



# 60 TIPS to Travel With EASE

FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION





TRAVELING WITH ARTHRITIS

# READY TO GET AWAY? GOT A BIG WORK TRIP?

WITH PROPER PLANNING  
AND THE RIGHT TIPS, YOU  
CAN SEE THE WORLD AND  
MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

Be it for work or for pleasure, there's no doubt, traveling with arthritis can be a challenge. But it is achievable, and the rewards can be well worth the effort. In fact, when it comes to vacations, they aren't just fun, they can also boost your health. Studies show those who take yearly vacations are less likely to experience depression and fatigue, which can be especially important for people with arthritis who are more prone to experience both. With foresight, proper planning and a flexible outlook, you can travel — whether it's taking that trip of a lifetime, visiting the kids or grandkids for the holidays or regular work trips. Ready to go? Here's how to do it wisely.



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# PLANNING

- 1** Travel can be stressful. But proper planning ensures smooth sailing. Do your research online, but also reach out to experts on the ground at your destination. Plan everything well in advance, and build in plenty of time for rests, time to get from point A to point B and even time to decompress after you get home — no redeye return flights before or on a workday.
- 2** If you're traveling with others, make sure they understand your limitations. If possible, travel with people who have similar needs; for example, book a trip through an accessible travel company.
- 3** Plan for Murphy's Law: what can go wrong, etc. If you're traveling by car, sign up for a roadside assistance program, such as [AAA](#).
- 4** Pick your destination wisely. Mayan temples are amazing to visit, but climbing an endless stairway is not. Ask ahead about ADA accessibility — elevators, curb cuts, trams and other conveniences. But note, ADA requirements only apply to the U.S., not to international travel.
- 5** Booking well in advance may ensure a better deal and will increase your odds for more convenient and comfortable options, such as an airplane bulkhead seat with more leg room, flight times that sync with your best times of day and hotel rooms with convenient locations and amenities.
- 6** Try to stick to healthy routines as much as possible, including your medication schedule, a healthy diet, an exercise regimen and getting plenty of water and restful sleep.





# LODGING

**7** The importance of location can't be overstated. Staying close to sites maximizes not only your time but also your energy for getting around.

**8** Researching your accommodations and reading reviews online can help, but also talk to the hotel's front desk agent for real-time insights. Tell the agent your mobility needs and what you plan to do while in town so she can provide the right assistance.

**9** Ask for a handicapped or ADA accessible room when making your reservation, and be specific about what you require. While these rooms can provide ease of access and handy features, like wider doorways and stepless showers, an ADA room label doesn't guarantee it will meet your needs. And remember that [ADA rules](#) don't apply outside the U.S.

**10** If you need to keep medications, such as biologics or insulin, cold, call ahead to request a room with a refrigerator, or use sealable bags and ice from the hotel.

**11** To get the sleep you need, request blackout blinds and a white noise machine, and ask if a quiet zone or floor with extended quiet hours is available. Some hotels also offer a menu of pillows of varying firmness.

**12** On the morning of your arrival, call the hotel and ask to be "pre-blocked" into your preferred room location. An on-site agent can make a room assignment before you check in. The concept is like airlines' preflight check-in and will further improve your chances of getting the room you want.

## Key Questions to Ask About Lodging:

- How close are the accommodations to sites, dining, a hospital, etc.?
- How close is parking to the lobby?
- Is the hotel shuttle equipped with a lift or ramp?
- How accessible are public areas — hallways, paths, swimming pools, etc.?
- Is there an accessible room near the elevator or on the ground floor?
- What is the bed height? If it's too high, ask for a rollaway bed. Too low? Ask for an extra mattress.
- Is there a refrigerator in the room?
- Are there lever handles on doors and faucets?
- Are light switches, thermostat and drapery pullers easy to access and control?
- Is there a walk-in shower or tub?

- Is a shower bench available?
- Are toilet and shower grab bars on the right or left wall? This makes a difference if your body is stronger on one side.
- Are grab bars parallel (best if gripping is problematic) or perpendicular or diagonal (best for pulling yourself up from a seated position) to the bathroom floor?



**Book a hotel with a hot tub, pool or massage services to help soothe aches and pains.**



# PACKING

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands and arms as they pack a suitcase. The person is wearing a light-colored, textured knit sweater. Their hands are visible, one holding a piece of light-colored fabric, possibly a shirt or sweater, and the other reaching into the suitcase. The suitcase is dark-colored and appears to be filled with various items. The background is out of focus, showing hints of a room with a plant and some furniture.

**13** Choose your bag wisely.

Wheeled luggage that's sturdy yet lightweight with an adjustable handle is best, such as hard shell, polycarbonate luggage. Opt for four wheels — rather than two — that swivel 360 degrees. This enables you to pull, push or walk beside your bag; whichever is most comfortable.

**14** Call your hotel to find out what you won't need to take. Most hotels stock rooms with hair dryers, irons and basic toiletries. Ask if laundry or dry-cleaning service is on-site, you'll be able to wash clothes, which means fewer items to pack.

**15** Pack small, travel-size soap, shampoo, lotions and other toiletries in gallon-sized zipper bags even if you aren't flying. The bags contain leaks if bottles fail and can double as ice packs.

**16** Pack clothes that mix and match so you can create several outfits from just a few pieces.

**17** If you can, wear your heaviest clothes during travel. If you plan to take a coat, a weighty pair of shoes or other heavy clothes like jeans, don them for your flight to lighten luggage if the temperature allows.

**18** Pack an extra week's worth of medication and backup prescriptions. Make sure they are clearly labeled, and keep them with you — not in checked bags — in case your stay is extended or your luggage gets lost. Keep a list with you of your medications with doctors' and pharmacists' names and contact information as well as medical information that may be needed in case of emergency.



**Pack water and healthy, easy-to-tote snacks, like an apple or almonds, to avoid grabbing fast food.**



# FLYING

- 19** Book an aisle or bulkhead seat to increase your legroom. If there's no assigned seating, ask a ticketing agent for an aisle or bulkhead seat.
- 20** On days you're flying, wear compression socks to prevent swelling and deep vein thrombosis, a potentially dangerous blood clot in your legs. Stay hydrated — drink a bottle of water on the way to the airport, pack the empty bottle in your carry on and then refill it once you land. And get up to walk and stretch during the flight.
- 21** Before you leave for the airport, print and fill out a [disability notification card](#) from the Transportation Security Administration TSA, 866-289-9673 or by visiting [tsa.gov](#) and if you've had a joint replaced, bring a note from your doctor documenting your "internal medical device" or "implant" as they TSA calls them. The notes won't guarantee easy passage, but they can help with communication.
- 22** Skip the hassle of driving to the airport and parking by arranging a ride from a friend, taxi, ride-sharing service or shuttle. If you do drive, park off-site and take the shuttle to and from the terminal to avoid a long walk from the airport parking lot.
- 23** Take advantage of skycaps' curbside services like baggage check and wheelchair lifts, which can wheel you from the terminal curb to your seat on the plane.
- 24** Make arrangements in advance for assistance with airport security screening by calling [TSA Cares](#) at 855-787-2227 or by visiting [tsa.gov](#). Call 72 hours prior to traveling so checkpoint support with a TSA customer Service Manager can be arranged if needed.
- 25** If you've had a joint replacement, let a TSA security checkpoint agent know. Simply tell the agent you have a hip (or other) "implant." Avoid the term "prosthetic"; the agent may ask you to remove it.
- 26** Instead of going through a metal detecting scanner, ask to go through a full-body scanner or advanced imaging technology (AIT). Even with AIT, your implant might trigger a pat-down, and if it's too painful or you are unable to raise your arms above your head, a pat-down may be required. If you require a pat-down, ask for a private screening, because the agents must take your belongings with you to the screening area so you won't be separated from them — a courtesy not always extended if you just step aside. Before the pat-down, let the TSA agent know if and where you have sensitive or painful areas.
- 27** Pre-board the plane when the gate attendant announces pre-boarding if you require extra time, and ask the flight staff if you need assistance.



**Keep your ID or passport and boarding pass in a pouch that's easily accessible at the airport.**





## Pre-Flight Checklist

Take these steps before you take off.

### 72 Hours:

- Get a backup prescription for each of your medications.
- Call [TSA Cares](tel:855-787-2227) (855-787-2227) or go online ([tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov)) to arrange for help with security screening — including wheelchair escorts.
- Confirm all reservations, including lodging, shuttles, rental car, or wheelchair or scooter rental.
- Make a list of travel essentials.
- Start packing.

### 48 Hours:

- Put insurance and medical information in your carry-on.
- Pick up extra medications you may need.
- Finish packing.

### 24 Hours:

- Check in online for your flight and print your boarding pass — even if you have it on your smartphone.
- Get cash to tip those helping you with baggage and transportation. Save sore fingers by putting cash, identification and boarding pass in a pouch around your neck.

### 12 Hours:

- Place suitcases by the door or in your car.
- Check flight status online for any changes.
- Lay your clothes out for your travel day.
- Set your alarm and get a full night's sleep.

## Flying With Medications

Flying with medications that must be kept cold, such as biologics or insulin, has its own set of challenges. First, check the fine print on your medication's safety information — some drugs that require long-term refrigeration can be kept at room temperature for short periods of time. When in doubt, use these tips to keep them cool.

Prepare to carry on. If you are traveling by plane, plan to pack your medications in your carry on. That way you will have them with you even if your checked luggage is delayed or lost. Plus, you can better control the temperature of medications if you have them with you. This is particularly important for many liquid medications, which should be kept between 36 to 46 degrees Fahrenheit.

Pick your cooler. Insulated, temperature-controlled medication travel cases (available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) keep medication cool for up to 30 hours with freezable gel packs. Some have built-in digital thermometers so you can monitor the temperature.

Prepare for screening. Whichever type of bag you pack, include a copy of all your prescriptions in a sealable bag, particularly if you are carrying on more than 3.4 ounces of liquid, per the [3-1-1 liquids rule](#) (the limit set by the TSA). Also toss in a few sealable plastic bags in case you need a lower-tech solution: ice. And alert your airline at check-in that you have medications to carry on. Allow for extra time at the screening checkpoint, where the TSA officer may remove the medications from your bag and examine them. Be prepared to show copies of the prescriptions you have packed if there are concerns or questions.

Enlist the help of flight attendants. If flights are delayed or you are concerned your primary cooling system is no longer keeping medications cool, ask flight attendants if your medications can be stored in the plane's refrigerator. (Be sure to label medications with your name and seat number, and remember to get them back before deplaning.) If refrigerator space is not an option, ask for ice. Use the sealable bags you packed to make a quick icepack.





# DRIVING

- 28** Use a swivel maneuver to get in and out of your car: With your back to the car, sit sideways in the seat, then swing your legs into a forward-facing position. Do the reverse to get out. A swivel seat cushion or plastic garbage bag on the car seat makes swiveling easier. Devices like the Stander HandyBar, which hooks onto a door latch, and the Stander CarCaddie, a soft handle strap that attaches to the car door (both available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)), can help you lift and lower yourself.
- 29** Reduce reaching when buckling seatbelts, reduce reaching with a seatbelt handle or reacher, a rubber handle that attaches to the belt. To ease buckling, connect a rigid seatbelt extender, like Buckle Booster (both available at [seatbelt\\_extenderpros.com](https://www.seatbelt_extenderpros.com)), to your car's existing buckle.
- 30** On road trips, be sure to stop every hour or two to get out and walk around and stretch for five to 10 minutes.
- 31** Remote car fobs make unlocking and locking cars a snap, but turning the key to start the engine can be challenging. If you don't have a push-button start in your car, have a remote starter installed, or attach a large key tuner.
- 32** To ease strain on hands and wrists, hold the wheel at 5 and 7 o'clock, add a thick steering wheel cover for a more comfortable grip or attach a spinner knob (also known as a body knob) to the wheel. Opt for smart sideview mirrors (available in some models and as an aftermarket upgrade) to detect traffic in your blind spots.
- 33** Keep a handy tool in your car to provide extra leverage to unscrew and tighten your gas cap when it's time to refuel (available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)).
- 34** Talk to your doctor about getting a handicap parking permit. A placard is assigned to you, not to a car, so you can take it with you when driving or riding in other cars in the U.S.
- 35** Additional or larger mirrors and a back-up camera and sonar sensors can be added to any vehicle to help with backing up and parking.



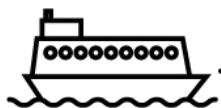
## Check Your Driving Skills

Need help behind the wheel or want to test your skills? A driver rehabilitation specialist is an occupational therapist who specializes in vehicle modifications and techniques to improve driver safety and comfort. A specialist can evaluate your driving skills and “prescribe” tips and modifications to your car as needed. To find a specialist near you, visit the American Occupational Therapy Association at [aota.org](https://www.aota.org). To see how well your current car fits your needs, check out [car-fit.org](https://www.car-fit.org).



# CRUISING

- 36** With meals, entertainment and amenities just outside your stateroom door, a cruise can be a perfect travel option if you have limited mobility. You can participate in as many or as few activities and shore excursions as you like.
- 37** Many of the same hacks for booking your lodging can be applied to booking a cruise, such as reserving an accessible cabin.
- 38** Consider a smaller ship, which has shorter distances to walk. However, be sure the ship has all the amenities you need — larger ships typically have more amenities. You can request a cabin close to the elevator and main deck to ease access. You may also be able to rent a scooter to use onboard.
- 39** Think about what you plan to do: Are you more interested in the onboard experience or in the port destinations and shore excursions? If the ports are key to your trip, prioritize and pace yourself.
- 40** Confirm accessibility details in advance, especially for shore excursions; some use local shuttles that may not have lifts or easy steps.
- 41** If needed, consult the onboard medical crew. They're there to help.





# WORKING



**42** Pack anything you might need, even if you don't need it regularly at home, e.g., acetaminophen/ibuprofen, joint brace, cane, etc.

**43** Use a pill organizer. Or pack medications in baggies for each day (or per time you take them) so you don't miss a dose. Put reminders or alarms in your phone so you don't forget to take them while you're busy working.

**44** Travel with a work buddy. They can bring you ice if joints flare and even help put on your shoes or tote luggage.

**45** Use a backpack for your computer and work supplies, and wear both straps. It evenly distributes the weight and won't strain your joints as much as a shoulder or messenger-style bag. Strap the backpack to your roller bag when walking to give your back and shoulders a break.

**46** Enroll in [TSA PreCheck](#) or [CLEAR](#). Lines at security checkpoints are shorter, and you don't have to remove your shoes, belts, light jackets, laptops and [3-1-1 liquids](#).

**47** Plan your flights during the day. Don't try to take overnight flights to save money because sleeping on a plane is difficult in the best of circumstances.

**48** Stretch every morning and night — you can even do this in bed. It's a great way to start and end your day, especially when travelling for work.





# GETTING AROUND

**49** Plan meticulously. That includes mapping distances you plan to walk and even calling ahead to restaurants to see if they have an accessible bathroom.

**50** Don't try to cram all your sightseeing into one day. Pace yourself, plan for breaks and drink plenty of water.

**51** If you're unable to walk long distances safely, even with support, you might want to rent a wheelchair for your trip.

**52** When traveling in the U.S., check the local municipality for ADA-accessible shuttle services' schedules. Call ahead for private shuttles, such as those for hotels.

**53** If arthritis in your hands or shoulders makes it hard to propel a wheelchair, consider renting a scooter to get around.

**54** When you use ride-sharing services, let them know if you have a wheelchair or need door-to-door service as opposed to curbside service.

**55** Those who have sun sensitivity, such as people with lupus, might want to consider a destination with indoor passageways and transportation, such as Montreal's Underground City.

## How to Safely Sit & Stand

To sit safely, follow these 3 steps:

1) While standing, make sure you can feel the edge of the chair against the back of your legs; 2) Slightly bend your knees and hips as you slowly and gently lower yourself into a seated position on the front of the seat, reaching back to touch the armrests or seat of the chair; 3) Scoot back so your buttocks and back are fully in contact with the chair back and avoid "popping" down.

To stand safely, follow these 3 steps:

1) Scoot to the edge of the chair, place your feet hip-width apart and slightly behind your knees to provide a solid support base; 2) Lean forward, flexing at your hips and go "nose over toes" as you lean; 3) Push with your legs and straighten your body as you push. If the chair has armrests, push off them with your palms or forearms; avoid gripping them.



# WALKING

**56** Prepare physically even before you leave. Consider physical therapy or adapting your fitness regimen for a few months before your departure to get in shape for the walking and other activities you would like to do.

**60** If using a cane on stairs, the proper technique is slightly different than without a cane: Going up, lead with the good leg, then the bad leg, then the cane. Going down, lead with the cane, then the bad leg, then the good leg.

**57** Use proper posture while walking to protect joints: Stand up straight with shoulders back and down, and relax shoulders and arms. Keep eyes forward and abs and glutes tight for stability.

**58** Wear comfortable shoes with good arch, ankle and heel support. A rule of thumb: Skip shoes you can bend in half.

**59** Use a cane or other assistive device when needed and as instructed by your doctor or physical or occupational therapist. A single-tip cane can steady you, but a cane with four tips and a pivoting base can provide more support, especially on uneven surfaces.



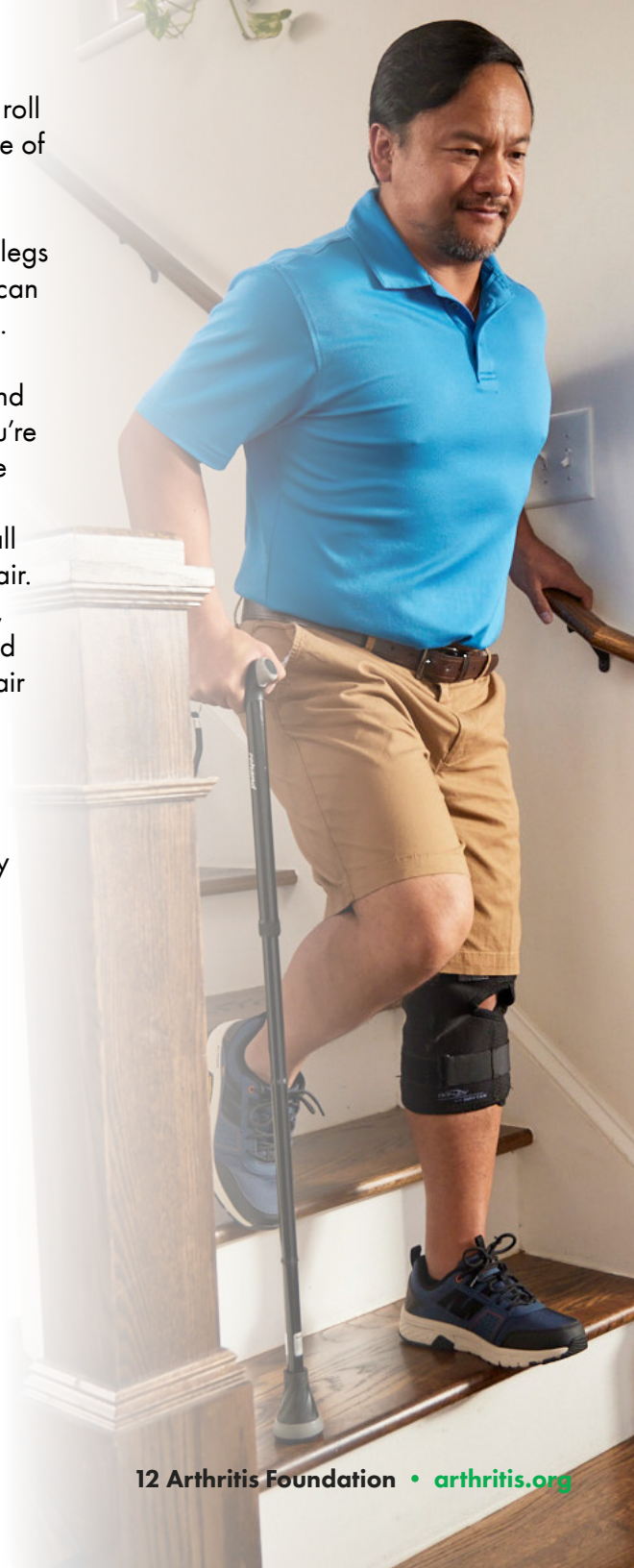
## Fall Prevention Tips

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related illness and death in the United States. One risk factor for falling is poor neuromuscular function, which is common with arthritis. The good news is fall-prevention programs can cut the risk of falls by up to a third by addressing everything from leg muscle weakness and poor vision to environmental hazards, such as slippery surfaces and the effect of medications, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to the report, the most effective single strategy involves exercise or physical therapy, which studies have found can reduce fall risk by 14% to 37%, by improving gait, balance and lower body strength.

Tai chi, yoga, water workouts and walking are all low-impact, and they build strength while improving flexibility, coordination and balance. These physical activities can also reduce arthritis symptoms, including pain and stiffness, while also boosting your overall health. Here are more ways to reduce the risk of falling:

- Remove clutter and cords from high-traffic areas, including throw rugs.
- Use assistive devices — canes, walkers, braces, wheelchairs — when needed. You can always set them aside on good days.

- Don't multitask while walking, like staring at your smartphone. And if you walk and talk, use hands-free devices and features.
- Have your eyesight checked regularly.
- Stick to well-lit entryways, steps and stairways that are clutter-free and have directional lighting. And use railings on stairs.
- Avoid wet floors and other slippery surfaces.
- Don't walk around in socks or pantyhose. Wear slippers with some tread instead.
- Pets underfoot are a major cause of falls, so be sure their collars have a bell to alert you when they're nearby, and use a baby or doggie gate to block them from busy areas during busy times, like kitchens during meal prep and dinner.
- If you sense a fall is inevitable, here's how to land to lower your risk of injury:
  - Relax your body so you can roll to the ground to absorb some of the impact.
  - Avoid stretching out arms or legs to brace your fall. Doing so can lead more easily to fractures.
  - Take your time getting up. And before you do, first see if you're injured. Call for help if you're injured. If all is well, slowly roll on your side, then onto all fours and then crawl to a chair. Kneeling in front of the chair, raise one foot to the floor and slowly use the seat of the chair to push yourself up to a standing position.
  - Tell your doctor about your fall, even if you're OK. It may be a sign of something that needs attention.
- Turn to the side instead of hitting the ground frontward or backward.
- Tilt your head down toward your chin to protect your head from impact.





## Accessible Travel Resources

American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), the world's largest association of travel professionals, is the global advocate for travel agencies, the travel industry and the traveling public. [asta.org](http://asta.org)

WheelchairTravel — Accessible Travel blog was founded by John Morris and is a catalog of what Morris has learned while exploring the world with one hand, a passport and power wheelchair. [wheelchairtravel.org](http://wheelchairtravel.org)

Sage Traveling provides customized, accessible holiday travel for disabled and elderly clients to European destinations. [sagetraveling.com](http://sagetraveling.com)

Easy Access Travel is dedicated to meeting the special needs of disabled and mature travelers by researching clients' vacation choices and providing the necessary information — eliminating "surprises" — to make their trip enjoyable and rewarding. [easyaccesstravel.com](http://easyaccesstravel.com)

The Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (SATH) is a nonprofit organization that works to promote accessibility and inclusion in the travel and hospitality industry. [sath.org](http://sath.org)

Mobility International USA (MIUSA) is a nonprofit organization that provides resources and information for travelers with disabilities, including travel planning guides, disability-specific travel insurance options and information on accessible destinations around the world. [miusa.org](http://miusa.org)

accessibleGO is a leading accessible travel website in the United States for people with disabilities to book their travel needs and be part of a dynamic community of like-minded travelers. [accessiblego.com](http://accessiblego.com)

The Americans With Disabilities Act, [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov), [ada.gov](http://ada.gov)

Airport and flight information: Transportation Security Administration (TSA), [tsa.gov](http://tsa.gov) (866-289-9673), [TSA Cares](http://tsa.gov) (855-787-2227), [TSA 3-1-1 liquids rule](http://tsa.gov), [TSA PreCheck](http://tsa.gov)

CLEAR provides pre-screening to speed up and ease the screening process without removing your shoes, laptops, 3-1-1 liquids, belts or light jackets at airport security. [clearme.com](http://clearme.com)

National Park information: The National Park Service (NPS) is committed to making facilities, programs, services and employment accessible for visitors and employees with disabilities. [nps.gov](http://nps.gov)

Accessible equipment rental: Scootaround Powered by WHILL provides rental of a wheelchair, scooter, powerchair, rollator, oxygen and other mobility equipment. [scootaround.com](http://scootaround.com)

Arthritis Foundation travel resources: Live Yes! With Arthritis podcast: [Traveling Well With Arthritis](http://arthritis.org)



**We're so excited  
to have you in our  
community and  
can't wait to help  
you Live Your Yes!**

**IT'S GREAT  
TO MEET YOU!**



**Arthritis  
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### **Helpful Resources**

To get started on your personal journey, we hope you'll take advantage of some of the many tools and resources designed for you. Here are a few to get you started.

- Join a [Live Yes! Connect Group](#) today to make connections and get information and resources to help you manage your pain.
- Have questions? Our trained staff is available to you to provide [one-on-one personal support](#).
- [A variety of tools](#) are accessible online to help you reduce pain, promote your independence and live your best life.
- Ready to connect locally? Check out programs and [events in your area](#).

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