

# Travel Tips

Travel is a very important aspect of our lives. Whether for business, pleasure or education, the traveller strives to be as relaxed and comfortable as possible. People with hearing impairments can be faced with difficult situations. But with informed planning, these difficulties can be overcome.

This PDF is designed to alert people with hearing impairment to be aware of potential difficulties and to offer suggestions to enhance their success and enjoyment as they travel.

## **Be aware of travel routines which may be challenging – consider the following:**

- Inability to hear or understand airline boarding and in-flight announcements
- Difficulty with announcements made in train and bus stations and on train platforms
- Getting the details of hotel and transport reservation, car hire arrangements, etc. accurate and understandable
- Inability to hear or understand scheduled events such as planned activities, tours, museum and art gallery lectures, theatre presentations
- Problems when driving such as wind noise, speaking with others in the car
- Difficulty with hotel room telephones, knocks on doors or warning signals such as smoke detectors
- Lack of accommodation for hearing ear dogs

## **The most important tip for successful travel is to make arrangements in advance - and in writing!**

### **• Booking on the Internet**

This ensures all information is written.

### **• Booking in person**

Booking in person is easier and more efficient than booking by telephone.

Write out your plans ahead of time and then get written confirmation. Travel agents will often want to get back to you to confirm booking. Ask them to get written confirmation to you, and to do it straight away in case there has been any misunderstanding.

Agents will often want to alter plans on the telephone. If this is a problem, again, ask for immediate written confirmation.

Obviously, this works best if you plan far enough ahead of time.

- **Making plans in an emergency**

If do not have the time for written confirmation of plans, try to have someone with you who can confirm your understanding of arrangements. Or write down what you understanding and have someone ring back to check.

**Many public libraries and other agencies have a TTY facility.** This can also give you written confirmation of emergency planning.

- **Show a hearing help card or tell the travel agent that you have a hearing impairment**

If you request it, most agents will pass this information on when making your reservations with airlines, bus companies, railways, hotels and various tourist attractions. This can smooth the way for you later on.

As many agents deal with a large number of people, **giving agents a hearing help stamp to put on your file will remind them how to work most effectively with you.**

### **Making arrangements in advance – and in writing is important for the rest of your travel planning!**

- **If you wear hearing aids, make sure your hearing aids are working properly and that you have extra batteries and tubing.**

It may be difficult to get proper help or to get the batteries you need in certain places.

Check with your audiologist/hearing specialist about any information you need to take with you and how to use your aid to maximum advantage. Some people have sophisticated remote controls, but don't know how to use all of the controls.

**Using your T switch will help daily with telephoning, buying tickets and getting information. Know how to use it!**

- **Checking with your doctor about the best way to protect your ears when travelling.**

Ear problems are the most common medical complaint of all airplane travellers. This obviously has implications for people with hearing impairment.

Travelling with ears blocked from a cold or flu can be dangerous.

You may be advised to **chew gum or let mints melt in your mouth**, as swallowing activates the muscle that opens the Eustachian tube. This helps to equalise the changes in pressure.

They may also tell you **not to sleep during take-off and when descending for landing**. This is because, when asleep, you are not yawning and swallowing.

Your doctor or hearing specialist may also advise you **not to wear your hearing aids during take off and when descending for landing**.

Check with your doctor about whether you should use any decongestants or nose sprays.

Get your doctor's advice also on the best way to clear your ears if they become temporarily blocked during flight. Some common practices can be dangerous!

- **Try out and get whatever portable assistive devices will make your travel easier. Get them far enough in advance so that you can be comfortable with them and can work out any problems.**

Devices which can help include:

Vibrating alarm clocks and watches

Portable alert systems, which flash a light when the phone rings or fire alarm sounds, or when someone is knocking on the door

Personal infrared systems to help communicate when in a car

Portable TV band radios, which can be tuned to TV channels and listened to through an earphone. You can then set the volume to suit yourself without disturbing others.

- **Many hotels now have rooms with various devices available. Your travel agent should be able to find out for you.** Your travel may take you to other places, however, which do not have facilities and you may feel more comfortable with your own.
- **Make sure you have a hearing help card and hearing help stamps. The blue ear symbol is internationally recognised.**
- **You may want to get a translation of your hearing help card in the languages needed for your travel.**
- **If driving, get your maps ahead of time so that you can plan your trip and avoid having to stop and ask directions too often.**
- **Find out the location of Travellers' Aid type help along your planned route as well as**

**contact information for hearing loss support groups.**

**The Internet is a good source of information on such groups throughout the world.** You may end up making contact with people beforehand who can meet up with you during your travels.

### **During your travel**

- **Arrive early at the airport, depot or station. Inform the person in charge of boarding that you may not hear announcements and need to be contacted personally.**
- **Give the same information to any attendants on the plane, train or bus.**
- **In some cases, you may want to use the T switch facility at the airport or depot to contact your accommodation for directions or to check that room is ready.**
- **Inform the receptionist at any accommodation that you are hearing impaired. That can be vital in case of an emergency.**
- **Look for the blue international symbol, which indicates a T switch facility.** You will find a growing number of banks, public telephones, tourist facilities and other venues provide this service.

It will help all travellers with hearing impairment if you thank or compliment places which provide this facility. And to suggest to any place without T switch facility, that it would be appreciated.

Most importantly, remember that travel can be enjoyable. So plan ahead, inform your fellow travellers and transport and accommodation hosts, obtain any necessary assistive devices and batteries, etc. And have fun!