

# HOLIDAY GUIDE 2024



**NMC Guide to  
Planning Your  
Perfect Trip**

# ***NMC Guide to Planning Your Perfect Trip***

Planning a holiday can be daunting as there is so much to think about. You may not have ventured very far, or as your condition has changed you might have lost confidence in travelling. With our tips, advice and details of all different types of holiday both in the UK and overseas we hope we can encourage you to have the confidence to find and enjoy the right type of holiday for you.

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## **1: Holiday Tips**

- Planning and preparation is key. Fail to plan, plan to fail!
- Always take out holiday insurance, preferably at the time of booking your holiday and declare your medical condition(s). Although more costly, it is far less so than if you fall ill on holiday without it. Shop around as quotes can vary. Apply for a GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card) - see section 4.
- Accommodation - always explain exactly what you need to ensure that your needs can be met. What is accessible to one person might not be to another. Ask for photographs of the apartment or room, bathroom, bedroom and for toilet seat height, bed height to see if the accommodation will work for you. Don't be afraid to ring /email the hotel directly.
- Please be aware that different countries regard different levels of accessibility as 'accessible'.
- Consider using a travel agent who specialises in holidays for people with disabilities. This can take away the worry and stress. Do shop around as quotes can vary. [OBJ]
- Think about any additional equipment that you might need to hire at your destination and book this in advance, e.g., hoists, bed raisers, an electric bed.
- Remember to fully charge equipment before you travel and take chargers and adapters with you!
- When flying abroad, always book your seats on the aircraft at the time of booking. Remember that Ventilators and Cough Assist machines, classed as medical equipment, must be carried as hand luggage on the aircraft.
- Airlines have an allocated number of places for wheelchairs and scooters in the hold. You need to reserve this at time of booking and have the exact dimensions to hand. They will also need details of the type of battery.
- Take a copy of your NHS Prescription with you in case you should need more medication when you are away.
- Remember to take an alert card and/or medic alert bracelet if you have one.
- Take hospital numbers with you in case of an emergency.
- It is useful to have a translation of some words into the local language that you might need when travelling/at your holiday destination.
- If taking your car abroad, do remember to make sure this is covered on your motor insurance.
- Take your disabled parking badge but check that it is valid in the country you are travelling to.

With the right support and equipment your holiday can be a success!

***Things to check and consider when booking accommodation:***

- Ground floor rooms/lift to all floors
- Adjacent carer's room/is this free?
- Wet room – seat, grab rails, level entry, non-slip floor, mat
- Accessible toilets with drop-down rails or hire of raisers/frames
- Disabled Parking Spaces
- Accessible dining area
- Profiling bed / bed raisers
- Hire of other equipment
- Evacuation Procedure in case of emergency
- Wide doorways
- Automatic doors
- Turning space for scooters and wheelchairs
- Portable hoist
- Accessible leisure facilities (if applicable)
- Extension lead for medical equipment
- Adapters suitable for use at your destination
- If going to a non-English speaking country it is worth finding out key words in the local language  
e.g.: wheelchair, scooter, ramp.
- Hoist into the pool
- Access to other parts of the hotel – dining room etc

## **2: Specialist Travel Agents**

Many people at the NMC choose to book via a travel agent as it gives them peace of mind. Agents that specialise in holidays for disabled people will book seats on the aircraft, book your scooter/wheelchair onto the aircraft, arrange assistance at the airport, arrange accessible transfers and answer any queries in advance of booking your holiday. It might be cheaper to book everything separately but for that little bit extra you are gaining peace of mind, knowing that everything has been arranged for you. Also, some companies, such as Disabled Access Holidays guarantee adapted rooms upon booking confirmation.

The following agents offer accessible holidays and can help plan the right holiday for you. It is worth getting a few quotes as prices can vary from agent to agent.

[www.disabledaccessholidays.com](http://www.disabledaccessholidays.com) (0800 622 6000) They provide accessible holidays in the UK and abroad also offer Mobility Equipment hire, Electric Profile Bed, Electric Hoist, Mobility Scooter, Manual and Electric Wheelchairs and Shower Chairs.

[www.limitlesstravel.org](http://www.limitlesstravel.org) (0800 711 7112) They provide accessible holidays both UK and abroad, including both accessible cruises and accessible coach holidays.

[www.enableholidays.com](http://www.enableholidays.com) (0330 380 6800) They provide holiday worldwide, except UK. They include adapted rooms, adapted taxi transfers, adapted rooms with various equipment, grab rails, shower chair and wheel-in shower.

[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk) Contact via email on their website. They offer accessible Farm Holidays, Holiday Parks, Self-Catering Cottages, all mainly in UK and in Jersey, destinations all over, including Blackpool, Martin Mere, Ormskirk, Liverpool and specialise in places to stay with Hidden Disabilities, i.e. autism.

[www.accessatlast.com](http://www.accessatlast.com) Contact via email on their website, they offer accessible holidays all over the world.

[www.haystravel.co.uk](http://www.haystravel.co.uk) (0800 408 4048) They offer accessible holidays in a variety of destinations and will check if your hotel has rooms and facilities suited to your specific needs - including adapted rooms with walk-in and roll-in showers, wider doorways and pool hoists to assist wheelchair users.

[www.accessable.co.uk/tui](http://www.accessable.co.uk/tui) (0800 145 6920) TUI have partnered with AccessAble and tasked them with the job of running accessibility audits at some of their most popular hotels.

[www.sykescottages.co.uk](http://www.sykescottages.co.uk) (01244 356666) They offer accessible cottages all over the UK and Ireland. Probably best to telephone as many accessible cottages aren't picked up in a general search.

## Other useful links:

### Holiday Cottage Accommodation:

[Accessible cottages in the UK - holidaycottages.co.uk](http://holidaycottages.co.uk)  
<https://www.premiercottages.co.uk/>  
<https://luxurycottages.com/collection/accessible-cottages>

### Coach Trips – UK and overseas:

[Limitless Travel](#) offer the opportunity to travel independently with personalise care plans. Accessible coaches and accommodation cover more than 50 destinations.

**Facebook** has several groups offering hints and tips for traveling, including:

[The World is Accessible | Facebook](#)

[Limited Mobility & Wheelchair Friendly Holiday Accommodation | Facebook](#)

**Motability** have produced a helpful guide for holidays and days out in the UK: [The Rough Guide to Accessible Britain / Motability Scheme](#)

## **3: Equipment Hire**

There are specialist companies who can arrange for any equipment you might require to be delivered to your room or apartment, so it's ready for you when you arrive. You can also arrange this via your travel agent.

### **How can I make sure the bathroom and bedroom meet my needs?**

The best thing to do is to ask the agent or hotel directly to send a photo of the bathroom and accessible bedroom. That way you can get a better idea of whether your needs can be met. You could also ask for bed height and toilet height measurements to see if you might need a toilet seat raiser/ bed raisers. These can be arranged for you.

[www.mobilityequipmenthiredirect.com](http://www.mobilityequipmenthiredirect.com) is one of several companies able to hire specialist equipment.

#### **4: Travel Insurance**

- It is worth contacting your bank/post office as they may well cover your condition for a small premium. This can be cheaper than some of the specialist companies listed.
- Remember to declare **all** medical conditions for each passenger. You will need to go through medical screening.
- Consider purchasing an annual policy if you are planning more than one holiday in a year.
- It is advisable to take out insurance as soon as you **book your holiday** so you are covered should anything happen before your holiday starts.
- You should obtain an GHIC prior to travel, which entitles all UK residents to reduced cost (sometimes free) health care, if necessary whilst travelling in most European countries. This replaces the European Health Insurance card (EHIC) which was available prior to Brexit. The UK GHIC is not a replacement for travel insurance.

**The UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)** lets you get necessary state healthcare in EU countries, and some other countries, on the same basis as a resident of that country. This may be free, or it may require a payment equivalent to that which a local resident would pay. The UK GHIC has replaced the existing European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). If you have an existing EHIC you can continue to use it until the expiry date on the card. Once it expires, you'll need to apply for a UK GHIC to replace it. You can apply for a new card up to 9 months before your current card expires. A UK GHIC is free and lasts for up to 5 years. Apply for your new card through the NHS website. Avoid unofficial websites – they may charge you a fee to apply. It is recommended that you check [FCDO travel advice](#) on GOV.UK for the country you're visiting.

You can apply online at: <https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/cra/start>

#### ***Companies that cover pre-existing medical conditions***

If you pay for a bank account that includes travel insurance contact them in the first instance for a quote for cover for your condition.

Money Helpers Travel insurance is specifically for people with conditions and disability.  
<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk>. (0800 138 7777)

Good to go Insurance – [www.goodtogoinsurance.com](http://www.goodtogoinsurance.com) (01279 621662)

BIBA – British Insurance Broker's Association – [www.biba.org.uk](http://www.biba.org.uk)

Fish Insurance – [www.fishinsurance.co.uk/product/pre-existing-medical-conditions](http://www.fishinsurance.co.uk/product/pre-existing-medical-conditions)  
(0800 294 5101)

All Clear Travel Insurance [www.allcleartravel.co.uk](http://www.allcleartravel.co.uk) (0800 294 5101)

Flexicover Travel Insurance - [www.flexicover.com](http://www.flexicover.com)

Free Spirit Insurance – [www.free-spirit.com](http://www.free-spirit.com) (02392 419 080)

Freedom Insurance – [www.freedominsure.co.uk](http://www.freedominsure.co.uk) (01223 446 914)

Saga Travel Insurance – [www.saga.co.uk](http://www.saga.co.uk) (0800 9885 886)

Age UK Travel Insurance – [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

Avanti – [www.avantitravelinsurance.co.uk](http://www.avantitravelinsurance.co.uk) (01604 981134)

The Insurance Surgery – [www.the-insurance-surgery.co.uk](http://www.the-insurance-surgery.co.uk)

Specialises in sourcing competitive travel insurance for clients with pre-existing medical conditions  
(0333 253 7534)

World First Travel Insurance – [www.world-first.co.uk](http://www.world-first.co.uk) (0345 90 80 161)

Staysure – [www.staysure.co.uk/travel-insurance](http://www.staysure.co.uk/travel-insurance)

Over 50's travel insurance, specialising in pre-existing medical condition cover (0808 304 9564)

### ***5: Help towards the cost of a holiday***

Everybody deserves a holiday but not everybody is able to find the money for a break away. Fortunately, there are organisations that specialise in providing subsidised holidays for disabled people and their families or allocate grants. For more information see: [Disabled Holiday Grant FAQs - Limitless Disabled Holidays \(limitlesstravel.org\)](http://Limitless Disabled Holidays (limitlesstravel.org))

**Revitalise** - A national charity that provides short breaks and holidays for disabled people and their carers.  
[www.revitalise.org.uk](http://www.revitalise.org.uk)

Grant giving organisations – [www.disability-grants.org](http://www.disability-grants.org)



## 6: Travel by plane

For many people with a disability or long term medical condition air travel can be a daunting prospect. Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People (QEF) established Tryb4uFly [www.gef.org.uk/tryb4ufly](http://www.gef.org.uk/tryb4ufly) which aims to give disabled children and adults the information they need to be confident about flying.

Services include:

- Free information on the website and an individual assessment service in a realistic aircraft setting
- Trained OT's will answer your questions - the most common being, how do I board the aircraft? Can I take my wheelchair? How do I get to the toilet?
- QEF's Tryb4uFly service is available at three mobility centres in Carshalton, Surrey, The William Merritt Disabled Living Centre in Leeds and the RDAC in Birmingham.

### What you need to remember before you book

- Rights for Disabled Passengers when flying. Under European Law, if you are disabled, or have difficulty moving around, you can receive assistance when you fly to, from and within Europe. This may include help when travelling through an airport, boarding or disembarking an aircraft and during a flight.
- Two pieces of mobility equipment are carried free of charge as checked baggage. This does NOT count towards your baggage allowance per passenger.

### Seats on the aircraft

- At the time of booking your flights, as a disabled passenger, you have a legal right to sit in an aisle seat even though the airlines will try and put you in a middle seat. This is because you cannot block the seat of somebody who is not in your party.
- As a disabled passenger, a travel companion can sit next to you.
- Airlines will charge you for choosing where you want to sit on the aircraft and for seats with extra legroom.
- If you find the aircraft seats low, take a cushion with you.
- Always book passenger assistance in advance with either the airport if travelling independently, or with the tour operator.
- It can be useful to find a seating plan of the plane before booking seats to ensure that you are near to the toilets and aircraft entrance.
- Some airlines have 'medical seats' which are reserved for wheelchair users or people with reduced mobility close to toilets and aircraft entrance.

### Travelling with your scooter/powerchair

- When booking your flights it is important to tell the airline that you will be travelling in a scooter or powerchair.
- They will need the dimensions, make, model and weight of the scooter.
- Scooter batteries **must** be dry cell. Airlines will **NOT** carry scooters with acid batteries.

### Travelling with your wheelchair

- When booking your flights it is important to tell the airline you will be travelling in your wheelchair.
- You will need to get out of your wheelchair at the aircraft door and transfer to an aisle chair to go to your seat.

### Travelling with your ventilator / cough assist machine

- Medical equipment such as ventilators and cough assist machines must be carried as **Hand Luggage**, even if you will not be using the equipment whilst on board the flight.

- It is advisable to take a letter from your Consultant confirming this, which you can show at check-in and again when boarding.

### **Do you need oxygen whilst flying?**

- If you use a ventilator, it is advisable to have a **Flight Assessment** at your respiratory clinic in good time **BEFORE** you fly. This will determine whether you need supplementary oxygen during the flight.
- If it is found that you do need oxygen, then you can either purchase it from the airline who will have it on board ready for you, or buy it yourself and take it with you. The cost of oxygen varies between airlines.

### **Can I use my ventilator on board the flight?**

This is possible but you will need to flag this up to the crew and again it is advisable to have a Consultant's letter with you supporting this. Do make sure the batteries on your ventilator are fully charged.

### **Does medical equipment count as hand luggage?**

Medical equipment does not count as hand luggage allowance. It is in addition to hand luggage.

### **Can I hire equipment at my holiday destination?**

Always check at the time of booking, but often scooters, wheelchairs, walking frames, toilet seat raisers, profiling beds, bed raisers etc. can be hired for the duration of your stay. It is sensible to ask for a quote.

### **Special Assistance at airports**

After booking your flight, contact the airline and let them know you will need special assistance.

- At check-in you are likely to be asked for your wheelchair/scooter details again and instructions on how to disengage it. You will receive a printed label. At this point you should explain clearly if you need your scooter/wheelchair delivered back to the aircraft door at your destination.
- After check-in you will need to go to **Airport Assistance** to register with them so that they can help you with whatever you need, e.g. help to the gate and/or assistance to get on the plane. You will be asked if you need an aisle wheelchair to help you get to your seat.
- Security – Be prepared. You will most likely be asked to take out any medical equipment from its storage bag and put it in one of the trays.
- Body search. If you are unable to get out of your wheelchair/scooter then you can be searched whilst seated.

### **Different options for boarding the aircraft**

- Ambi-lift which takes you right to the aircraft door
- Special chairs to take you up the steps of the aircraft

People in wheelchairs and scooters generally board the aircraft first and disembark last.

### **Is there anything I can do to minimise damage to my wheelchair / scooter?**

You could attach written instructions explaining how to operate your wheelchair / scooter, as well as how it folds up. Any removable parts from your wheelchair should be removed and these items may be carried on the plane and will *NOT* be counted as baggage. As soon as you reach your destination, check your wheelchair/ scooter for damage and notify the airline immediately if there is a problem.

### **Carrying medication on the plane**

Essential medicines and liquid dietary foodstuffs are **not** limited to the usual 100 ml hand luggage allowance. You will, however, need supporting evidence such as a letter from your doctor or a copy of your prescription. Do ensure that everything is labelled.

## **Getting to the toilet on the aircraft**

The toilets on most aircrafts are varied and some are very small. If there is an on-board narrow aisle wheelchair, flight attendants can push you to the bathroom but are unable to assist you transferring to the toilet. For short haul flights many people use the disabled toilet facilities at the departing airport and again immediately on arrival at their destination.

## **7: Cruising**

Cruises are a very popular choice with our NMC community for several reasons. Most large cruise ships depart from Southampton where there are plenty of accessible hotel rooms near the cruise terminal. The Premier inn is often a safe bet for a reasonably priced overnight before you embark. There are blue badge car parks (booking essential) close to the terminal and all your luggage is collected from your vehicle in the car park and delivered to your cabin.

### **Are all cruise ships accessible?**

Most cruise ships are mostly accessible, with the general rule being the newer the ship the more facilities will be available. It is, however, your own responsibility to make the cruise line aware of any specific requirements you have when making your booking, and failure to do so could result in assistance not being available when you need it. Bear in mind that there may be steep ramps to negotiate to embark and disembark and consider how you would best like to tackle that.

### **Who should I sail with?**

Deciding which cruise line, and more specifically which ship, to book is one of the biggest decisions you have to make when planning your holiday. P&O, Celebrity Cruises, Disney Cruise Line, Princess Cruises, Saga and Royal Caribbean have a decent reputation when it comes to onboard facilities disabled passengers. Most also have specially trained staff. But it's best to arm yourself with the brochures of the lines you are considering and check their websites, as most have pages dedicated to special needs and accessibility.

### **Will I be able to get on and off the ship easily?**

Most ships now have large gangways, which allow passengers using wheelchairs and scooters to embark and disembark without issue. Depending on the itinerary you have booked, a few ports might require tender boats to take guests ashore. Cruise companies have strict guidelines in place for tendering, and many might deem it unsuitable for guests who use assistive devices. Guests wishing to use the tenders must have sufficient independent mobility to negotiate steps and traverse a gap of up to 45cm. Crew members will be on hand to guide and steady you, but they cannot support, carry or lift guests for safety reasons.

## **What sort of cabin should I book?**

Wheelchair-accessible or modified rooms are available on most ships but they are in extremely high demand, so you should book well in advance. The term 'wheelchair-accessible' usually means it has been designed for purpose, often with wider doorways and a roll-in shower and push button door entry. Meanwhile 'adapted' means the cabin has been modified based on its original specifications, which could pose a problem to a full-time wheelchair user, as accessible cabins are generally larger than standard rooms to allow for wheelchair manoeuvrability.

Solo travellers may be prevented from booking an accessible cabin. You would need to check if planning to travel alone.

If you require use of a mobility scooter, powerchair or similar on board be sure to book an accessible cabin or you might not be able to take it on board. Equipment can also be hired and available for you as you embark.

## **What equipment is in an accessible cabin?**

A fully accessible cabin will be barrier-free, allowing a wheelchair easy access to and from the bathroom, the balcony (if there is one) and of course in the room itself. They will typically feature a roll-in shower, pull-down shower seat or bench, grab bars to assist with balance, lowered sink and vanity area and lowered wardrobe hanging rods. Portable visual and hearing kits will also be available on request.

Most accessible cabins can accommodate shower stools or chairs, raised loo seats. If you need a commode, bed blocks or a hoist, you are invited to bring your own or to arrange for them to be delivered to the ship by contacting an independent supplier. It's always best to request or check on booking.

## **What sort of wheelchair can I take on board?**

Most cruise lines accept gel, dry cell, sealed lead acid or lithium-ion battery-operated wheelchairs, but it is your responsibility to check with before you travel that your wheelchair is allowed on board. Collapsible wheelchairs can be taken into most cabins, but you should ensure that your chair, when collapsed, will fit through your cabin door.

## **Will the ship have medical facilities?**

Every modern cruise ship has a fully equipped medical centre that is designed to meet the care of its passengers. There is usually at least one fully trained doctor and two nurses on board, with the exact number dependent on the size of the ship. For those on regular medication, make sure you pack ample supplies because the ship might not be able to meet your prescription needs should you run out, and some medications can be difficult or to find in port.

## **Will the excursion office provide accessible tours?**

Cruise lines will provide accessible tours at selected ports wherever possible, and you should consult with the staff at the excursion desk for assistance when purchasing tours to make sure they're suitable for you. Before booking make sure you read the description of each tour and the small print as there are sometimes discrepancies. You can also book accessible excursions in port or before you travel, this might work out less expensive.

## ***8: Driving Abroad***

### **Taking your Motability car abroad?**

You can take your vehicle aboard within the European Union and to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein at no extra cost for up to 90 days in total within a 12-month period. You're not allowed to take your vehicle abroad for longer than 12 months.

You need to get a VE103 form and take it with you or call the RAC (0800 731 3310). When you ask for your VE103, you'll be offered RAC European breakdown cover.

If you want to travel for longer than 90 days call Motability customer services team (0300 456 4566) at least three weeks before you plan to leave. RSA Motability (RSAM) will let you know if you can extend your insurance cover, but you might need to pay a charge.

You cannot get cover for legal expenses and replacement locks while you're abroad. For the latest information visit the Motability Website.

### ***Blue Badge in Europe***

The UK is no longer part of the EU Disabled Parking Card scheme. However, you can still use your UK Blue Badge when travelling in some EU countries, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

The UK has informally agreed to continue the mutual recognition of the EU disabled parking card for visitors to the UK. Some EU and EEA countries have committed to reciprocate this gesture, but these agreements are not mandatory.

Recognition of foreign issued parking cards remains at the discretion of the administering authority in the host country. Advice is to **always check locally before parking at:** [Using a Blue Badge in the European Union and European Economic Area - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) The UK Blue Badge is recognised in many European countries. Some countries provide notices in the local language which you can print off and display next to your Blue Badge. You do not have to do this, but it may help.

### ***Blue badge in USA***

Some states will recognise it. Sometimes international permits is sufficient or local temporary permit is required. Check with local tourist office.

## ***Accessing Accessible Toilets Abroad***

Radar Keys are common on accessible facilities in UK but not compatible abroad.

Euro-key is the equivalent European toilet key and costs 45euros plus shipping so is more expensive than a radar key. It enables access toilets and lifts in EU but unfortunately since Brexit they cannot be ordered for shipping to the UK. You can purchase in advance and have it mailed to your accommodation in advance (one month delivery time) and ask the hotel to keep it for you.

Visit Disabled Access Travel Website and download free app Accessaloo is a free app which you can download and provides details of accessible toilets in the UK and across Europe that don't need a key: restaurants, hotels, coffee shops - use key code system or keep a key at counter (free on app store and google play).