

*in*Motion

A magazine dedicated to living well with limb loss

A Publication
of the



amputee
coalition™

Travel & Accessibility

**Traveling
With Your
Service Dog
p. 32**

**Home Sweet
(Swapped)
Home
p. 34**

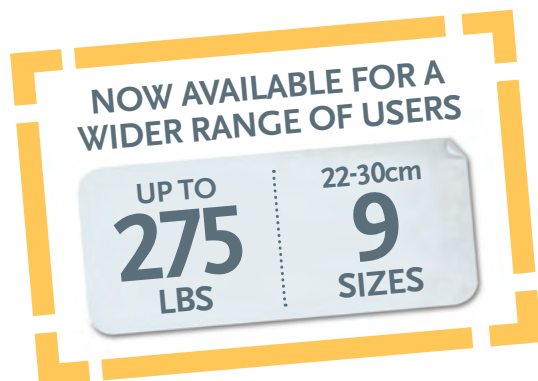
**“Accessibility is a
priority for the
Park Service as
it approaches its
100th anniversary.”
p. 22**



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Are We There Yet?



Have you been daydreaming about getting away from it all? Exploring faraway lands or places right here in the United States, discovering the kind of things other people only read about?

Of 63 million Americans with disabilities, studies show that 24 million would travel or travel more frequently if they knew that their special needs would be met. But mobility concerns don't have to cancel your travel plans. You can experience the excitement and wonder of new places and different cultures even if you are physically challenged.

When the subject of travel comes up, two common rationales are often used to support the response of "Maybe *next year*."

First, there's fear of the unknown. People with limb loss develop routines for performing daily tasks, such as getting into a car, transfers and accessing familiar destinations. When you travel, however, all that changes. Travel, by its very nature, is unpredictable (for some, that's part of the fun), but thanks to the rapidly growing accessible travel industry, whether it's by plane, train or automobile, for business or pleasure, you can now go almost anywhere and do almost anything. It just takes a little planning ahead. Many of the articles in this issue are designed to help in that regard, such as "*Have Meds, Will Travel*" (see page 14).

The second, and more universal, rationale is money. But you might be surprised at how easily you can find affordable housing with modifications (see page 34). Or you can get away from it all closer to home by obtaining free passes to visit a national park (see page 22).

No place will ever be quite as easy or comfortable as home, nor should it be. In the words of author Clifton Fadiman: "When you travel, remember that a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its *own* people comfortable." That's the philosophy of "*Exploring Beyond the Comfort Zone*" (see page 40). We can't discover anything new unless we leave the familiar behind.

Enjoy your summer, be safe and send us a postcard.

Bill Dupes, Senior Editor



"Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

— Mark Twain

BE AN INFORMED READER

Editorial content (articles, news items, columns, editorials, etc.) in *inMotion* often contain healthcare information. As an informed reader, you should never make a decision about managing or treating your condition without consulting your own clinicians: They know you best.

Sometimes, in our interviews with people who are amputees, the person being interviewed will say something about his or her personal experience that may not be entirely consistent with standard practice. In these cases, we print what the person said because we think it gives readers insight into that individual's experience that we believe will resonate with others. But: We urge you to always check with your medical team before changing your own healthcare regimen.

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**“IMPOSSIBLE IS AN OPINION,
NOT A FACT.”**

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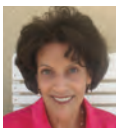
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Our Mission To reach out to and empower people affected by limb loss to achieve their full potential through education, support and advocacy, and to promote limb loss prevention.

inMotion

A Publication of the Amputee Coalition

inMotion magazine publishes unbiased journalism that seeks to "empower and motivate" living well and thriving with limb loss. The magazine targets amputees and their families and is provided free electronically to all friends of the Amputee Coalition and hard copy to all subscribers. Each issue averages 56 pages in print and covers health, well-being, exercise, life issues and advocacy for amputees and their families. Stories showcase amputees living and thriving with limb loss and profile Amputee Coalition programs and services.

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Magical Memories



My friend Rose and I have been to Disney World at least once a year during my 9-year battle with a bone infection. Each visit presented challenges, but this time was different. On October 4, 2011, I had an unplanned right above-knee amputation. Our trip was scheduled for November 9 – December 8. Everything was paid for, so Rose said, “It’s doable.” So we went, and we had an awesome time.


One day while visiting the Animal Kingdom, I recognized a man as a pirate from the Magic Kingdom. I stopped and spoke with him. He asked a few questions, then burst into song about me and Rose staying at the Caribbean Beach, sleeping in pirate beds, and how ironic, me with just one leg. We’ll always remember that moment as a highlight of our visit.

Another day we celebrated Stumpy and what being infection-free meant to my life. Rose came out of City Hall with a first-time visitor badge with Stumpy’s name on it. We laughed and pinned it on my pants leg. Stumpy posed for many pictures, in the stockade, in jail, with Santa, wearing multiple hats, and enjoying Mickey waffles.

Rose was right: We *could* do anything. We set out to conquer every ride, and we did. I was able to fully function as a person with an amputation. Rose was attentive, yet allowed me to do what I could for myself. I was grateful that she was so considerate of my need for independence.

I was scheduled for rehab as soon as our vacation was over. I was concerned about being strong enough to face the reality of the loss of my leg. But our travel experience sparked a new light in my hopes, dreams and future and renewed my lost spirit. Just what the doctor ordered!

— Angie Fratus

Editor: Thank you for your message, Angie. We’re pleased to hear how your travel experience had such a positive effect. For those who are planning to attend the 2013 Amputee Coalition National Conference, we hope your experience is equally positive at Disney World, SeaWorld and the many other area attractions. For more information about the National Conference, please visit amputee-coalition.org/events-programs/national-conference. 

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A woman with a prosthetic leg is riding a brown horse in a grassy field. She is wearing a green patterned shirt and dark pants. The horse is brown with a white blaze on its face and white markings on its legs. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

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diabetes.org

MAY 7

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Learn to Golf for Iowa Veterans

Dubuque, Iowa

opfund.org

MAY 12

Casino Night in the Carolinas

Charlotte, North Carolina

cancerforcollege.org

MAY 19

Jacksonville Tour de Cure

Jacksonville, Florida

diabetes.org

MAY 30

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fdnntv.com/Home-Safety-Month-Resources-Tips-Fire-Corps

NATIONAL FIREWORKS SAFETY MONTH

fireworksafety.com

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JUNE 14-20

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JUNE 3

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JUNE 9

First Volley Adaptive Tennis Clinic

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JUNE 10

Escape From Alcatraz Triathlon

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JUNE 13

Celebration of Heroes, Heart & Hope Gala

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JUNE 22

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Have Meds, *will travel*

by David McIntyre, MD

Remember the good old days, when you could walk through airport security with your shoes on and your belt on, drinking a can of soda and cutting up an apple with a pocket knife? Remember when your luggage flew for free and your cavities went unsearched? Times have changed. Two weeks ago a snow globe souvenir I was bringing home to my son was confiscated because, somehow, I was going to hijack the plane with the half-ounce of cloudy liquid it contained. I was extremely calm and understanding when I was able to purchase the exact same item at the terminal and carry it onto the plane, no questions asked.

Here are a few tips intended to make traveling with your medications a little less intimidating.

Bring extra medication. If you are traveling for a week, bring enough medication for 2 weeks. This tip struck home with me a few years ago when I brought a 2-week supply of insulin on a family vacation to Mexico, and Hurricane Wilma delayed my return home by 5 days. Meds can get damaged, stolen, lost or spilled, so be sure to bring enough. Carry a full supply in your carry-on bag. Keep your extra medication in a separate bag, if possible. That way, if one bag *does* get lost, you will have backup medication.

Bring proof. Ideally, keep all prescription medication and over-the-counter medication in their original bottles or packaging. Prescription meds will have a label with your name, instructions, pharmacy information and the doctor's name and phone number. Controlled substances such as narcotic painkillers, sleeping pills and relaxers should always be left in the original container with the proper prescription label. And airport security dogs don't care that your baggie full of glaucoma medicine is legal in some states, so leave it at home!



It is a good idea to carry a written prescription for every prescription medicine. This will make it much easier to have the prescription filled if your medication does get lost. Carrying a list of your medications and their doses as well as a brief health summary will be very helpful if you need to seek medical attention away from home.

Package and protect. Pack your prescription medication properly. Use tightly closed containers, such as the containers your medicines came in, and make sure to protect your medications from heat and light. Most airlines will allow gel packs to keep meds cooled if necessary. While it may seem easier to place your medications in a day-of-the-week pillbox, this should really be avoided. The pills can rub together and decompose when traveling and there will be no way to identify the pills.

Don't preload. If you are taking any injectable medications (particularly insulin), you must have the medication along with you in order to carry empty syringes. Do not preload your syringes. People with diabetes

who are traveling with syringes, pen needles or lancets should carry a note from their doctor explaining the need for these. Ideally, keep these in their original packaging.

Heightened airport security has caused a lot of angst for people who need to travel with medication. Fear of losing one's medicine, running out or having it damaged can ruin a vacation. If we follow these simple steps, traveling with medication will be less stressful so we can all go back to worrying about the important things – like what the creepy guy in 12C is doing with that snow globe. 🌪️

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Making the Ace

by Tom King

Getting Back in the Swing of Things Through Adaptive Golf

Jeff Lewis is a walking miracle. In 1985, at the age of 31, he was accidentally shot by a neighbor's child. The bullet, which shattered his spleen, still remains lodged between his aorta and spinal cord. Twenty years later, he became a quadrilateral amputee due to a devastating illness; he is an elite member of the 1 percent of people who have survived this disease. And survive he has!

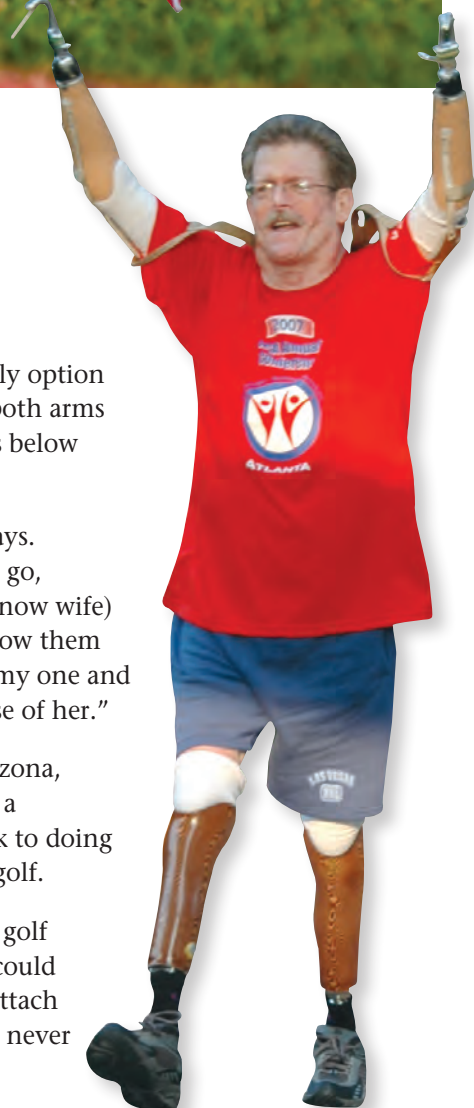
One morning in April 2005, Jeff woke up with what he thought was the worst case of flu ever. Within hours, he was in the emergency room of a Phoenix, Arizona, hospital. The "flu" was a strep infection that led to disseminated intravascular coagulation, a condition in which the blood clotting factors become overactive, restricting blood circulation. As a result,

his limbs began to die. The only option to save him was to amputate both arms below the elbow and both legs below the knee.

"I flatlined three times," Jeff says. "The doctors wanted to let me go, but Carol (his then girlfriend, now wife) saved my life and wouldn't allow them to let me die. She is my hero, my one and only. Every day is a gift because of her."

Jeff, now 58, lives in Mesa, Arizona, and teaches math part-time at a community college and is back to doing what he loves most – playing golf.

In 2007, Jeff contacted several golf club companies to see if they could make custom-fitting clubs to attach to his right-arm prosthesis. He never



got past their customer service departments. Then he called PING.

"I first talked with Paul Wood at PING," Jeff recalls. "He asked if I could be there the next day and I said, 'You bet.'" He and Carol met with Paul and his staff for 4 hours in PING's adaptive fitting department. Paul, PING's research engineering manager, is Jeff's second "hero." Paul and his staff accepted the challenge to help Jeff get back to golfing.

"We'd recently started this adaptive golf fitting project – I had been working with wheelchair golfers, some amputees, talking to a few blind golfers," Paul says. "The aim of the project [is] to offer a better set of custom-fit clubs to people with adapted swings of any kind; when Jeff's call came in, I was really keen to see if we'd even be able to do something. Helping Jeff has been our most challenging project, and a fun one. I gained a golfing partner out of it."

Helping Jeff has been our most challenging project, and a fun one. I gained a golfing partner out of it.

Today, Jeff has a driver, a fairway club, a 7-iron, a wedge and a putter, all of which simply click and lock into his right prosthetic arm. And PING has done all of this and not charged Jeff a penny for their work. In late April, Jeff made his first birdie on a par 3, 155-yard hole. "The ball hit the flag and almost went in the hole," Jeff says. "It dropped 6 inches from the cup and I had an easy birdie." He also bowls, and recently rolled a 236 game (300 is a perfect game).

Golf is Jeff's passion, but so is helping his fellow amputees. He is an Amputee Coalition-certified peer visitor and facilitates a support group in Phoenix: Lively Limbs. The name of his Web site says a lot about him as well: dontworryaboutme.com. 🌀



Photo courtesy of the National Amputee Golf Association

Amputee Golfer

Yesterday, I played golf.

The sun was bright.
The temperature was cool.
The wind was still.

The grass was short.
The bunkers were deep.
The greens were fast.

I hit some drives.
Missed some irons.
Made some putts.

My wife was there.

Today, I am sore.
The sun is bright.
The temperature is cool.
The wind is still.

I played golf.

– Herb Hartman, MD

Related Resources

American Disabled Golfers Association
americandisabledgolfersassociation.com

Fore Hope
forehope.org

National Alliance for Accessible Golf
accessgolf.org

National Amputee Golf Association
nagagolf.org

PING
ping.com
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Cruises

Solution for Family Reunions When a Member Has Special Needs

by Debra Kerper

Summer is rapidly approaching, and thoughts are turning to family reunions, but how to please all of the people all of the time? An excellent solution is a family cruise, where family members of all ages, as well as any with special needs, will find plenty to do. Cruises have become the vacation of choice for people with a variety of challenges, including wheelchair and scooter users, hearing and visually impaired travelers, people on peritoneal dialysis and a wide range of people with medical conditions that enjoy the safety and comfort of having a stateroom nearby and medical care available should

the need arise. Access on many ships is outstanding and travelers with disabilities will find exceptional accommodations and service when they choose to cruise.

Our first family cruise included myself using a wheelchair in the stateroom and a scooter to get around the ship and ports, great-grandparents, grandparents (I was one of them!), parents, teenagers, preteens and children as young as 18 months old. Our party was a total of 20, with our oldest member in his 90s, and a fantastic time was had by all. In looking back at the pictures we took on that cruise and some subsequent ones, the memories we made were, as they say, priceless. The preteen with braces on her teeth is now on full scholarship at MIT, and the young man experiencing his awkward teenage years is now finishing his second year in medical school.

Cruising gives a group with diverse interests the opportunity for everyone to do their own thing as well as to come together at dinner and other times during the day to compare and share their





experiences. Find out who tried rock climbing, surfing or ice skating! Yes, all those activities are available on certain ships! Did one of your family members win at bingo or in the casino? How about a relaxing spa day at sea or just sitting on your private balcony with a good book? How will you decide where to eat? There are now so many food venues to choose from that you will be hard pressed to visit all of them during a 7-night cruise.

So how do you choose the right cruise for your next family reunion? It can be helpful to use a travel agent who specializes in meeting the needs of disabled and senior travelers. When planning a cruise for a group that includes members with special needs, that person's situation should be at the core of your decision with the other members' needs and wants following closely behind. Remember, if the traveler with challenges can be accommodated, so can everyone else. You also have to consider the ages of any children in the group and know what onboard children's programs will work best. If this sounds overwhelming, don't worry. The right travel agent can help you with all these details and prove that, indeed, you really can please all of the people all of the time!

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FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)



“It seems like you would rather not talk right now... that’s OK...sometimes there aren’t words to express what we’re feeling.”

>> **In many cases**, only a peer visitor, as another amputee who has had similar questions, experienced similar situations and faced similar decisions, can provide the answers a new amputee needs. That is the power of peer support.

But some questions are harder than others. The following are examples of difficult situations and how to respond to them.

What do you do when the new amputee you are visiting is reluctant to talk?

It isn’t necessary to fill the entire visit with words; often, just sitting with someone is helpful. If you’ve made a few attempts at small talk and after a period of time, there hasn’t been any attempt to communicate verbally on the part of the amputee, it’s OK to say something like, “It seems like you would rather not talk right now... that’s OK... sometimes there aren’t words to express what we’re feeling. I’ve felt that way sometimes myself.” With this type of response, we are acknowledging feelings, affirming their choice and empathizing.

Remember, each person reacts differently to amputation, and understanding this before you begin the visit will be helpful.

Check it out at
[amputee-coalition.org/
 limb-loss-resource-center](http://amputee-coalition.org/limb-loss-resource-center)



On more than one occasion, while performing a peer visit I've been asked to recommend a prosthetist, or to tell who my prosthetist is and how I feel about the services I've received. I find this to be a very awkward question to answer. Does the Amputee Coalition have any guidelines for handling a situation like this?

These questions aren't uncommon ones for peer visitors. The rule of thumb is, neither question should be answered directly. Instead of recommending a prosthetist, you should recommend a method they can use to find one for themselves. Instead of telling who your prosthetist is and saying whether you are satisfied with the services you are receiving, you should point out that prosthetic services are intensely personal and that your own experience may not apply to their unique situation.

As a peer visitor representing the Amputee Coalition, you must remain as neutral as possible when asked about recommending a prosthetist or any other medical professional. Of course, it's only human nature that the new amputee will be interested in knowing about your prosthesis and who made it. The Amputee Coalition realizes that there are some questions that can't go unanswered and this is one of them, but a *direct* answer isn't the best one.

Offer the new amputee a list of several certified prosthetists in the area. Such a list is often compiled by the local support group or can be obtained by contacting the Amputee Coalition. It's important to point out that each amputee has different needs and that each prosthetist has different strengths and weaknesses. Emphasize the importance of selecting a prosthetist, just as you would any healthcare provider.

The Amputee Coalition has published materials that will assist you in helping the new amputee determine how to choose a prosthetist. These materials are available in our online Limb Loss Resource Center or by calling our Resource Center at 888/267-5669. 🌀

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Take a Hike

Reap the Benefits of Becoming One With Nature

by Amy Di Leo

At the turn of the 20th century, nature essayist John Burroughs wrote: “I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order.”

At that time, no one knew the scientific benefits of the great outdoors on the human body and psyche, only its appeal in just making us feel good. Fast forward to today when recent scientific evidence now backs Burroughs’ statement.

A 2010 study conducted for the Finnish Forest Research Institute showed that “Forests – and other natural, green settings – can reduce stress, improve moods, reduce anger and aggressiveness and increase overall happiness. Blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension and the level of ‘stress hormones’ all decrease faster in natural settings.”

The doctor who conducted the study explains that many people feel relaxed when they are out in nature but, she adds, before this research was conducted, not many of us knew there was a scientific reason why nature heals.

Our national parks host 297 million visitors a year. There’s every reason why your spring or summer vacation, whether you’re traveling near or far, should include a trip to one or more of our nation’s nearly 400 natural, cultural or historic treasures.

Blood pressure,
heart rate,
muscle tension
and the level of
‘stress hormones’
all decrease in
natural settings.





Access Pass

People with disabilities are eligible for the Access Pass, which affords free admission at all federal facilities that charge entrance fees, and also offers discounts for some amenities, such as camping.

The free pass can be obtained at the park, which charges an entrance fee, with proof of disability, or online at: store.usgs.gov/pass/access.html.

An outdoor camping or hiking vacation may not have occurred to you, due to the thought of potentially rough terrain, possible nonaccessible bathroom or camping facilities, or your possible need for wheelchair ramps, but with a little planning, exploring the beauty of our national parks may be one of the most positive decisions you'll ever make.

According to National Park Service Accessibility Program Manager Kay Ellis, "All 397 national park sites have accessible features to some degree, and many of the larger and more popular parks are very accessible."

Many gravel trails are still accessible. Some paths are paved or have an accessible natural surface, and newer ones are being made wide enough for wheelchairs. The National Park Service (nps.gov) has made a commitment to making our parks accessible to everyone. And accessibility is especially a priority for the Park Service as it approaches its centennial anniversary in 2016.

A majority of the 1,300 campgrounds in parks across the country, including Alaska and Hawaii, offer accessible campsites. And according to Ellis, "All of the shuttles and ground transportation at Yosemite

continued on page 26



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"With the HiFi, my goal was simple - mimic osseointegration in a removable interface. I always knew the HiFi Interface would be an improvement over current sockets, but I never knew how tremendous an impact this design would have on a person's life."

— Randall Alley, HiFi inventor, CEO biodesigns



"I have fit numerous patients with the HiFi. This design significantly improves the comfort, stability and functionality of any prosthesis we provide."

— Matt Albuquerque, Next Step O&P

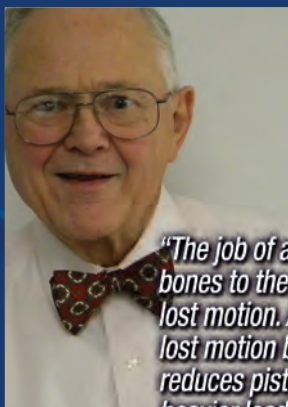
"With the HiFi I can walk up and down stairs with confidence and carrying a hundred pounds of plaster."

— Mike Tallman,
HiFi Interface with
new Genium knee



"The HiFi Interface definitely gives me more stability. I was videotaped walking so I could see my gait before the HiFi Interface and after. I saw how the HiFi Interface keeps my leg more stable... my leg movements are quicker and more responsive so when I'm chasing kids around the dining hall and they stop suddenly — it helps with those types of things. Dancing, too."

— Scott Liloia



"The job of a socket is to transfer forces from the bones to the prosthesis comfortably and without lost motion. Alley's new socket design reduces lost motion better than earlier designs and also reduces pistoning. With it, arm patients can lift heavier loads and increase their range of motion, and transfemoral amputees gain a new level of stability."

— T. Walley Williams, Liberating Technologies

"With the HiFi, I can last twice as long if not more... I've become much more active and involved with tasks that I could not do before the HiFi."

— Ron Goudy



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*Based on commercially available prosthetic sockets.



"Stable, responsive and cool. The HiFi socket enables amputees to function and move with comfort well beyond their previous boundaries. A true paradigm shift in socket technology that is harmonious with the advancements in upper and lower limb prosthetics."

— David E. Altobelli, MD, Clinical Principal Investigator, DEKA "Luke Arm Project"



"I found it difficult to participate in my favorite sport, rowing, because my prosthesis would slip off and I would lose grip on the oar. But after being fit with the HiFi, I was able to rejoin crew. It feels more like a part of my body."

— Michael Hart

"I have witnessed a patient with tears of joy and a patient who would give up their C-Leg before they'd give up their HiFi... this socket design will absolutely revolutionize how sockets are designed world-wide!"

— Scott Schall, Optimus Prosthetics



"My ability to move is much better. It doesn't feel like I'm carrying something. The HiFi is a part of me. It's solid; it has me. And it's a wonderful thing!"

— Terrance Wortham



"Previously all of the soft tissue in the residual limb would move in the socket. In this new technology, there's no more slushy skin. I have more freedom of movement and more stability and better control of my arm. I want to wear my prosthesis now. And I do... 8 to 10 hours a day. It is the greatest invention in prosthetics in the last 100 years!"

— Chuck Hildreth



"What amazes me about the HiFi is the amount of control my patients have with their prosthesis and especially with above knee amputees - their issues of groin pain is virtually eliminated."

— John Brandt, Optimus Prosthetics



"I feel like I could skip with the HiFi! It feels much lighter and more comfortable and I feel like I have more control of my prosthesis. Before I had the HiFi, if I was going to the mall or going to do a lot of walking, I knew I would tire out so fast that I would have to use a cane. With the HiFi, I'm not as tired, I can wear it longer, and more comfortably."

— Linda Lyons



"I have experience fitting several previous and current socket designs with good results. But I can honestly say that the HiFi Interface is the next generation design for lower and upper limb sockets. Our patients smile the first time they wear the HiFi and comment that they feel secure in their prosthesis, and their knee is quick to respond."

— Bill Sampson, Sampson's P&O



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- Learn how this new interface design is changing prosthetic sockets forever

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Travel Tips

When they created the tdtcompanion.com Web site, Ron and Kay Wilmer wanted to flesh out the intricacies of being a “disabled” traveler. The site is full of facts, tidbits and tips, some of which are provided here. Kay is a registered nurse. Eventually, there will be an “Ask the Nurse” feature on the site.

Much of the information may be common sense, but a checklist can often help reduce the stress of travel.

First, Ron offers, “Try not to travel alone but have a companion who can assist you. You’ll also want to let someone back home know where you are going; leave that person your itinerary. Take a cell phone and check for proper coverage at your destination. Have emergency roadside service numbers with you and numbers for next-of-kin listed in your cell phone under ‘ICE’ (in case of emergency).”

If you use special adaptive equipment, carry company phone numbers with you in case of a breakdown. It wouldn’t hurt to know the nearest dealer or repair locations to your destination.

You should also be sure you have the necessary tools for minor repairs, such as a spare tire tube, patch kit and air pump; you can find these at a hardware store. Ron has also created a little emergency kit of his own that he takes along when he travels. It contains duct tape, a flashlight, batteries, wire, rope and cushions. He also takes along a folding commode in case an accessible bathroom is unavailable.

If you’re on any medications, take enough to last for the trip and a few days after you return home. Take a copy of your medical records with you. If you require oxygen, you can often call ahead and have a local company deliver it to your place of lodging.

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National Park in California are accessible, as are many of its trails and campgrounds. Yellowstone National Park, which is in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, is also very accessible, with boardwalks through the thermal fields, accessible campgrounds and many other features.”

Besides the many parks that offer accessible trails, some of the parks have additional services and programs that will enhance your experience. For example, Ellis says Yosemite has a hand-crank bicycle in its bicycle rental program at the park.

At Maine’s Acadia National Park, there are two wheelchair-accessible, horse-drawn carriages for tours through the park. Both Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in Michigan and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in Colorado have sand wheelchairs, which are specially designed for over-sand travel so wheelchair patrons can enjoy the dunes and beach while visiting. At Great Sand Dunes, visitors in wheelchairs can also access backcountry camping facilities. There is also backcountry camping available at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and many others.

For people who enjoy boating, the canal boat rides at Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historic Park, which is situated on the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., Maryland and West Virginia, are wheelchair-accessible. At Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, the Jenny Lake Boating shuttle boats are accessible as well.

At Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, which sees more than 3 million visitors annually, all main walkways, the amphitheater and parking structure are fully accessible. Russell Cave National Monument in Alabama includes a wheelchair-accessible, ranger-led tour of the cave shelter area and archeological site. Pennsylvania’s Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site uses golf carts to transport visitors to historic areas of the park.

Accessibility is especially a priority for the Park Service as it approaches its centennial anniversary in 2016.



The Disabled Traveler's Companion
provides specific information for people
with disabilities. For more information...
tdtcompanion.com

Other parks offer wheelchair-accessible trails that allow for better access to the beautiful vistas and exploration of nature. At Montana's Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, a short wheelchair-accessible trail was laid to allow a better view of Devil Canyon Overlook. At Little River Canyon National Preserve in Alabama, there is an 11-mile scenic drive. From the accessible boardwalk overlook, the view of a 45-foot waterfall is breathtaking. Congaree National Park in South Carolina features a nearly 3-mile wheelchair-accessible boardwalk that loops through one of the tallest deciduous forests in the world. And at Hawaii's Volcanoes National Park, accessible pathways and overlooks have been created.

Ron Wilmers of Lapeer, Michigan, loves to explore nature. He has been visiting our country's state and national parks and enjoying wildlife his entire life. When an auto accident left him in a wheelchair back in

1977, he never for a moment thought he wouldn't be able to continue camping, exploring and enjoying the outdoors as he always loved to do.

Around 2007, he and his wife Kay, with the help of their son Roger, a professional photographer, developed a Web site called The Disabled Traveler's Companion (tdtcompanion.com), which Ron says is "geared toward providing specific information for people with disabilities so they may go where everyone else has gone before."

Ron and Kay have experienced Glacier National Park in Montana, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Yellowstone, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in his home state of Michigan, and many other amazing parks. At each stop, they chronicle their adventures, including providing information on boardwalks and paved paths, accessible lodging and other useful data for the "disabled" traveler.

continued on page 28



**“Go camping,
but first gather
the equipment
you will need
and set it up in
the backyard
and see what
problems arise.”**

continued from page 27

Ron says the best part of these outdoor excursions is sharing the experiences with his grandsons. “Being able to see the expressions on their faces when they see what they see, with their mouths open wide in excitement, is so much better than staying home and hearing about it afterwards,” he reminisces.

Even though he can’t climb with them, Ron gets to connect with his grandkids and be a part of his family’s rock-climbing experience. When his 10-year-old grandson climbed the 14,259-foot Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, Ron was there, camping and cooking for the family, and he was there to celebrate with them when they came down the mountain.

At Yellowstone, Ron was able to experience Old Faithful, enjoy the hiking paths with his family and even got to see wildlife in the form of a bison that hung around outside the inn where they were staying. He has been able to see and experience plenty of the country, and he’s happy to share his knowledge with others.

The Wilmers are trying to help “connect the dots” so people will get the same information about accessibility whether they contact the park, hotel, convention and visitors bureau of the area, or the tdtcompanion.com Web site. Ron believes the biggest obstacle for most people is a fear of the unknown. With the myriad pages of user-friendly information and the beautiful photos they provide, the Wilmers are trying to allay that fear.

“You have to convince yourself, and don’t go alone,” Ron advises. He adds that many travelers with disabilities enjoy traveling, but have legitimate concerns: “What will it be like upon my arrival? Will the accessible room meet my functional needs? [Will there be] easy access [and] curb cuts? Will the accessible parking spot allow my lift to work, providing adequate space?... and so on. [There’s] nothing like driving 9 hours to be met with frustration. It’s like ‘Let’s Make A Deal.’ What’s behind [hotel room] number 123, 231 or 342? You won’t know until you open the door.”

Providing room information is a major part of what tdtcompanion.com offers, including photos, room measurements, a checklist and more. This takes some of the fear and frustration out of planning the trip. The other way to eliminate fear is a dry run. “Go camping, but first gather the equipment you will need and set it up in the backyard and see what problems arise,” Ron says.

“This way, you can eliminate [or solve] many problems before you leave and take what you need with you instead of getting to a destination thinking it will be available.”

Ron and his wife, Kay, have also come up with some tips and suggestions to help you research and plan your trip (*see sidebar on page 26*).

The National Park Service says it continues to “assess and identify those areas of our national parks that lack accessibility and are working very hard to correct those deficiencies.”

Most of the parks have accessibility information or guides on the park Web sites, which are linked at nps.gov. Ellis says she’s working with the technical staff to make the individual park Web sites more user-friendly for people looking for accessibility information. She hopes the link will eventually be available on the NPS homepage.

The best part of a visit to our national parks is that it could be a cost-effective vacation. Ellis explains, “People with disabilities are eligible for the ‘Access Pass,’ which affords free admission at all federal facilities that charge entrance fees, and also offers discounts for some amenities, such as camping. The free pass can be obtained at the park, which charges an entrance fee, with proof of disability, or online at: store.usgs.gov/pass/access.html.” 🌀

Photos courtesy of rogwillmers.com.



Researching and Planning Your Trip

Ron suggests starting your research at least 2 months before your vacation, explaining, “The more time allowed, the more information you will receive. Start by requesting information from the state [or states] you want to visit through the convention and visitors bureau or chambers of commerce in the area. This can often be done online. The packets they send will usually include a map and, most likely, magazines. Review the magazines to help narrow down the areas you want to visit. Make notes, and write down telephone numbers and Web sites.”

Here’s where things can get tricky. “Accessibility means a wheelchair can enter the location, but it does not mean that it is functional for your particular needs,” Ron explains. Web sites are great, but sometimes it’s better to pick up the phone and have questions answered by someone located where you’re going.

When it comes to lodging, speak with someone directly at the hotel or place you’re seeking to stay, rather than at the hotel’s general toll-free number. Have a list of general questions concerning your functional needs that you would like answered. If they cannot provide answers, ask them to research [them] for you. Once you determine a room will fit your needs, “hard book” that particular room and know the room number before you go.”

Other general travel tips include:

- Call ahead for information regarding wheelchairs: Are motorized chairs allowed? Are only certain widths allowed?
- Watch fluid intake, including coffee and alcohol, 24 hours before the trip and use the restroom before venturing out.
- Find out how long your hike, boat trip or other excursion should take and plan accordingly.
- For boat trips, check your wheelchair brakes and prepare for motion sickness.
- Make sure there are people with you who are experienced in operating as well as raising and lowering you in your chair.

The tdtcompanion.com Web site has many of these tips and more, as well as information on accessible lodging and other anecdotal information gleaned from the trips Ron has taken. Ron adds, “You can call parks directly and specifically ask for accessible information to be included with the other information about the park.” And as NPS’ Kay Ellis explains, information about accessibility is also available at nps.gov.

Planning is the key to taking the stress out of vacations but even then, things can go awry. That’s why Ron’s final message is: “Expect the unexpected and try to plan accordingly.”

New Rules and Regulations Under the ADA Will Make Hotels More Accessible

The Amputee Coalition's Government Affairs activities include monitoring rules and regulations that affect the lives of people with limb loss. A significant new rule that just went into effect on March 15, 2012, has come a full 20 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The rule sets standards for hotels and other lodging facilities and will have a major impact on how these facilities are built and renovated. The new regulations will affect the design of public spaces such as ballrooms, gyms, lobbies and spas, and address elevators, service animal policies and wheelchair accessibility.



Another significant change requires that 5 percent of public space must be accessible.

For example, if the hotel has a bar, 5 percent of the bar area must be ADA-compliant, with allocated bar space at wheelchair height; simply providing a lower table off to the side is no longer adequate. Meeting space must also have accessible routes throughout, as well as a clear line of sight from designated seating areas.

Noncompliance will come at a heavy price. The Department of Justice (DOJ) will impose a fine of \$55,000 for the first offense and \$110,000 for subsequent violations. The DOJ's enforcement activities against hotels has been on the upswing (as has its budget, climbing to \$162 million last year from \$123 million in 2009).

For more information, visit ada.gov. 

The law requires that buildings built or undergoing renovation on or after March 15, 2012, must comply with the new standards.

Existing hotels that meet the old 1991 standards get a passing grade until they start a renovation.

- A special slide-out shelf at the hotel registration desk is no longer adequate for accommodating wheelchair users. Hotels must provide actual counter space at a designated height.
- If there are multiple elevators responding to the same call button, all must be ADA-compliant.
- All swimming pools will require lifts or sloped entry.
- Spas must ensure saunas and steam rooms have accessible doors.
- In a fitness center, at least one of each type of exercise equipment categorized as promoting strength and cardiovascular health must be designated accessible.



>> **For more information,** visit www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.

See videos of past games at www.va.gov/opa/speeven/wcg/docs/video.asp.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games

In Richmond, Virginia, from June 25-30, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will present the 32nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games. This event brings 600 disabled veterans from around the country, as well as from Puerto Rico and Great Britain. The competition is Olympic style with medals awarded throughout the week. It's the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world and has been the catalyst for several paralympic athletic careers.

How can I register to compete in the Games?

Registration is closed this year, but for future Games, check the Paralyzed Veterans of America Web site (pva.org). Or, contact your nearest VA medical facility (Recreation Therapy or Rehabilitation Medicine Services) or Paralyzed Veterans of America

chapter (sports department) for more information. Completed registration packets must be submitted to:

National Veterans Wheelchair Games Registration
Paralyzed Veterans of America
801 Eighteenth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006-3517

What types of sports are offered?

There are 17 different competitive sports, plus a variety of exhibition or demonstration sports that vary each year. Competitive sports include: air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field, handcycling, a motorized wheelchair rally, nine-ball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting and weightlifting.

Are there world-class wheelchair athletes at the Games?

Yes. Although nearly 25 percent of the veterans competing each year are first-timers, many experienced wheelchair athletes attend the event every year. Some of these athletes have competed on a national and international level. The Games enjoy a partnership with the U.S. Paralympics, a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Every 4 years since 1984, several athletes from the National Veterans Wheelchair Games have been selected to represent the United States in the Paralympic Games. Often, those veterans return to serve as mentors to newly injured veterans, offering invaluable guidance and unequalled inspiration.

What does it cost to watch the events?

All competitive events are free and open to the public. 

Tips for Traveling

With Your Service Dog



A trained service dog can help you travel comfortably and safely, but getting there can be tricky – for the dog.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has made it illegal for airlines and other travel vendors to deny access to needed special services, including your service dog. The Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Air Travel Act, 14 CFR Part 382, ensures that, with proper documentation, your service dog will be able to travel with you. With documentation and a few other considerations, you and your service dog can travel together more smoothly.



HAVE PROOF.

According to Part 382, airlines can use identification cards, written medical documentation, emergency tags, presence of harnesses, or the

“credible verbal assurances” of an individual with a disability. To make the approval process as simple and speedy as possible, provide as many forms of documentation as possible to the airline.

ADVANCE NOTIFICATION.

Let them know your dog is coming – airline, tour operator or any other travel personnel. In some cases, such as flights longer than 8 hours, airlines must be notified at least 48 hours in advance.

SHOT RECORDS.

Keep copies of your dog’s vaccination and other shot records for your trip. Vaccinations must be current.

TALK TO YOUR VETERINARIAN.

Find out if there are any diseases or parasites that your dog might be exposed to while traveling, and discuss with your veterinarian what you can do to protect your dog. Also, get a referral for veterinary services at your destination.

TAKE TREATS.

Pack with your dog's food, treats, a favorite toy and/or blanket. If you are traveling to places with special weather conditions, bring appropriate protective clothing for your dog.

PREPARE YOUR DOG FOR TRAVELING.

Limit your dog's food and water for 24 hours before flights or extended car travel. Give your dog a bathroom break as close as possible to travel time and as often as your type of travel allows during active travel – but remember for long trips your friend will need hydration just as you do (ice cubes can be handy).



ETIQUETTE.

For those who require the use of a service dog, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) allows service animals to travel in the cabin of an aircraft. Remember your doggie etiquette by keeping dogs on the floor of a plane, lying at your feet, and have available zip-lock bags and clean-up supplies in case of an accident.

SECURITY CHECKS.

According to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), your service dog will have to pass through the same screening process as all other passengers, including a metal detector. You will not be required to separate from the animal, but if the metal detector is set off, you will both be required to go through additional screening. The safety officer should ask permission before interacting with your service dog, and you will be required to keep the animal under control at all times.

FEES.


The ADA makes it against federal law for an airline to charge fees for you to fly with a service dog, as long as it does not obstruct the aisle or another area that could be used for emergency evacuation.

PROOF OF OWNERSHIP.

Carry two recent photographs that show your dog's face and body, one close up and another with the dog standing next to a common object (like a chair) for scale. You should also have a written detailed description of your dog: age, weight, height at shoulders, identifying markings, license number and contact

information for the licensing agency. Keep a tag on your dog's collar with identifying information such as "Service Dog" and your last name and a phone number.


FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Traveling With Your Service Dog
deltasociety.org/Page.aspx?pid=492 



HOME SWAP

Ever thought of home swapping for vacation? Home exchanging has long been a favorite European holiday option. In the past few years, however, this idea has slowly gained popularity in the North American travel market. It's a great, affordable choice for people who need accessible vacation accommodations.



If you've made accessibility modifications to your home, it makes sense to find another person who has made similar modifications. In fact, most veteran home exchangers suggest that you look for someone with a disability similar to yours when you need an accessible home. In most cases, if you find someone with a similar disability, the modifications you've each made will probably work for one another.

Principal home exchange agencies such as HomeLink.com, Intervac (intervac-homeexchange.com) and HomeExchange.com have facilitated exchange offers of people with mobility challenges for many years. Advanced search engines make it easy to find accessible homes from the database.

The principles are simple. The idea is to find somebody with a lifestyle similar to yours, in another part of the country or world. Then the two of you exchange homes; you both live in each other's house while you are on holiday. You both save money on lodging and you are able to stay in a comfortable home equipped with the accessibility modifications you need.

Finding a Home Exchange Partner

So, where do you look for a home exchange partner? The Internet is a good place to start, as it offers many accessible home exchange resources.

SWAPPED

TRADOME



Accessible sites

At the top of the list is the Vacation Home Exchange (independentliving.org/vacex/index.html), a free online listing service for accessible home exchanges. This electronic bulletin board currently has over 100 listings, most of which contain detailed access information. There is no cost to post or view listings.


Another good site is MatchingHouses.com, which now boasts almost 700 members. There is no charge to browse or submit listings (all accessible), but registration is required.

Mainstream sites

One way to increase your chances of finding a compatible exchange mate is to search some of the mainstream home exchange Web sites too. Most charge a fee for access, but only a few list accessible homes. Most of the listings do not have adapted bathrooms, so it's not an option for everyone. Still, some sites, like HomeExchange.com, have a large section of self-defined accessible homes, most of which are good choices for slow walkers.

If you go this route, be careful, because some Web sites share the same database. For example, Home Base Holidays (homebase-hols.com) and Invented-City.com both contain the same listings, but charge separate access fees.

Finally, if you're thinking about a home exchange, educate yourself about the process. Veteran home exchangers recommend *The Home Exchange Guide: How to Find Your Free Home Away From Home*, by M.T. Simon and T.T. Baker. It's an excellent primer on the subject.

Candy Harrington is the editor of *Emerging Horizons* (emerginghorizons.com) and the author of *Barrier-Free Travel: A Nuts and Bolts Guide for Wheelers and Slow Walkers*. Visit her blog at barrierfreetravels.com for access news, resources and industry updates. 

Block, Don't Guarantee, Your Accessible Room

The only way to determine if a property routinely blocks their accessible rooms upon reservation is to ask, but be careful how you phrase your query. Many people ask if the property will "guarantee" the room. This is the wrong terminology, as in hotel-speak, "guarantee" means "to secure with a credit card deposit."

The correct way to phrase your question is, "Can you block that accessible room for me?" In hotel terminology, "block" means to reserve a specific room for a specific guest. If the clerk says "no" or "sometimes" or hesitates, then select another property. If the accessible room that you reserve isn't available when you arrive, what good is your reservation?

Of course, even if you ask the right questions, you still might have to go through a few properties before you get the appropriate response. In the end, it's a numbers game. You just have to keep calling until you find a property that blocks accessible rooms. The best way to speed up your search is to begin with properties that have a better-than-average chance of answering your query affirmatively. Here are a few places to start:

- Many small properties, including B&Bs and inns, have the ability to reserve specific rooms.
- Microtel's former president, Michael Levin, was at the forefront of the accessibility movement in the mid-1990s when he instituted a policy to block all accessible rooms upon reservation. This policy continues today under new management.
- Hampton Inns have been very proactive about blocking accessible rooms. This is not a systemwide policy, so inquire directly with the property.
- Under the terms of a 1996 Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement, all Marriott Courtyard properties are required to block their accessible rooms.
- All BASS Properties (Holiday Inn, Crowne Plaza and Staybridge Suites) are required to block their accessible rooms under the terms of a 1998 DOJ settlement.

So the next time you reserve an accessible room, remember: it's not really reserved unless it's blocked.

Mountain Bike

Tips for Upper- and Lower-Limb Amputees

Mountain biking is a sport that consists of riding specially adapted bicycles off-road, often over rough terrain. Mountain bikes share similarities with other bikes, but incorporate features designed to enhance durability and performance.

This sport requires endurance, core strength and balance, bike-handling skills and self-reliance. The following tips are for bikers of all levels of ability, as well as for upper-limb and above-knee amputees.

General Tips

The most fundamental advice? Just get out and ride. Once you have made your bike and/or prosthetic modification, you'll find that your riding technique is the same as or similar to an able-bodied rider. Basically, most of your moves and timing for getting up, down, over and around obstacles are the same as any typical rider.

If you're a beginner, contact your local bike shops. They can help you make any necessary bike modifications and inform you about local bike clubs and group rides. You may want to look into lessons or just buddy up with other mountain bikers.

The best actual riding tip, regardless of your physical disposition or ability, is: "Mo" (momentum) is your friend. A rolling bike is easier to control and keep upright than a bike that's standing still. But don't confuse momentum with speed – these are two different things.

Too much speed will get you into as much trouble as a lack of momentum. Using too much brake or going too slow in certain situations can cause your bike to hang up or slide out. By letting your bike roll through or over obstacles, you're allowing the bike to do what it is designed to do.

Upper-Limb Amputees

- Invest in fully hydraulic disc brakes. They're worth the extra money.
- If you're a beginner, start with platform pedals. It's one less thing to worry about releasing from in case of a crash.
- Drop the saddle on sustained descents; this makes it easier to shift your weight around.
- If you're an above-elbow amputee, try angling your forearm more outboard; it makes it easier to turn to that side.
- Use the widest riser bar you can find; it will provide better steering control and handling because you have more leverage.
- Elbow angle is very dependent on the terrain. If you're doing mainly downhill, consider setting the elbow in a more extended position, and suffer a little more on the climb.
- Use a bigger front tire; the weight penalty is worth it. This will beef up the whole front end of the bike, and allow you to roll over obstacles more easily.

Riding

>> For more tips and information,
visit mtb-amputee.com.



Above-Knee Amputees

- Fit is critical. If investing in a new or used bike, take your time to find the one that's right for you.
- Starting with seat height and position, ride with a slightly lower-than-normal seat height to allow you to put your foot on the ground while your bike is in the upright position. Although some AK amputees prefer to slightly angle their seats toward their prosthetic leg, others prefer riding with the nose of the saddle pointing straight.
- When mounting or dismounting, lean the bike on an angle toward your good leg, making it easier to swing your prosthetic leg over the rear tire. Don't be too proud to use trees or other objects to help you get started.
- When training, try to push hard with your sound leg; otherwise, you will overload your other leg and cramps will come within hours. Practice getting your real foot/pedal in the 11:00 trigger position to be able to apply torque when needed.
- Rhythm is key; use your iPod!
- For beginners, use a toe clip for your prosthetic leg (set the strap as snug as possible to hold your foot in place) with a flat, clipless pedal for your good leg. The benefits of using a clipless pedal along with the toe clip are more power and pedaling efficiency.
- If you're going to be riding for more than an hour, apply Certain Dri deodorant to your residual limb; it will stop perspiration and allow better grip/suspension to the leg.
- If possible, use a separate socket for riding. It should be cut down 2 inches to prevent abrasion.
- Wear a knee warmer/converter over your knee and prosthetic leg; this will prevent mud, sand and pebbles from slipping into your socket. 🌀



How to Protect Your Feet While Traveling

by Robert P. (Bob) Thompson, CPed

Whether traveling for business or pleasure, many people spend a considerable amount of time deciding which types of shoes to pack – dress shoes, walking shoes, boots, sneakers for a workout, sandals for the beach and so forth. But equally important, especially for people whose feet are at risk, are the proper socks – ideally, padded socks that are appropriate for each type of activity you are likely to engage in.

Traveling often means negotiating unfamiliar terrain. Wearing the right padded socks and shoes can help protect the skin/soft tissue of the foot from cuts, bruises, blisters and other lesions; this is part of your first line of defense against foot ulcerations and infections. For amputees and other people whose feet are at risk, even a hotel room can be a minefield. Rooms are cleaned as well as possible before they are assigned to new guests, but many people have reported stepping on paper clips, pens, even bits of glass when walking around

their room. So it makes sense to *never* go barefoot (and the same is true on the beach).

How do you choose the right padded socks and footwear? First, select padded socks that have been designed for specific activities, such as walking around a city or on a country road, golfing (know the type and terrain of the course you'll be playing on), tennis, hiking, etc. The right padded socks will have terry fibers placed strategically below the foot's fat pads to protect the skin/soft tissue during the moves that are unique to a particular sport or leisure pursuit. They will also be designed to work with the specific shoe or boot the activity requires.

Fabric also is important. Padded socks made of acrylic or acrylic blends help ensure the resilience of the terry fibers and wick moisture away from the foot. Those made from all-natural fibers (cotton, wool, silk) absorb moisture but don't wick it away

Additional ways to protect your feet (and health) while traveling:

- Wear shoes that are broken in, even if they are relatively new. Don't pack a brand-new pair of shoes and hope they will be comfortable when you arrive at your destination. Purchasing the shoes while wearing the appropriate padded socks will help ensure the correct fit.
- If you'll be doing a considerable amount of walking on the way to your destination (think airports) and when you arrive, make sure your shoes will stand up to the challenge. If you can splurge in one area, let it be on the proper padded socks and shoes for your main activity. Peer-reviewed, published studies have shown that wearing clinically tested padded socks can help prevent injuries to the skin/soft tissue of the foot caused by impact, pressure and shear forces.
- Wear padded socks in hotels and/or vacation homes to help avoid punctures or scratches or fungal and bacterial infections. Put clean towels on bathroom floors to avoid bacteria and infections.
- Practice good foot hygiene. Wash and thoroughly dry your feet every day while traveling, more often if you are involved in different activities. Use mild soap, wash between the toes, and dry thoroughly, especially between toes.
 - Inspect your feet at least twice a day. Check the top and bottom of your feet and between your toes. If you have trouble seeing the bottom or other parts of your feet, use a mirror to help you.
- If you see or feel bumps, lumps, blisters, bruises, cuts, sores or cracked skin on your foot, or experience pain or tingling or no feeling (numbness), you may need to contact a health professional quickly. Try to identify a health professional at your destination *before* you leave so you will know who to turn to if you have foot or other health problems.



from the foot; this can lead to slippage (a cause of blisters) and a wet environment that sets the stage for fungal infection and bacterial growth.

Once you've selected the appropriate padded socks, try them on with the proper footwear for your activities.

Don't cut corners by thinking you can wear running sneakers to go hiking, for example. The integrated approach helps ensure that your shoes, padded socks and any insert or orthotic prescribed or recommended by a foot health professional work together as a system. This means they should be purchased and/or tried on, and worn all together when you engage in any *activity*, including walking around your hotel room, by the pool or on the beach. 🌀

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Exploring

Beyond the Comfort Zone



By Charlene Whelan, LCSW, MBA

Imagine yourself sitting alone in a quiet space with absolutely no distractions. No TV, radio, phone, Internet – no intrusions whatsoever. Would your own thoughts entertain you? No? Then maybe it's time for a "getaway!"

Changing things up from time to time is as essential to our emotional well-being as movement is to our physical condition. This means pushing the boundaries of our so-called comfort zone. No, watching the Travel Channel isn't good enough; simple watching is a passive activity that leaves us unchanged. Genuine travel will actually, inevitably, alter us.

Let's back up a bit. What does that mean: "genuine" travel? Have you ever met anyone who has traveled the globe and yet remained

remarkably unchanged? If so, it's because they were not truly engaged, not really open to new experiences. They didn't allow themselves to feel the vulnerability that goes with leaving our comfort zones. In a manner of speaking, they never really left home.

If we really cross the boundaries of our comfort zone, we *will* feel vulnerable. We *will* feel lost – and that's as it should be. We can't discover anything new unless we leave the familiar behind. Think of it as exploring, as opposed to feeling lost. Did early explorers know where they were going? No, they didn't, but we never say they were "lost."

Not all definitions of travel refer to going from one physical place to another location.

This concept of “genuine” travel is reflected, for example, in definitions that speak of going from one “point to another” or of “proceeding or advancing in any way.” Any new learning or anything that changes our perspective is a form of travel.

As long as we’re actively engaged outside our own comfort zones, “travel” can come at little or no cost – just as long as it’s an adventure. Adventures, by definition, can only occur outside familiar territory. They are crucial to our sense of vitality and they are the

it up a bit? Remove some of your travel “aids,” the props you’ve used to feel in control, such as going on scheduled tours or over-planning your journey. Take a break from watching the news or checking your e-mail. Don’t worry – the world will go on without your participation.

Having adventures outside our comfort zones may sound like a luxury to some of us. Major trauma in our lives shatters our illusions of permanence and amputation is obviously no exception. The task in its wake is to begin to create

“As long as we’re actively engaged outside our own comfort zones, “travel” can come at little or no cost.”

means by which we discover more of our own selves. Crossing back and forth over the boundaries of our comfort zones may not be a fountain of youth, but it is a fountain of life lived more fully.

Are you still reluctant to stretch those boundaries? How about some travel “aids?” Buddy up with a friend and hatch a plan to do something entirely different from your usual routines. Go to a new part of town for no reason other than you’ve never been there before. Try an exotic menu item at a restaurant you’ve never been to. Take a notebook, sit in the park or the mall and write down whatever thoughts cross your mind. You might be surprised at how much knowledge and new learning you can pull from inside yourself.

Do you consider yourself a seasoned traveler already? How about shaking

a *new* comfort zone. Until then, we are only surviving. Life in survival mode forces us to collapse into ourselves. The outside world becomes irrelevant until we heal. After all, we can’t run away from home if we have no home from which to run!

To lose a limb and find oneself again is a process. It doesn’t happen overnight. This is where, ironically, “travel” can be used as a tool to actually help us find our comfort zone. Think of the new perspectives that can be found in an amputee support group. Or that can be found at the Amputee Coalition’s National Conference. Being surrounded by others like ourselves helps us realize we belong somewhere. If we are able to know this, and remind ourselves of this over and over, we’ll have a sort of internal GPS. We’ll never *really* be lost. 🌀

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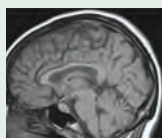
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Please leave a message for Dr. Scott H. Frey via email: freylab@missouri.edu or by calling 573/882-3866.



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Explore Your Abilities & *You Will Go Far!*

by Debra Kerper

People often ask me how I got into the travel business or, more specifically, why I arrange travel for people with special needs. I was diagnosed with lupus at the age of 20 after the birth of my first child. At age 23, shortly after the birth of my second child, I developed a serious infection in both of my ankles and my left femur, which evolved into osteomyelitis, causing me to become a full-time wheelchair user for the next 6 years and eventually leading to the below-knee amputation of my right leg.

>> **“I realized that this was an opportunity to combine my research skills, my experiences as a person with disabilities and my love of helping others into a part-time career, working at home.”**

This was long before the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) was in effect. There were no disabled parking spaces, and many public places, including restrooms, were not accessible. So, I learned to plan ahead. To prevent problems and frustration, I did advance research anytime I needed to go somewhere. Fortunately, I have always enjoyed research and have spent countless hours in libraries.



Debra Kerper (second from left) and family.

In the early '90s I experienced a serious lupus flare-up and was advised that I could no longer work. I eventually became bored and took some travel classes at the local community college. I realized that this was an opportunity to combine my research skills, my experiences as a person with disabilities and my love of helping others into a part-time career, working at home. Thus, Easy Access Travel was born, creating the opportunity to meet many wonderful and inspirational people who have allowed me to help make their travel dreams come true.

My clients have given me much more than I could ever give them. They have taught me the real meaning of living life to the fullest every day and how to appreciate the abilities we have without focusing on our disabilities. I work hard to respect each client's personal situation and to plan trips that will be best for them. I wake up every morning and count my blessings and I am truly grateful for all of the exceptional people who are in my life. 🌀

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