



## **Travel Tips for People With MS**

**By Ed Tobias, MS Blogger**

As more people receive the COVID vaccine, we can begin to think about travel once again!

I have lived with MS for more than 40 years. Even though my disability has progressed over that time, it hasn't stopped me from visiting interesting places all over the world. My scooter and I have bounced over the cobblestone paths of Crete and meandered among the ruins of Ephesus, Turkey. I have traveled through Alaska, visiting the White Pass, Yukon railway, and Denali National Park. Closer to home, I have been up close to some huge alligators (at least they seemed that way to me), and even taken an airboat ride through the Everglades.

I'm here to share my experience so you can enjoy travel as much as I do! With a little planning, a little scooter, and a little help, you will find that the world is yours to explore.

### **PLANNING FOR YOUR TRIP**

**Planning is key. Ahead of any trip, you need to know what's accessible and what's not.**

Even if you discover a destination does not have the accessible landscape you hoped for, don't give up! Pick up the phone and see if you can still work out a way to visit. You will always be grateful to have learned the lay of the land *before* you arrive to your destination.

I once arrived at a five-star hotel in London only to find that it had many steps at its front and rear entrances. It was "accessible," but a portable ramp had to be wheeled out each time I arrived. Fortunately, I wasn't traveling alone, and my wife was able to go inside to alert hotel staff that my scooter and I were waiting to get in.

In Santorini, Greece, I needed to leave my scooter at the base of a cable car that runs up the steep cliffs and go to the top without it. I was able to walk the short distance to have a cup of coffee outside a restaurant at the top, but I couldn't go any further.

**Neither of these situations was a disaster, but I should have planned better.**

There are many travel agencies that specialize in arranging travel for people with disabilities. If you're unable to work with a specialty agency, note that almost any travel agency can find the information you need. And if you prefer to do it yourself, an internet search and a few phone calls will always help!

## **USING A SCOOTER**

**An electric scooter is essential. You might be hesitant, but hear me out.**

There's absolutely no way to enjoy a few hours touring, even if your disability is minimal, if you're dragging yourself around. Use a scooter to save energy while you sightsee or to keep up with tour groups – especially if those groups are made up of able-bodied people.

**Need a recommendation? Here is my experience.**

I used to use a [Pride Go-Go](#), which breaks into four pieces. It's comfortable, but cumbersome. Its heaviest part is only 40 pounds, but it still was not my ideal option for traveling.

I now use a [TravelScoot](#). This scooter weighs just 35 pounds, its lithium-ion battery seems to go forever when fully charged, and the scooter folds up to be quite compact.

I have taken my TravelScoot on trains, boats, and planes. I have found it especially useful in countries outside of the U.S., where it is rarer to see curb-cuts in the sidewalk and you may need to have your scooter lifted over a curb on occasion. The TravelScoot has joined me even into the smallest of spaces—like a cruise ship's small tender—that wouldn't be doable with a heavier scooter.

There are several scooters similar to the TravelScoot at a range of prices, so you should be able to find one that works for you. If you would prefer not to buy a scooter, you can always rent one and have it delivered to your destination.

Remember, traveling is all about enjoying your destination, participating in the activities you want to do, and [finding fulfillment](#) in your explorations! You may not be able to achieve this if you wear yourself out by walking. Consider a travel scooter to make sure you don't miss a thing.

## **HAVING HELP**

**I cannot recommend enough that you travel with a friend, a partner, or your family.**

By having a buddy who does not have a disability, you can be sure that you never find yourself stopped in your tracks by an inaccessible area, surge of MS symptoms, or unexpected mishap.

For those who may be able to afford it, hiring a driver or personal tour guide can also be a big help. This travel assistant can help lift your scooter when needed, take you quickly to the places you want to see, and even get you past tourist attraction lines!

At the Vatican, our driver ushered me, my scooter, my wife, and a couple traveling with us to the head of the line, saving us an hours-long wait. In Turkey, our guides helped me navigate through ruins and eat at accessible restaurants. In St. Petersburg, where my scooter was prohibited in some museums, our guide obtained a wheelchair and pushed me.

For free help, you can find many other [sites like mine](#) that share tips for accessible travel. A couple of my favorites are [Curb Free with Cory Lee](#) and [Wheelchair Travel](#). Some countries and cities have their own accessible travel blogs, and a quick online search will bring up many others!

## **ONE MORE THING**

### **Expect the unexpected!**

My wife and I arrived at the airport in Venice to start a cruise only to find my scooter had not! A wheelchair was commandeered in the airport to get me from baggage claim to our shuttle bus. Another wheelchair was obtained to go from the bus to the ship. But from there, I had to walk up the gangplank. My crucial learning was this:

### **Always have a Plan B.**

I hope you can learn from my experiences to better plan for your own travel. For more suggestions about travel and living with MS, check out my blog at [www.themswire.com](http://www.themswire.com) and my book "We're Not Drunk, We Have MS," available on Amazon.