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Q AND A

For the Disabled Traveler, Strategies for a Successful Trip





wheelchair. The elder Mr. Cohen recently discussed the book, here
Terry Scott Cohen, and his father, Barry, dog-sledding in Alaska, where they find the
are excerpts from that conversation.
people to be very friendly.

Q. Why should people with disabilities travel?

A. There actually are medical reasons to travel. People who have disabilities and travel have a much easier time sleeping. They're not as stressed as other people. Particularly if they are in the house and confined, traveling is an incredible way to grow yourself as a person and impact your mind. And travel can produce long-term health benefits such as using leisure as a coping mechanism for stress. People who have disabilities unfortunately don't get as much activity as other people. But when they're in travel mode, they do get activity, which actually contributes to their overall health.

What are the characteristics of a good travel companion?

The right travel companion can make or break a trip. First is conscientiousness. It takes a person who is going to help the disabled person even if it means personal inconvenience and sacrifice. Second, you want a person who's caring and thoughtful, because they can recognize and appreciate the physical limitations of the person traveling. Number three, you need a person who can remain cool under fire and doesn't get upset when they're faced with setbacks. Physical strength is important. You have to at certain points lift up the wheelchair or scooter to get it into something or another.

What destinations have been friendliest for those with disabilities?

The U.S. and Canada are extremely friendly. The best in Europe is Germany. When you take a train, for example, in a lot of countries there's a space between the platform and train. In Berlin, at every station, you can request that the engineer come out and put a special piece of equipment between the train and the platform. In Thailand, the [king](#) who recently died ordered the government to have attendants stationed in every handicapped bathroom to help the disabled.

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How do you ensure that where you're going is mobility-friendly?

I would never make the assumption that a hotel overseas is fully accessible. I would definitely call the desk and explain your

disability. I check out the bathroom and accessibility into the hotel and then ask them about restaurants. Are there stairs?

What's your favorite trip?

The most incredible trips we take are to Alaska. You would think that Alaska would not be accessible. Our experience in Alaska is it is a super great place to see so many unusual things, and Alaskans tend to be very friendly people.

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Sounds like a blend of place and companionship.

We like to experience fun together in new ways. If you're disabled, and particularly if you have a disability that's progressive, you know there's going to come a time when you're not going to be able to do these things. So for me to be able to do these things with my son while I'm capable and he's still capable is wonderful. Why would we want to miss the opportunity? We're always looking for adventures.

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