

FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION

47 TIPS to travel with EASE



Traveling With Arthritis

READY TO GET AWAY? WITH PROPER PLANNING YOU CAN SEE THE WORLD.

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, vacations 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 or simply visiting the kids or grandkids for the holidays.

Ready to take that trip? Here's how to do it wisely.

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Planning
- 3 Lodging
- 4 Packing
- 5 Flying
- 6 Driving
- 7 Cruising
- 8 Getting Around
- 9 Walking

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 red-eye return flights before 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, will go wrong. 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 accessibility – elevators, trams and other conveniences.

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, exercise regimen and getting plenty of water and restful sleep.

LODGING



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

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 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 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.

PACKING



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

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.

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 onsite; 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.

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.

FLYING



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

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 and get up to walk and stretch during the flight.

21 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 offsite and take the shuttle to and from the terminal to avoid a long walk from the airport parking lot.

22 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.

23 Make arrangements in advance for assistance with airport security screening by calling TSA Cares (855/787-2227; tsa.gov). Call 72 hours prior to traveling so checkpoint support with a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Customer Service Manager can be arranged if needed.

24 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.

DRIVING



25 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 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)), can help you lift and lower yourself.

26 Reduce reaching when buckling seatbelts with a seatbelt handle or reacher (seatbelt [extenderpros.com](https://www.extenderpros.com)), a rubber handle that attaches to the belt. To ease buckling, connect a rigid seatbelt extender, like Buckle Mate ([mybucklemate.com](https://www.mybucklemate.com)), to your car's existing buckle.

27 On road trips, be sure to stop every hour or two to get out and walk around and stretch for five to 10 minutes.

28 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 (aka a brody 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.

29 Talk to your doctor about getting a handicap parking permit. A placard is assigned to you, not a car, so you can take it with you when driving or riding in other cars in the U.S.

CRUISING



30 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 as you like.

31 Many of the same hacks for booking your lodging can be applied to booking a cruise, such as reserving an accessible cabin.

32 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.

33 Think about what you plan to do: Are you more interested in the onboard experience or in the port destinations? If the ports are key to your trip, prioritize and pace yourself.

34 Confirm accessibility details in advance, especially for shore excursions; some use local shuttles that may not have lifts or easy steps.

35 If needed, consult the onboard medical crew. They're there to help.

GETTING AROUND



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

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

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

39 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.

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

41 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.

42 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.

WALKING



43 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.

44 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.

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

46 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.

47 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.

Welcome to the Live Yes! Arthritis Network.

We realize you didn't sign up for arthritis. Our family is probably one you never planned to join. But it's a special community where you'll find strength, support and solutions to live life to the fullest.

As part of the largest, most supportive arthritis community, we'll help make your everyday life easier. We'll cheer you on during the good days and lift your spirits on the bad ones. And we'll challenge you, too — to help redefine the future for all 54 million of us living with arthritis.

Where to Start

While we're getting to know each other, here's where to start, depending on what you need and want.

I WANT TO CONNECT with people going through a similar experience.
Go to liveyes.arthritis.org

I LOVE DATA and want to know more about the latest research.
Go to arthritis.org/arthritis-cure

I NEED PRACTICAL ADVICE and tools to improve my everyday life
Go to arthritis.org/Tools

Need help now?

Call us 24/7 at 844-571-HELP or visit arthritis.org.

**IN LESS THAN
5 MIN YOU CAN
BE CONNECTED.**

The turning point in my arthritis journey was meeting others who understood what I was going through. Thanks to the Live Yes! Arthritis Network, I've found encouragement and advice to help me adjust to my new normal. This amazing community has empowered me to live my most meaningful life.

— Liz M.



Live Yes!SM
Arthritis Network