to put hand controls on a rental car. In many cases they automatically put them in a full-size two-door car unless you specify otherwise.
- If you make reservations through an 800 number, get the phone number for the local office where you will pick up the car. Call that office at least 24 hours in advance to make sure they will have what you need when you arrive.
- If you fly into an airport, few rental car companies have accessible transportation from the terminal to the place where you pick up your car. If you are unable to get into a bus, the rental company should come and pick you up in a car. Insist on this.
- Bring a handicapped placard, if needed, to display in the vehicle. Find out how to get a temporary placard for states or countries of your destination

## COMPLAINTS?

To complain about a lack of access for travelers with disabilities:

### • Air travel

U.S. Department of Transportation,  
202-366-2220 or  
Email <airconsumer@ost.dot.gov>

### • For hotels/facilities

U.S. Justice Department 800-514-0301 or 800-514-0383 (TDD)



Kim Calabretta and Susanna Bourgeois prepare for an outing.

before your travels begin.

- If you need a van with a lift, Wheelchair Getaways has an extensive network of vans for rent. For reservations, call 800-642-2042. There are many other accessible van rental companies; for a list check out this website:

<[www.disabilityaccess.com/travel](http://www.disabilityaccess.com/travel)>.

You can also call the local independent living center in the city you are traveling to for assistance with public transportation or van rental.



If you will be staying in a hotel or motel, accessibility is a key issue to make your stay a pleasant one. An accessible room in one hotel may be very different in another hotel. The following are tips for booking a room:

accessible room in one hotel may be very different in another hotel. The following are tips for booking a room:

- Contact the hotel directly. Central reservations don't have information about room accessibility. In many cases, they can only request an accessible room.
- Ask specific questions about accessibility based on your needs. Ask about door width, roll-in shower or tub, sink access, dog accommodations, etc. Ask them to go measure or give you specifics if they don't know the answer. (Most hotels and motels will have a shower or tub bench that you can request.)
- Check to see if the hotel has the Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance Kit that will include a TTY, volume control phone, fire alarm and wake-up alarm as well as a door knocker that is devised for Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers. TVs should be equipped with closed captioning capabilities.
- If you are at all concerned, ask to see the room before you agree to sign anything.

If problems arise during your trip, go to customer service. According to Kim Calabretta, "It becomes our responsibility to be assertive in making sure we have the information we need, and that it is accurate information." If you plan ahead and do your homework, traveling can be a wonderful experience. If you experience a lack of access at some point during your trip, be prepared to know your rights and to speak up. 🌸

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By Lauren Howard, Consultant, NC Office on Disability and Health



#### **Access-Able Travel Source.**

Accessible travel options.  
Email <[access-able@home.com](mailto:access-able@home.com)>  
303-232-2979  
<[www.access-able.com](http://www.access-able.com)>

#### **Easy Access to National Parks: The Sierra Club Guide for People with Disabilities.**

by Wendy Roth and Michael Tompane,  
May 1992.

#### **Fodor's Great American Vacations for Travelers with Disabilities (2nd Ed).**

by Donna Cornacchio and Anto Howard,  
November 1996.

#### **Global Access Disabled Travel Network.**

<[www.geocities.com/Paris/1502/](http://www.geocities.com/Paris/1502/)>

#### **The Guided Tour Inc.**

Outings for persons with developmental and physical challenges.  
7900 Old York Road, Suite 114-B  
Elkins Park, PA 1902 72339  
800-783-5841  
<[www.guidedtour.com/home.html](http://www.guidedtour.com/home.html)>

#### **The Literate Traveler.**

Lists many books and resources for travelers with disabilities at  
<[www.literatetraveller.com/disabled.html](http://www.literatetraveller.com/disabled.html)>

#### **Trips, Inc.**

Travel outings for people of various abilities.  
96 East 19th Street  
Eugene, Oregon 97403-1320.  
800-686-1013  
<[www.tripsinc.com/](http://www.tripsinc.com/)>



**This  
time's  
for  
you**



## When was the last time you did something for yourself—just for you?

Many women consider leisure a low priority and often forget to take time for themselves. With careers, families, volunteer work, errands, cooking, cleaning, carpooling, helping with homework, religious activities, yard work, bill paying and everything else we try to cram in 24 hours, most women can't even imagine finding the time to do something just for themselves.

Unfortunately, with this attitude, we are cheating ourselves—and our loved ones.

Think about it. Who would you rather spend your time with: a stressed-out, frenzied, exhausted woman with smoke coming off her heels; or someone who has taken time to regroup, relax and be rejuvenated?

### Number One

You will be happier if you add leisure to your daily schedule. You need to start putting you and your needs first and get over the guilt of being a little selfish.

On the airplane, the flight attendant always instructs the adults to put their oxygen masks on first, and then help the children. If the adults don't take care of themselves first, then they will not be in a position to help others. The same holds true in finding time for yourself. You must have some leisure time to better equip yourself for helping and being with others.

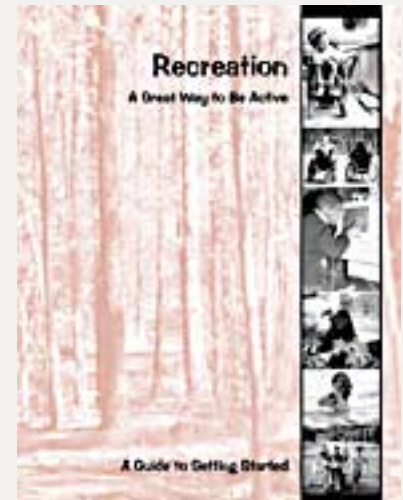
There is no right or wrong way to spend your leisure time. To make the most of your time, think about:

- What do you need out of your leisure time or activities? To be around people? To be alone? Reduce stress? Be more active? Be creative? Have fun? Be outdoors?
- What activities would you enjoy that also match well with your needs?
- What are the best places to pursue this? At home or in the community?
- Will adaptive devices, extra support or a companion make the activity more successful?

### Many options

"If I don't make time each day to do something I enjoy, such as playing with the dog, going to lunch with a friend, or spending time with my horses, then I'm not myself. I do these things to relax, get away, get support from people, be more active, and just have fun," says Lauren Howard, *Orchid* contributor.

Almost anything can be a leisure activity—gardening or taking a walk or listening to music. There are some activities you may only be able to do once a month such as visiting a museum or taking a class, and you may only be able to take a trip once a year. The key is opening your mind to all the possibilities and trying different kinds of leisure activities as often as you can. Make sure you do at least one thing almost every day—just for you. 🌸



The NC Office on Disability and Health has published *Recreation: A Great Way to Be Active* by Karen Hamilton and Lauren McDevitt.

*Be Active* is designed to help you think through the steps to pursue more leisure and recreation activities.

It's new. It's exciting. It encourages you to "think outside the box" about being active.

And it's free!

### To order a copy, write

NC Office on Disability and Health  
UNC-CH  
CB 8185  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185  
or call  
919-966-2932.

Also available in HTML and PDF format online at [www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/pubs.htm](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/pubs.htm)

By Lauren Howard, Consultant, NC Office on Disability and Health





## Making Gardening Easier

“Gardening helps me wind down and relax after a day’s work and I now get regular physical activity in a way that I enjoy,” says *Orchid* contributor Roxie Oakes. “Soon after planting black-eyed susans, coreopsis, cone flowers, and zinnias, I quickly benefited from the joy of watching the seedlings sprout, then picking fresh flowers for my house and watching beautiful butterflies each day.” Her advice: “Try gardening in small or big steps. There are many ways to garden and a wide range of approaches to make a garden accessible and fun for you.”

Here are some of Roxie’s tips:

- Make a garden in a raised bed, planter, box, or other container. This lets you reach without bending.
- Choose garden tools that help you function in the smoothest, most efficient way.
- Consider using lightweight children’s tools.
- Add gripping material or padding to tool handles to make them easier to hold and use.
- If you garden while seated, try long-handled tools. You can fit a broomstick or tennis racket handle into the socket of a trowel or fork head. For little jobs use long-handled barbecue tools.
- Mulch, mulch, mulch. This keeps down most weeds and helps the garden thrive with little watering.
- Try soaker hoses or spray wands for watering. These let you water with minimal bending or lifting.
- Consider ratchet pruners and shears for general pruning jobs. These offer a lot of power with little effort.
- Get a long-handled pick-up grabber for all of those clippings. You can find them in some gardening stores, or try a dog’s pooper-scooper.
- If you stand while gardening, have a seat available for resting. There are many stools, carts, kneeling benches, and pads for sale. You don’t have to spend a lot of money; an inexpensive stool or tipped-over recycling bin would do.
- A cart, wheelbarrow, wagon, or plastic tarp helps move things to and from the garden. Choose the approach that works best for you. I often pull a tarp on the ground; this works well with my back strength and balance.

By Pam Dickens, NC Office on Disability and Health



## NC BOTANICAL GARDEN OFFERS HORTICULTURAL THERAPY PROGRAM

For Cheryl, gardening means more than growing flowers. It's a way of cultivating her confidence and self-esteem.

Cheryl, who became disabled following an injury, participates in the horticultural therapy program at the NC Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. Twice a week, she works at the garden raking, weeding, gathering herbs, arranging flowers and working in the greenhouse. "I'm proud that I can do all this stuff," said Cheryl.

The NC Botanical Garden's horticultural therapy is for people of all ages and abilities. Some of the groups that participate in the program include people with disabilities and senior citizens. The garden features raised planting beds and adaptive gardening tools for people with physical, sensory and mobility limitations.

For more information about the horticultural therapy program at the NC Botanical Garden, call Nancy Easterling at 919-962-0522 or write her at: NC Botanical Garden, UNC-CH, CB 3375 Totten Center, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3375.



### For more information about accessible gardening:

- *Accessible Gardening for People with Physical Disabilities: A Guide to Methods, Tools and Plants.* Adil, Janeen R. Bethesda, MD; Woodbine House, 1994.
- *Dynamic Living: Accessible Gardening* web site <[www.dynamic-living.com/gardening.htm](http://www.dynamic-living.com/gardening.htm)>
- *Growing with Gardening: A Twelve-Month Guide for Therapy, Recreation and Education.* Moore, Bibby. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- *The Able Gardener: Overcoming Barriers of Age and Physical Limitations.* Yeomans, Kathleen, RN. Pownal, VT: Storey Communications, 1992.
- *The Enabling Garden: Creating Barrier-Free Gardens.* Rothert, Eugene, HTM. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing, 1994.



# D.C. offers many **ACCESSIBLE SITES**



**OUR NATION'S CAPITAL** is one of the most popular tourist sites in the United States. Washington, D.C. has made significant changes in accessibility and holds its own in a comparison with just about any other major metropolis.

The Washington Metro Transit Authority, which runs the city's public transportation, has made great strides in providing access to everyone. Between the numerous accessible buses, wheelchair-converted taxis and the subway system, there isn't anywhere you should find off limits.

For example, throughout the Metrorail system, there are elevators, Braille signs, textured flooring to mark the edge of the station platform, voice enunciators in the elevators and door chimes and audio messages to signal the opening and closing of the rail car doors.

One of the most popular stops on anyone's tour of the capital is the White House. Once inside, you may be surprised by how small many of the rooms actually are. Wheelchair users will find a few tight turns going through the House, but the tour is completely accessible. A neces-

sary elevator ride upstairs even allows for a glimpse of areas unseen by able-bodied tourists.

Free tickets are required and can be obtained at the White House Visitor Center (202-456-7041 / TDD 202-456-2121) on the corner of 15th and E Streets.

Congressional Guided Tours of the White House must be arranged ten weeks in advance with your Congressman. Group or individual tours for those with hearing or visual impairments are available in conjunction with the Congressional Guided Tours. An interpreter is available for





those with hearing disabilities, and visitors with visual impairments may touch selected objects under Secret Service supervision.

Another must-see in Washington, D.C. is the Capitol. At the Capitol, there is a Special Services office on the ground floor, located in the Crypt, which offers accessible tours using ramps, elevators, sign language, FM systems, tactile and descriptive accommodations.

There are numerous memorials throughout Washington, D.C. The Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Tidal Basin, Vietnam Memorial, Washington Monument and FDR Memorial are all located along the National Mall. Each has wheelchair access, and sign language tours are available through the Park Service 202-485-9880.

Washington is also famous for its museums. Perhaps the best known are the Smithsonian museums. The Smithsonian's exhibits are, for the most part, accessible to wheelchair users and those with visual and hearing impairments. Signing tours are available at all of the Smithsonian's museums with two weeks advance notice 202-786-2942/TTY, 202-786-2414, and Braille guides and audio tours are provided at most of the museums. 🌸

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To find out more about Washington, D.C. and other popular tourist destinations, visit [www.gimponthego.com](http://www.gimponthego.com) for useful travel information for people with disabilities. There is also a forum for readers to share their own experiences or request information about specific destinations.

The above article was excerpted with permission from "Washington, D.C.: Access with a Capital A" at <[www.gimponthego.com](http://www.gimponthego.com)>.

## LOOKING FOR THAT PERFECT VACATION IN NORTH CAROLINA?

From the mountains to the coast, *ACCESS North Carolina* has the information you need about the accessibility of over 400 parks, historic sites and other places of general interest.



*ACCESS North Carolina* rates parking, entrances, interior, exterior and rest rooms based on the ability of a person who uses a wheelchair to access the facility. The guide also includes information if the attraction has programs and services for persons who have other disabilities.

So whether you want to go skiing or site seeing or attend an outdoor drama, you need *ACCESS North Carolina*.

**For your free copy, write**  
NC Division of Travel and Tourism  
Department of Commerce  
Raleigh, NC 27611  
or call 919-733-4171 in Raleigh  
or toll free at 800-VISIT-NC.

*ACCESS North Carolina* is also available at N.C. Welcome Centers. You can also see it on line at <[ncnatural.com/Access-NC/](http://ncnatural.com/Access-NC/)>.