

Disabled Travel Guide

Advice and information for disabled and mobility restricted passengers travelling through UK Airports.



About The Guide

Travelling with a disability or restricted mobility can be a daunting experience if the appropriate assistance and support is not available at the airport. This guide has been created to inform and advise you about the services available to make your journey as easy and pleasurable as possible.

What's included in the guide:

- What happens at security and customs?
- General airport assistance
- Advice before you travel
- Return journey help
- Travelling with autism
- Travelling with medication
- Travelling with kidney disease
- Breathing related mobility restrictions
- Visual impairments
- Deaf or hearing impaired
- Assistance at the car park
- Wheelchair advice
- Assistance pets
- Tips and advice
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What happens at security and customs?

Disabled passengers may wish to make security staff aware of any specific medical needs or extra considerations before a security search is undertaken. Due to increased security risks, all passengers flying on commercial airlines are required to undergo security searches. During this, you must let security staff know if you feel uncomfortable or if you are experiencing pain. Airport security staff will often ask if you would prefer to be taken to a private room where a security search can be carried out with additional privacy.

Should you require assistance with your luggage, a member of staff should be made available to assist you. If you have a member of the special assistance team guiding you through the airport, it is their job to help you with your luggage.

Passengers with visual impairments passing through customs and security can request a witness to be present when baggage is being searched to make sure nothing is stolen and your belongings are correctly repacked.

General airport assistance

A wide range of help is available at every UK airport. This is governed under European law whereby disabled people and people with reduced mobility have legal rights to receive assistance when travelling by air. There is detailed information about this on the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission

Some of the assistance and help airports can provide includes:

- Staff from the airline and airport will help disabled passengers onto the aircraft with specialist equipment. Wheelchair users can board the aircraft before other passengers and extra space seating will be allocated.
- Help at the airport for disabled travellers.
- Every European airport should have disabled accessibility advice and assistance at the airport whether you have restricted mobility, sensory problems or any other disability.

The following services should also be available:

- Assistance to reach the check-in desk.
- Help at the check in desk.
- Designated help points to call for assistance. These should be located at the nearest entrances, terminals and in the car parks.
- Help with getting on and off the plane.
- Assistance with retrieving baggage from the aircraft.
- Assistance to access toilet facilities at the airport and on the aircraft.
- General assistance helping you to successfully reach your desired destination.

Advice before you travel

Each airport should, by law, have their own special assistance staff. Otherwise, they will employ a specialised company who will help you at the airport with various tasks such as stowing luggage or guiding you through the airport.

Whether you book your flight with an online travel agent, commercial airline or at your local travel agent, it is crucial that you inform them of your disabilities and/or additional requirements before travelling. This allows for the appropriate assistance to be arranged before you arrive at the airport terminal.

For additional peace of mind, it is worth contacting the main help desk at the airport to request disabled advice before you arrive. This will ensure that the necessary equipment and staff are on hand to assist you.

Some airlines may ask you to complete various forms. This is standard procedure and will help the airline and/or airport to ensure the correct equipment and assistance is available to support you during your time at the airport and during your flight. This information will also be used to determine if you are fit to fly.

Return journey help

For the return journey, passengers should pre-arrange any specific help with the assistance services at the airport. This will ensure that the specific help required is available as soon as you land. Please get in touch the special assistance team before you fly or when you arrive by locating the help desk.

You must make sure that the airline staff are aware of your disability before landing. This will avoid any delays in arranging special assistance equipment or help once you have landed.

Travelling with Autism

If you are a carer for someone who has Autism, we appreciate that travelling abroad may be a challenging and daunting experience for both parties. However, with the help and support from airport staff and airline crew, there is no need to worry. All staff have received comprehensive training and have hands on experience, enabling you to travel with confidence.

Some airports, such as Manchester Airport, have produced a free guide which details step-by-step procedures for what happens at the airport. The guides cover checking-in, security, baggage help and boarding the aircraft. These guides are accessible to all ages and feature easy to understand text and illustrations which cover everything you will need to know.

The most challenging aspect of air travel for parents or carers may well be the security check point. Children with autism may display characteristics of anxiety which could raise suspicion with security staff. It is advisable to approach the situation as calmly as possible, making sure the security staff are aware of your circumstances beforehand.

Before travelling through the airport, we recommend that you request the support of special assistance staff at the information desk. Alternatively, you can press the 'Help' button located at the terminal entrances or in the car park; you will find these at most airports. This will alert staff who deal with accessibility and allow them to notify the security staff whilst they guide you through customs and security sections.

You can download the Airport Awareness Guide provided by Manchester Airport from [here](#). Although the guide is for Manchester Airport, the procedures are very similar at other UK airports.

More information

[Autism UK](#)
[Talk About Autism](#)

Travelling with medication

It is not uncommon to travel through the airport with various types of medication. However, if you are flying with a controlled drug prescribed by your doctor (such as methadone or morphine) you will need to bring a doctor's note to show the security staff. Also, please keep your medication in the original packaging.

Passengers who need to take medical equipment such as sharp objects or hypodermic needles may be seen as a security risk. It is therefore recommended that you carry a letter of approval from your doctor to avoid any confrontations or unnecessary questions.

More information

[NIDirect](#)

Travelling with Kidney Disease

It is possible to fly with dialysis equipment, however we always recommend that you obtain a letter from your doctor to show the security staff to prove that you are exempt from the liquid regulations.

Do not pack your dialysis equipment and medical supplies with your main luggage. Keep them with you at all times in your hand luggage in case of an emergency when you are on board the aircraft. Your luggage is also at risk of being misplaced or lost, leaving you without your crucial treatment/ equipment.

- Make sure you have enough medical supplies with you. It is essential to keep additional medication in your luggage.
- Keep your main medical equipment with you in your hand luggage.
- Inform the special assistance team/ airline staff at the airport of your disability.

IMPORTANT: You must inform and get advice from your doctor regarding your proposed trip. They may need to check to see that you are fit to fly. If you are on a kidney transplant list, travel restrictions may apply.

More information

[Life after transplant](#)

Breathing Related Mobility restrictions

For passengers with breathing related mobility restrictions, help is available from the special accessibility staff at the airport. The following assistance can be arranged prior to your arrival at the airport.

- Help transporting luggage through the airport terminal.
- Assistance with stowing luggage.
- Wheelchair assistance; wheelchairs can also be provided by the airport.
- Help at check-in and customs.
- Advice on return journey.
- Help from the car park and onto the aircraft.
- Guidance through the airport.

We cannot comment on individual airlines regarding their policy on carrying oxygen cylinders onto the aircraft. You must get prior approval from the airline before flying.

With the increase in airport security, more checks are being made. Therefore, it is wise to carry a doctor's letter detailing your condition and explaining your oxygen dependency. This should avoid any unnecessary delays and disputes.

It is also advisable to seek the advice of your doctor before you travel to ensure that it is safe for you to do so.

More information

[Lung UK](#)

[Scleroderma Society](#)

Visual impairments

For passengers with an impairment disability, it is advisable to arrange for extra assistance and help if you do not have a carer or someone travelling with you.

What help is available?

- Someone will meet you at the airport and guide you through the procedures such as check-in and security.
- Staff will also help you onto the aircraft and help you store away luggage.
- Airline staff will supply you with Braille and audio versions of any required safety demonstration documents. They will also provide on board assistance such as helping you to access toilet facilities and assistance with food and beverages.
- Visually impaired passengers who wish to take guide dogs onto the plane should always inform airport staff before travelling. Staff may also ask the dog owner to produce documents proving that the dog has been trained by the correct organisations such as Assistance Dogs UK.
- Guide dog owners should also look into the Pet Travel Scheme for more specific information.

More information

[RNIB](#)

[Direct GOV UK](#)

Deaf or hearing impaired

The majority of UK airports have special assistance personnel who are trained in basic sign language skills. This allows them to communicate more effectively with deaf or hearing impaired passengers.

If you would like to double check that this type of assistance is available before flying, please contact the special assistance help desk. You can find the number on the official airport website under Contact Information.

One of the main worries for deaf or hearing impaired passengers is hearing boarding gate status changes and/or when special announcements about a flight are announced over the public address system. Most airports now use induction loops to make sure all important information is received by deaf and hearing impaired passengers. Please note however, some induction loops require a 'T' hearing aid to use this feature.

Deaf or hearing impaired passengers can also make specific requests to the airport or airline staff. For example, you can request to be notified in person when any changes are made to your flight, such as a gate change or delay.

Before travelling, we recommend that you notify the special assistance team with details about your hearing impairment if you think this is necessary. It is also possible to arrange for someone to guide you through the airport, whether it is through security or help boarding the plane. Most airports advise you to request help 48 hours prior to your arrival.

More information

[RNID](#)

Assistance at the Car Park

When pre-booking airport parking it is essential that you notify the company about your disability prior to travelling. This will help staff to provide appropriate assistance to ensure you do not experience unnecessary delays or inconvenience.

Each car parking company should have staff on site to help you from your car to the terminal. They may contact the special assistance team or assist you, if you are a wheelchair user, to the terminal where airport staff will take over.

All airport car parking services have disabled parking bays located close to the reception and to the shuttle bus pickup points. Help assistance buttons should be located close to the disabled bays allowing you to call for assistance if necessary.

Remember: Under European law, disabled and restricted mobility passengers have legal rights for assistance when travelling by air. For more details on this, please visit the Equality and Human Rights Commission website

Wheelchair advice

Some UK airlines will allow you to board and fly on the aircraft using your own wheelchair. However, in some cases you may need to be transferred into an airline wheelchair or boarding chair which will fit into the aircraft. This is necessary to comply with airline rules and regulations.

If you have to board the aircraft through a connecting tunnel, you won't be transferred into an airline wheelchair until you reach the door. Similarly, when boarding an aircraft via stairs, you will be transferred onto the lifting equipment (scissor lift), then onto an aircraft approved wheelchair.

Please ensure that you check with your airline regarding their boarding procedures with your own wheelchair. It is important to clarify this before you travel as different airlines operate different rules and policies.

Airlines are obliged by law to carry disability equipment, such as wheelchairs, free of charge. Depending on each individual situation, your wheelchair may need to be packed and passed onto the aircraft via the same route as your baggage. This will mean that you will have to use one of the airport wheelchairs.

More information

[DTAC](#)

Assistance Pets

Some airlines allow disabled passengers to travel on board with their assistance pets. Guide dogs will need to be approved by DEFRA under the Pet Travel Scheme prior to travel.

Only specific routes have been approved by DEFRA which allow assistance pets on board the aircraft with the passenger. For all other non-approved routes, guide dogs will be required to travel in the cargo section.

If possible, please advise your airline 48 hours prior to your flight if you would like to travel with your assistance pet. Some airlines may ask you to produce documentation about your dog, disability and whether it has been approved by the PETS scheme.

Guide dogs that have been registered with the PETS scheme will be able to enter the UK without being placed into quarantine.

European Regulation (EC) No.1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air places obligations on airport managing bodies to provide services for handling recognised assistance dogs (guide dogs and other assistance dogs) at airports.

More information

[Guide Dogs Website](#)

Tips and Advice

- Always contact the airline before travelling to make sure they are aware of your disability.
- Bring doctor's notes and/or prescriptions for medicines to avoid the items being confiscated at security.
- Passengers with breathing problems who need to fly with oxygen cylinders or similar equipment must contact the airline and airport beforehand and seek advice from their doctor. A medical note may also be required to fly.
- Contact the airport car parking company prior to your arrival to ensure you receive help at the car park.
- Don't forget to bring your Radar key - the airport may have separate disabled toilets.
- Keep your medication in its original bottle and/or packaging.
- Ask the pharmacy to write down the details of your medication in case you lose it while abroad.

End Notes

This guide has been produced by Parkat Airport Parking to provide help and support to disabled travellers and their carers’.

PLEASE NOTE: This guide is intended for information purposes only. It has not been created by an official body. All information included in this guide has been taken from recognised charities and official government websites. Although we have taken great care to ensure all information is current and correct, you should always seek professional help from the correct resources before flying.

Contacts and further information

Matthew Lobas
Parkat, Pavilion 2, Salford Innovation Forum
51 Frederick Road
Greater Manchester, M6 6FP
matthew@parkat.co.uk
0161 7433638
<http://www.parkat.co.uk>

