

## **Choosing a Travel Agent for Your Disability** **By Allan Checkoway, RHU**

Just as you are unique with your special abilities, there's an ever-increasing number of travel agencies specializing in "disabled travel". As computers and on-line reservations began to negatively impact the world of travel agents, the airlines began cutbacks on compensation to travel agents, adding insult to injury.

Travel professionals began searching for alternative sources of revenue to expand their businesses. With an ever-increasing number of seniors and people of all ages with disabilities, "disabled travel" has become an ideal specialty.

"I am very satisfied with my travel agent and she tells me she's researching disabled travel opportunities. Do I ask for her help or seek out a disabled travel specialist?" Our answer is "it depends".

Accessible travel has numerous complexities, which are impacted by your particular disability. We applaud your travel agent for her venture into "disabled travel" and hope she becomes a valuable asset to you. We also urge you to "protect your turf" as you will probably be more appreciative of your travel experiences from this point on.

Make sure your agent clearly understands your particular needs. New challenges will present themselves. If you sense your travel agent is not up to the task, then it is time to move on.

Prior to development of our modern day technology, we might have dealt with the travel agency downtown. The telephone and U.S. mail were the 'tools of the trade'. Today computers, e-mail, voicemail and the fax machine give us immediate results. With 800 #'s, your accessible travel agent might be 3,000 miles away. Here are some hints for your search . . .

When you think you've found an agent who can satisfy your needs, it's time for some careful due diligence. There is presently no certification, professional designations or licenses which would ordinarily be a good measuring stick.

Ask how long they have been specializing in accessible travel and how they gained their experience. Do they have a travel specialty? Keep in mind that based on your own unique needs, accessible travel specialists have to cover a broad spectrum of disabilities such as:

- Blind and impaired vision
- Developmentally disabled
- Diabetes, insulin dependent
- Dialysis
- Hearing impaired
- Mentally handicapped
- Oxygen dependent

If you have severely impaired vision, you need someone who understands "your world". Maybe this is your opportunity to seek out a travel agent who also has some limitations. If your travel agent is wheelchair bound, they will certainly have a great appreciation for accessible travel.

There is no reason to expect your accessible travel experiences to be any less rewarding than prior to your disability. You will probably discover a new found level of satisfaction never before experienced.

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