



A message from the Co-Editor *Maria Glaze*

Greetings Everyone!

We are very pleased to share this issue of VelaVision focusing on travel. Thank you so much to all the knowledgeable and experienced people who have shared their stories, tips and travel information with us for

this newsletter. Perhaps their stories will inspire and prepare you for that next trip you always dreamed about! If you have story ideas or tips to pass on to others, please call or email us at 604-575-2588 or info@microboard.org.

Bon Voyage!
Maria Glaze
Co-editor

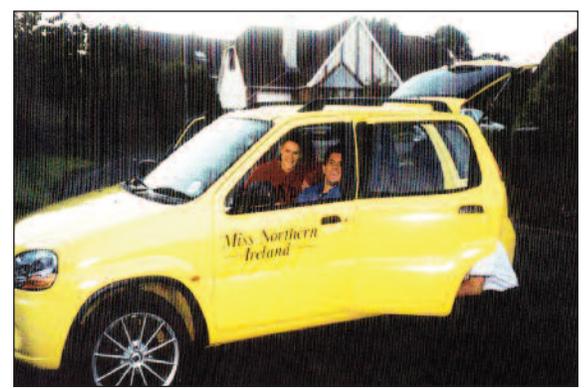


A message from the Co-Editor *Jeff Moulins*

On the night of September 6, 2001, Linda Perry, Lori Emanuels, and I, as well as one of my former workers, John, were on our way to Belfast, Northern Ireland. We had no problems with our check-in at Vancouver International Airport. We went through security without any effort. We were all looking forward to a good trip. Since Linda had been there before, I had some questions that she answered. By the time we landed at Heathrow Airport nearly nine hours later, we were all tired.

Fortunately, the crew members in Belfast were more supportive. By the time we got to the hotel, I was exhausted. I slept until the afternoon of the next day. My attendant John and I spent the next three days sightseeing in Belfast. John and I would end each day with a drink in the hotel lounge. I noticed that the cigarette machine in that lounge had the skyline of New York, featuring the World Trade Centre. We commented on how strange it was to be in Belfast and seeing the New York skyline.

Things got more complicated at Heathrow when the ramp crew brought a regular wheelchair without a seatbelt instead of mine. We had to go from one terminal to another. We were made late by British Airlines, yet they said that the reason why we were late to take off was me.



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On Tuesday, September 11th, Lori, John, and I went walking downtown to shop. We went in a store and the shopkeeper noticed our accents and asked if we were Americans. We said no and asked why she was asking. She told us there were attacks on New York and Washington. We went straight back to the suite. When Linda came to the door, we could see she was upset, and the first thing that she said was, "They're gone." We asked, "What?" We couldn't believe what we were hearing. We had our first meeting that evening; we considered whether or not to go ahead. After talking it over with the folks that had sponsored our trip, we decided to go ahead with the meeting. That night we all went to the hotel lounge and I pointed out the cigarette machine. We all sat silently, sad, having a hard time believing what had happened.

The rest of our trip went well. I enjoyed the time in Northern Ireland and a trip we made to the Republic of Ireland. People were welcoming, and there were many great sights to see. But there was a cloud over the trip, and all of us were anxious to get home. We were worried that we might not be able to get home. Linda spent many hours on the phone with British Airways making sure we weren't bumped from our flights.

By the day we flew back to Vancouver, we were ready to go home. Before we even left Belfast, everybody had to wait outside in front of the airport because of a bomb scare. When we got to the check-in desk, we made sure my chair would be at the gate in Heathrow.

At Heathrow, there was long queue just to enter the building. The security guards led us toward the British Airways staff's private check-in

room. We were lucky, but our flight was delayed over eight hours. While we waited, we saw a bobby approach a man that was acting oddly in the restaurant we ate in and then escort him in handcuffs from the restaurant.

When we finally boarded the plane and got seated, Lori saw a man escorting a woman in hand cuffs off the plane. Linda said it was an air marshal with a prisoner. Because John and I took muscle relaxants, John slept most of the way back to Vancouver. Meanwhile, I kept slipping out of my seat. Lori would help lift me up in my seat every 15 to 20 minutes.

Here are some travel tips I have learned over the years traveling on airplanes, nationally and internationally. As a disabled person in a wheelchair, I have some insights that most people wouldn't think of.

First and foremost, make sure you have everything you need with you. If you are visiting somebody, make sure they know when you are coming. Once when I went to Sydney, Nova Scotia, to visit my dad, we got mixed messages on the date and time I was arriving. This was embarrassing! Thank God he was home and remembered I was coming!

The day you leave, make sure you have an ample amount of time to check in and pass through security, no matter where you going. Before September 2001, security was lax; I hardly ever got patted down. After that fateful day, I found that even though you are in a wheelchair they give you a search, which I am totally fine with, but it takes a long time. When you are at the check-in, make sure your wheelchair gets tagged stating that you need it at the gate, if

you have a custom seat, because their chairs may not have seatbelts. This happened to me at Heathrow Airport in London, England. I was very uncomfortable because we had to take a shuttle from one terminal to another one in the wrong chair. If possible, try to get a direct flight or a layover with the same plane so you don't have to change planes. For times when you have to change planes, make sure you have enough time between flights. Don't rely on the airline's idea of enough time. It is usually longer if you are in a wheelchair, with waiting for your chair and navigating in the airport terminal from one gate to another.

My friend Jennifer needed to get out of her chair and lie down while traveling. We learned that every large airport has a first aid area with beds and privacy curtains. We found that the first aid attendants were always welcoming and allowed Jen to rest out of her chair for a bit.

My final tip is to always be polite. I know it seems obvious. You will always get better service, and maybe you will get upgraded seats in the cabin. I always found that if you tell the ground crew when you check in or at the gate that you can't sit on the narrow chair they take you to your seats in, they will always find a better seat for you.

In a perfect world, out of respect, airlines should have disabled seating close to the doors. The ground crew should be taught how to transfer somebody safely for the safety of everyone involved. Since we are all different, no one will have the same experiences with airlines.

But I hope my tips will help you in planning for your flights!

As the Mom of a 23-year-old who uses a power wheelchair, and as a travel addict, I learned the hard way about travel with a wheelchair, starting with many ferry rides to and from Children's Hospital in Vancouver. On one notable occasion I flew with Kieron on an Air Ambulance from Victoria General Hospital to Vancouver so Kieron could get emergency neurosurgery. Three days later we were discharged, and there I was, in Vancouver, on my own with a tiny scrap of miserable humanity, in hospital jammies (hideous yellow-and-white-striped things) with a huge bandage and a half-shaved head, no wheelchair, not even a stroller, and not a clue what to do. The good news is I worked it out, as I have every other challenge that Kieron has presented me with!

Since then, my two sons and I have cruised to Alaska, the Panama Canal, and the Western Caribbean, enjoyed the delights of Disneyland three times, and hopped over to Seattle a number of times. The next plan is Las Vegas for Nascar (and the rest of what Vegas has to offer, I am sure!)

Soon after I became a Travel Agent, friends who had a family member who had extra support needs started asking me if I could help with making sure their holidays went well, and over time I acquired more and more experience and knowledge about travel for people with all sorts of different needs. Now about 50% of my clients are people with disabilities.

Cruise ships can often be the most welcoming and accessible of all

vacation choices for people with extra support needs. Wheelchair-accessible cabins are usually excellently designed with roll in showers and on some ships electronic door openers and sling systems to get you into the hot tubs and the swimming pools.

There are, however, some cruise lines that "get it" more than others, and you have to be very careful and do your research to work out which cruise ship is going to work for you, as well as which itinerary will take you to places that will also be accessible. Cruises are often a good choice for



My son Kieron and his Step-Dad Jim

people with support needs other than mobility needs. Cruise-ship staff members are usually very supportive of anyone who has a disability, and will arrange things like dinner in your rooms if the dining room is too difficult, or have someone in the kitchen cut up or mince food for you. On one occasion when I was escorting my Annual Disney and a cruise group, we had with us a young lady who would vocalize loudly at the dinner table. Her waiter soon worked out that if she had a glass of orange juice, a straw, and some bread sticks in front of her when she got to the

table, things went much more smoothly!

Where you go on a cruise is also important; many places are very un-wheelchair accessible, (One hint: Venice doesn't work)! Alaska as well as anywhere in the USA is usually great, as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has made it law to make every public place in the USA accessible. Europe can often be complicated; again research is the key.

Most of the world seems to have a different definition of what "Wheelchair Accessible" means. In most places if there is a ramp; then as far as they concerned they are accessible!

The advantages of taking our cruise make this an excellent way for traveling for a person with a disability. As well as having a floating wheelchair-accessible hotel taking you from place to place, cruise ships are filled with all sorts of other delights for a holiday: All you can eat food , entertainment, great welcoming children's programs, casinos, swimming pools, bars, more food, and lots of fun!

Then you get to go to a new place every day!

Yes, you can Cruise!

Bio:

Alex Yates is the president of the Kieronator Support Society, a Micro-board set up to support her son Kieron. She lives in Victoria, BC, and is a full-time Travel Advisor with Vision 2000 Travel Group. You can reach her at alex.yates@vision2000.ca

Every five years our family takes a pilgrimage to our “HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH” – Disneyland. We drive our full-size van and make a serious holiday of the trip, usually four to five weeks. It’s a long drive from our home in Prince George, BC, and California, Oregon, and Washington have a lot of things to see and do.

We have traveled the highway between Prince George and Vancouver for more than 40 years, but in the last 24 since Bree-Anna was born, we’ve become experts on where the accessible bathrooms and restaurants are along the route. Summer, of course, has WAY more options than winter, so we are lucky that Bree-Anna has a bladder of steel when she wants (not like her mom!) because many of the rest stops are locked up tight from late September until May. I guess they don’t think anyone would be traveling the highways and byways of the province during the winter! Summer’s outhouses are a little too smelly for many of us, especially if odors are a problem, but there are a number of options for travelers (like the Visitor Centres in Williams Lake and 100 Mile House), and the nice thing is those government bathrooms are single use, so both Mom and Dad can help if needed.

The trip through the United States was an eye-opener for us this trip. We have traveled I-5 extensively on the other trips, but this year we decided to try their rest areas conveniently spaced right on the highway. It saved us driving into towns searching for accessible bathrooms, where there’s the problem of some being for ladies only, as Terry isn’t supposed to do any lifting. The rest areas have lots of parking, coffee bars with snacks, and sometimes the

coffee was free! They are busy places, so you don’t have to feel uneasy using them at any time of the day. This trip we decided we needed to take a support worker to help us meet Bree-Anna’s care needs, so we had an extra set of hands when we needed to use the washroom during the trip.

We were so happy and surprised in Washington and Oregon to see signs outside bathrooms that recognized that sometimes someone of the opposite sex may need to assist someone in the bathroom! Oh my gosh! How fabulous was this?

PRETTY PROGRESSIVE IF YOU ASK US – LOOK FOR THESE CHOICES IN WASHINGTON AND OREGON. There may be other states that have this policy, but we’ve only been to these two. In California they have rest rooms for people with disabilities at their rest areas, but no signs allowing opposite-sex assistance, but we did that anyway in places where it was a single-use stall, and no one said anything to us. The California Visitor Centers all had rest rooms that were wheelchair accessible.



Signs outside accessible washrooms in Washington and Oregon



I'm really sorry if this whole article sounds like it's focused on the "bathroom" issue, but if you're in a chair, it's a huge issue in any kind of travel, and if you know there are accessible places and where to find them, we think it makes the whole idea of travel more do-able!

This trip was the first with the aid of a GPS unit. Aside from the obvious benefit of being able to easily locate our hotels, which we had pre-programmed into it before leaving home, it sure made eating on the road easier. Just ask it where the nearest restaurants are and it gives you all the choices, in all directions, by type! In keeping with the bathroom theme, it was also invaluable for finding them when on the road. We simply chose "rest stops" from the Points of Interest menu, but if there weren't any of those close enough, we then searched for Visitor or Information Centres, and failing that, large department stores.

Bathrooms at Disneyland:

While in Disneyland itself, there are wheelchair accessible bathrooms in all of the park's restroom areas. If you need more space than that, or perhaps there is a need to change clothing, etc., go to their Medical /First Aid Offices. In Disneyland this is located at the far end of Main Street from where you enter the park. It's on the right hand side of the street heading towards the Castle. Take a hard right at the photography store, go past the Baby Care Centre, and set back behind the store fronts is the First Aid Clinic.

There are medical staff on the premises at all times while the park is open, and since we found this haven on our second visit the nurses or

paramedics have been very helpful and supportive. Mostly they treat people for dehydration, heat and sunstroke, and blisters, but they also have two large wheelchair accessible bathrooms which each contain a bed, as well, for any kind of changing needs. You'll find a similar space in California Adventure located in about the middle of the park behind the Tortilla Factory. This facility does not have a bed in the bathroom, though.

On our first trip to Disneyland in 1995, we didn't know about the First Aid clinic and so spent time going back and forth from our hotel room for bathroom breaks, which ate up a lot of time. This time we had a support person along, and it allowed us to use a few of the general wheelchair accessible washrooms scattered about the parks where we could get Bree's chair in. That extra set of hands was a real lifesaver during the whole trip, and Gord and I were able to have a little time for ourselves because of having that additional help.

Eating in and around Disneyland:

One of the best places we have found to eat is Plaza Inn Restaurant. Located on the square at the end Main Street, near the first aid clinic, they serve a standard fare of fried chicken or roast beef everyday of the year, but their portions are huge and enough to feed two people in our case. Their chicken dinner comes with four pieces of chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, and green beans, plus a biscuit. We ask for an extra scoop of potatoes and buy an extra biscuit and everyone is full by the end of the meal.

We always have a tough time finding foods that Bree can eat when traveling, but we've always found something for her on the various menus around the parks. You can find somewhere where they serve mac and cheese, and there are burgers, hot dogs, and pizza at several places. The Carnation Café halfway down Main Street in Disneyland on the left hand side



First aid station at Disneyland

heading towards the Castle has a varied menu, and we often will eat dinner there as well. California Adventure has lots of eateries as well, but many of them have a Mexican theme due to the California heritage, but look around and ask at the information booths they can certainly help with suggestions. If you don't mind leaving the resort for a meal, Harbour Boulevard in front of Disneyland has a host of restaurants ranging from McDonald's to Tony Roma's. We will sometimes take a break and go to Downtown Disney, which is located in the space between Disneyland and California Adventure. There are tons of shops, snack bars, and full-scale restaurants to choose from, and each evening you can find live entertainment on the street.

Some of you will have already had a Disneyland holiday, so you know all of the ins and outs of where to go and what to do, but for those of you who have been too scared to try it, we really recommend it. To access many rides in Disneyland, if you have a disability you enter thru the exit. This is because when the park was originally built accessibility was not something people considered, so much of the old part of the park has line-ups that go up and down stairs or around angles that a chair can't access. Look for the exit signs, and usually there is a disability sign with an arrow showing you should enter there. Toontown is one of the exceptions to this rule, as it was added in the mid '90s when accessibility became the norm, and therefore everything in that "land" is accessible so you must line up with the masses to see and do things there.

California Adventure is completely wheelchair accessible, so it means lining

up like everyone else. We highly recommend the live theater performances. For the past five years Aladdin was playing, but they are now coming out with a Beauty and the Beast show that is sure to be as fabulous. Look for the woman in the wheelchair who is part of the theatre troop.

Rides:

We can't say that even after four visits to Disneyland, we have tried all of the rides, but we have experienced most of them. Bree-Anna is luckily very petite, only weighing a little less than 80 pounds and measuring 4'8" at the age of 24, but she does have to be lifted from her wheelchair onto all of rides that are not fully accessible (more on those later). Her cerebral palsy makes her limbs and back very stiff, which does make it challenging, and in some cases impossible, to get her into some of the vehicles used on some of the rides. Although the cast members (that's what they call the staff at Disneyland) are not allowed to physically assist you in loading and unloading, they are generally very helpful, and in our four experiences, they are more than happy to do whatever they can to make your experience as memorable as possible.

Despite the challenges, Bree regularly enjoys rides such as Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, the Matterhorn Bobsleighs, Autopia, the Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, Indiana Jones, Space Mountain, and her two favorites: Splash Mountain and The Grizzly Raft Run. We have also ridden several of the older rides in Fantasyland, including Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, Peter Pan's Flight, and The Mad Tea Party. Rides that we have ridden that have wheelchair-accessible cars (or boats) are: (in Disneyland) King Arthur's Carousel,

It's a Small World, The Jungle Cruise, The Disneyland Railroad (be aware that the Main Street station is not accessible), Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters, the Mark Twain Riverboat (you get to load first, so you get your pick of seating. We like the very front for the best views), the Monorail; (and in California Adventure) Mickey's Fun Wheel, Monsters Inc., and King Triton's Carrousel. The Grizzly River Raft Ride has a special loading area for people with mobility issues. They actually stop a raft in a quiet area so you can have as much time as you need to get in and out. Soaring Over California has 5-point harnesses for everyone, so she was also able to ride it, even though we couldn't hold onto her at all. We checked out California Screamin', the big roller coaster, and the Hollywood Tower of Terror, but didn't feel she had enough legroom for her stiff legs, so we didn't take her on them. All of the shows have wheelchair seating, as do the parade routes and the laser shows in both parks, but you need to stake your spot early to get in the front row so you can have an unobstructed view. For the World of Colour Show in California Adventure, you need to get tickets early in the day. They are free, but due to limited seating you need to get them ahead of time.



Nolan is a 23 year-old man who takes pride in his independence. He is blind and has autism, but he doesn't let his challenges slow him down. When Nolan was 18 years old, one of his support workers moved away to Edmonton. She invited Nolan to come for a visit for a few days and go to the West Edmonton Mall, so he flew by himself from Quesnel to Edmonton. It was that trip that ignited his passion for independent travel. Nolan can't see the world through photos and images - he experiences the world by being in it.

Bonnie has discovered that it takes a combination of formal and informal supports for Nolan to travel successfully. She's learned that Westjet, Air Canada, and Central Mountain Air will make sure there is an employee to guide Nolan safely on and off the plane, assist him to the gate of a connecting flight, and help him find a washroom along the way. Bonnie felt challenged when she learned that all the airlines required an emergency contact person for every destination. She didn't think they knew people everywhere Nolan wanted to travel. As Bonnie and her husband started connecting with their relatives and friends, friends of friends, and even the relatives of friends, they discovered that many people were more than happy and excited to support Nolan's travels. Bonnie says the hardest part was asking.

Bonnie has also used Support Worker Central; (<http://www.supportworkercentral.com/>) to find people Nolan can stay with and show him around during his travels. Nolan pays for all his own travel costs and his Microboard pays the costs for the support person he



stays with. Bonnie and Nolan hope to find contacts throughout the province and beyond - wherever Nolan wants to go. Nolan has stayed with a woman in Abbotsford from a connection through Support Worker Central. They e-mailed back and forth, checked references, and eventually set up a time to meet in person. Nolan and the person "clicked" and eventually Nolan made a trip to Surrey on his own for 4 days. They had a great time together and are planning a future trip, including going across the border. Bonnie is currently trying to find someone for

Nolan to stay and do things with in Kelowna. Nolan loves parasailing there!

Nolan is planning more trips, including one to San Francisco. Bonnie will continue to reach out to family and friends and research ways to find support people for him at each new destination. If readers of VelaVision have travel connections for Nolan, please email him at parasailer@shaw.ca.

Marina and her brother Christian, only 15 months apart in age, share a very special bond. When Marina moved to Yellowknife with her boyfriend who was starting a new job as a pilot, Tamara (their mother) knew there was a visit to the north in their future. They simply had to visit Marina in her new home. Tamara had looked at maps with Christian and talked about how far away Marina was, but they knew it would be important to actually see where she lived now. Even though the trip was costly and could have potential challenges for Christian, Tamara could not conceive of visiting Marina without Christian. Knowing how much she was missing her daughter, she could imagine how Christian felt, too.

Tamara had been flying around the province for her work and knew that with the increased and more invasive security, screening could present the most significant challenge for Christian. Tamara and her family spent several weeks talking about and preparing for the trip.

Tamara's first concern was a possible long line and wait for screening at the airport. It helped that they would be traveling as a family and that Stephen and Josh, Christian's Dad and younger brother, would be there, too. Christian can experience bursts of energy, and at times he needs to physically bolt to release the energy. Tamara knew that Stephen could stay close to Christian if he needed to burn off some energy, and that she and Josh could hold their place in line. Tamara also was prepared with a letter from Christian's doctor explaining how his behaviours were related to his disability. She had the letter to produce as an official document in case they had to provide



an explanation quickly. They also had a prescription for sedatives in case the whole travel experience created too much anxiety for Christian.

Even though Christian is now in his 20s, Sesame Street books are still among his favourites. Tamara has been very conscious of public perceptions of Christian, and he usually enjoys these “younger” books only when he is at home, not when he is out in community. She was strategic in her choice for Christian to carry a couple of Sesame Street books at the airport. They were larger in size and calming for him to carry and Tamara hoped the books would alert observant fellow travelers to expect the unexpected from Christian – such as his sudden movements.

For weeks prior to their departure, Tamara and her family had many conversations about their upcoming trip. Tamara had used “social stories” in the past to assist Christian's understanding, preparation and anticipation of events. Using

Boardmaker, clipart, and images from Google, Tamara has been able to create a variety of visual images to share with Christian. As they got closer to the date of departure the family even practiced “airport security” at home, including the use of the “wand.” Tamara decided a remote control looked closest to the metal detector wand at the airport, and they rehearsed using it many times at home. Tamara would demonstrate while Stephen passed the wand over her, and then Tamara would pass the wand over Christian while he practiced standing still. On the day of the trip, Tamara was very thoughtful about clothing choices for Christian. She made sure there was no metal in his clothing or on his shoes and that he carried nothing in his pockets that could cause the metal detector to go off.

When the travel day arrived, Tamara felt confident and well prepared. As it turned out, there wasn't much of a wait for security, and the only one who set off the metal detector was Tamara! She went through screening first, Christian was next, followed by

A Trip to Yellowknife Cont.'

Stephen and Josh. They made sure that one of them would always be on the same side of the security gate as Christian. The hardest part was over, and everything went even better than expected – it was such a relief. During the flight they hit some bumpy weather, and that's when Tamara realized the one thing they hadn't talked about or prepared for – turbulence! But Christian experienced

it like a roller coaster ride - a little bit scary and a little bit fun.

Yellowknife had not been on Tamara's list of dream destinations, and Stephen noted that they could have gone to an all-inclusive in Cuba for the same cost. But Tamara and Stephen knew it was incredibly important for all of their family to see Marina's new home and her life so far away from

them now. They visited for Marina's birthday and enjoyed a lovely family celebration with Christian's favourites – pizza, cake, and time with his sister. It was important to see Marina, but it was also really important to build some travel skills. With Marina beginning a new life – now as the wife of a pilot - travel will be a necessary part of the future.

Travel Tips for you and Your Loved One Living with Autism

Every person living with autism is unique. Strategies that are successful for some individuals may not be effective with others. Routines, however, are the common denominator. How do you mitigate the need for sameness and then travel? Whenever possible, include your son or daughter with the planning process. The questions in this series are things to consider. After all, you know your loved one best. You have probably had to plan each and every event for your son/daughter on a daily basis. Preparation and logistics are crucial.

Developing a plan and answering the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions prior to your trip will help ease the journey for all parties. So who is going on this trip? Is your son or daughter going with supports but without you? Will you be bringing staff supports for your son or daughter? If so, how will you manage breaks for the staff? If you don't have staffed supports, who will spell you off? If you're considering travelling alone with your child/adult, have you thought of the possible risks that may arise in doing so? Are siblings coming along? How do you ensure their needs are met along with your son or daughter living with autism? Are you planning to visit

family, and how does your child cope with extended family members? These questions shouldn't deter you, but as mentioned, planning and logistics are important.

What do you plan on doing? Is this trip focusing solely on your child/adult and what they wish to do, or is it a family event such as a wedding? Would your child/adult cope with attending a wedding, or do you need to arrange for care prior to departing? What's the plan B should your child not be able to cope with, say, Knott's Berry Farm? Who knew I would be looking at the Koi fish and pretty much only the Koi fish on our trip there? What may be of interest to your child/adult may not be on the top of the list for his or her siblings.

The Auto Utopia at Disneyland: priceless; Pirates of the Caribbean, not so much. In fact, that ride was downright scary. Be prepared to go on the It's a Small World ride fifteen times.... just split the experience with your significant other. Trust me, I hate the song. If you are going to places such as theme parks, they often have line passes so you don't have to wait. Call ahead and gather the information you may need.

When are you going? Will your child have to miss school? A break in that routine may be great news for his/her siblings but may present a total disruption for your child/adult with autism. Does your child have to get up early to leave? Will your child stay up all night in anticipation? How do you make that transition from home to holiday mode and back again easier? The more you adhere to regular anticipated times for meals, bedtime, bath time, et cetera the less likely you will encounter issues. If you are going by car, plot your course, pre-book your hotel; check the traffic report and the road conditions. Try to minimize disruptions. Is it wise to go to Disneyland during spring break? When is spring break in Orange County? You get the drift!

If you are travelling across a border and therefore going through customs, how will your child/adult react? Can you call ahead to the US border and explain your son or daughter's needs? What would be their likely response to a Customs officer? How would your child/adult react to an airport scanner and a search? You may choose to carry a card that explains your son or daughter's disability. It can be helpful when you need to relay information quickly and discreetly.

Travel Tips for you and Your Loved One Living with Autism

Where and how are you travelling? How long is the journey, and how long are you staying? Your child/adult may enjoy the car ride more than where you're going. If you travel by air, where is the most logical place to be seated? Do you have food with you that your child/adult will eat? If your child/adult has never been on a plane the sounds, confined space, proximity to others, and seat belt requirements may be daunting. You may want to consider going on a short local flight to assess how the trip goes.

Why are you going? Be prepared to let go of your perceptions of what constitutes a holiday and a good time. You may want your child to experience all of Playland, but he/she may value the House of Mirrors rather than going on all the rides. To this day the House of Mirrors is a huge hit for my son, especially the convex and concave mirrors. I'm okay with what's important to him. I do not however, love the "You're fatter" look in some of those mirrors. Planning the mode of travel and the holiday itself is, in effect, looking at what may possibly go awry and figuring out how to prevent potential pitfalls. In fact, you do this every day. So happy trails to you and yours, and by the way, are we there yet?

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

Calling ahead to the airlines, hotels etc. Explain your possible special requirements. For example: Please ensure that my room is on ground level; my son can't manage the 16th floor, nor can I. Is your swimming pool operational? Is there construction presently at the hotel? Please confirm my reservation. Ask the airline for a reduced fare as the caregiver. It may possibly be half price.

Inquire whether meals are served on the flight. Ask for the menu options. Consider asking for the bulkhead. You will have more room and will be closer to the restroom.

Consider bringing earplugs or using headphones for your son or daughter if that will ease their trip. Explain why you need to do this to the attendants, as they usually request that you remove these items during takeoff and landing.

However you travel, bring the items that will engage your child/adult during the trip, such as electronic games, favourite toys, CDs, et cetera. Does your child/adult have a special pillow and/or blanket?

Are there construction delays on the highway? Check the road report. Have your car and tires checked before you leave. Check all fluids. Don't let your car get below half a tank if possible.



Always have a meeting place if you and your child are separated from the rest of the family.

Enlist your family and assign specific daily tasks. You can't manage everything.

Purchase travel insurance.

Make lists and check them off.

REMEMBER TO BRING:

- Identification/passport.
- Travel letters if necessary for crossing the border with a minor.
- Bring all of your son or daughter's medications and a backup prescription. Bring a list or a MAR sheet of all medications. Blood type?
- Develop or bring an emergency contact list including where you are staying during your trip.
- If applicable, bring a care plan for your son or daughter in case others need to help with support.
- Bring a First Aid kit and tool kit whenever possible.
- Don't forget your cell phone and charger as well as the charger for the car.
- Pack an extra change of clothing that is easily accessible on the plane or in the car.
- Remember to bring snacks and fluids wherever permitted.
- CD'S, toys, electronics are important to some people.
- Personal care supplies if required.
- Patience!!!



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A few questions and answers to assist travelers with mobility challenges and their caregivers to plan vacations

There are three different types of insurance you might consider while planning your vacation: (1) additional/out-of-province/out-of-country medical, (2) trip cancellation/interruption, or 3) the combination package, which is medical and cancellation insurance together. As a Certified Travel & Cruise Agent and RBC Travel Insurance Specialist, I am going to answer a few common questions about the medical insurance options and hopefully clarify some misconceptions.

What is additional/out-of-province/out-of-country medical insurance? These are extra insurance packages you purchase to cover any medical situation that may arise while away. This is added coverage above and beyond your provincial MSP, and is also recommended even for those who have extended medical in their employee benefit packages.

What situations are covered? There is a long list of situations that are covered and can be specific to the package you buy, but here are a few examples of covered items: One-way economy airfare home, up to \$300 in emergency professional services like chiropractor, physiotherapist, and dentist, assistive devices (crutches, canes), hospital stays, medications, walk-in clinics, etc.

Who can buy insurance? Anyone can buy insurance

Why should I buy medical insurance when I travel? We insure our houses, vehicles, and lives; why not insure

your holiday investment? If you don't insure yourself, you have the potential of losing the cost of your trip, and even your savings if the expenses are high enough. If you have medical insurance, it will pay for expenses up front, and RBC specialists deal with the paperwork (MSP, employer's insurance, etc.). So it lessens out of pocket expenses. Trip cancellation/interruption insurance covers the extra expenses of airline/hotel changes.

Should caregivers also buy medical insurance if traveling as a support person? Yes!

Do I need insurance when traveling outside of BC but while still in Canada? Yes, you should have insurance even if just visiting another Canadian destination, as each province has different provincial health insurance plans. For example, if you were to require medical attention while on a holiday in Alberta, the BC provincial health insurance will only cover the medical costs based on BC premiums. You are responsible for paying the difference in the care costs between BC and Alberta pricing.

I am a wheelchair; can I still buy insurance? Yes, if you are in a wheelchair or use a walker or any other type of mobility assistive device, you can buy insurance.

I have a long term illness or condition i.e. MS or CP; can I still buy insurance? Yes, you can buy any of the insurance packages that are offered as long as your medical or related condition (whether or not the diagnosis has been determined) is



stable a minimum of 90 days prior to the date you were injured or became ill on your vacation.

What does "stable" mean? If at any time in the 90 days before you depart on your trip, your medical or related condition has not been stable -- for example, if there is a medication change, an increase in severity of condition, etc. -- check with your insurance provider if there are significant changes to your health before you leave on your holiday.

When should I buy medical insurance? At the time you book your trip; the reason is there could be an increase of price at any time. Why pay more if you don't have to?

How much is insurance? The cost of insurance is based on age and the length and cost of the trip. The costs can include airfare, hotel, and car rental.

Who can I buy medical insurance from? You can always buy it from your Travel Agent at the time you book your trip. However, find out if there is an area RBC Insurance Certified agent. RBC agents undergo extensive annual training, and RBC offers the most coverage. There are other insurance companies out there; however, they most likely have deductibles, where RBC Insurance does not.

Thank you to all our Funders & Donors

A special thanks to Joey Rivey and the North Okanagan Handicapped Association for their generous donation

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We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia



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