

TRAVEL ADVICE

Andy Wright, managing director of Accessible Travel and Leisure, has a wealth of knowledge about travelling and knows first-hand about the problems many disabled people can face. Each issue Andy provides advice on common problems of travel and welcomes questions from PosAbility readers.



To view Andy's Top Tips for air travel visit www.posabilitymagazine.co.uk.

VENTURING ABROAD

Tips and advice for holidaymakers travelling overseas for the first time



I have been asked recently by a number of readers contemplating their first holiday overseas since injury or medical diagnosis, 'how do I go about booking my holiday, now that I am using a wheelchair?' or 'what should I be asking my travel agent, and can I trust the information I am given?' Consequently, this article is hopefully going to answer some of your worries and concerns and direct you to some ideal holiday options that have recently been assessed for their suitability.

Many first-time travellers often make assumptions about the level of adaptations that will be available to them when booking their first overseas holiday. In other words, they may well have their home environment adapted to meet their daily living needs and assume that if a hotel advertises itself as 'accessible' they are very likely to find a similar set up to what they are used to - with a toilet at the same height, grab rails in the same place etc. On other occasions first-time travellers, especially those who are still adjusting to their new

found reduced abilities or changes to their day-to-day functionality, are often reluctant to actually detail the level of assistance they require.

Therefore, it is imperative that you carefully consider your day-to-day routine and requirements and ask whether these same facilities are available in your preferred holiday destination. This would include access into the restaurant, swimming pool, airport transfers, excursions, etc. Failure to do so could easily result in disappointment or even the possibility that you would not be able to manage unaided.

Given the information and level of detail you may require, be prepared for the fact that many travel agents will not have this type of information readily available to them. So in order to ensure your first holiday abroad goes as smoothly as possible, I would highly recommend that you book with a specialist tour operator. They will have already checked out the destination in advance before selling holidays there and not simply rely upon third-party information. That way you are communicating with somebody who has a full understanding of your requirements and will be empathetic to your needs.

Equally important, is to ensure that you are booking with a legitimate travel company who is fully bonded and financially protected. Unless your travel provider is either a member of ABTA (the Association of British Travel Agents), ATOL (Air Travel Organiser's Licence) or the TTA (Travel Trust Association), your deposit and balance

payments for your forthcoming holiday may be at risk if your travel provider ceases to trade. By contacting any of the above mentioned organisations, they will confirm whether the travel company you are considering booking with, is licensed.

Accessible Travel and Leisure, whilst being fully bonded, also ensure that all the properties that we offer to our customers have been fully inspected and audited by our own staff. All of which have extensive travel experience and a full understanding of our customers' needs and requirements. Following a recent inspection trip to Majorca, several new properties have been added to our portfolio, a couple of which are mentioned below.

Sol Alcudia Centre Aparthotel which is an excellent family hotel only 150m from the beach, and is located on one of the main streets in Puerto D'Alcudia, with studios that have bathrooms with wetrooms.

Protur Palmeras Playa, Sa Coma is a lovely four star, all-inclusive hotel, located just 100m from the beach and 500m from the fishing port of S'Illot. It also has bathrooms with roll in shower, grab rails and shower seat, as well as a pool hoist.

Flights are available to Majorca from a variety of UK airports and accessible transfers, excursions, as well as medical and mobility equipment are also available.

For more information about these properties, as well as numerous others, please visit www.accessibletravel.co.uk or call 01452 729739. ■