



A Practical Guide To Planning Accessible Travel

Travel isn't just about the destination – it's about independence, new memories, and discovering what's possible. For people living with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), taking that first trip or even beginning to prepare for one can feel exciting, but also overwhelming.

That's why this travel guide was developed in partnership with **Becoming rentABLE** and **Cory Lee**, a travel fanatic who is living with SMA, to serve as an all-in-one resource for people who are new to travel or just beginning to explore what travel may look like for them.

From planning ahead to preparing for the unexpected, this guide is designed to help take some of the pressure off, answer common questions, and support you in planning your next trip with more confidence.



Cory L, SMA Patient Advocate, SMA Type 2



Before Departure

Set yourself up for a smooth journey from the start

Before you set off on your adventure, it's a great idea to make a list of things to double-check, questions to ask, and information to have at-the-ready. Try opening up a note on your phone as you take a look at the checklist below to start a list of key reminders for yourself that may help avoid unexpected hiccups along your journey.



Mobility and Equipment Needs

- Schedule or complete a service check on your mobility device to be sure nothing needs to be tuned up ahead of your trip
- Keep information on the exact dimensions and weight of your device written down in your Notes app or on an easily accessible card, for rental vehicles, airlines, hotels, and rental properties
- Pack essential spare parts like a joystick controller, armrests, and footrests
- Bring a copy of your device's user manual in case it needs to be handled by hotel or airline staff
- If you're able, pack a backup mobility option if available for tight spaces or short distances
- Check the weather before your trip and pack necessary water protection for wheelchairs and other medical devices



Roadtrip and Accommodations Preparation

- Take a lap around your vehicle to check the tires and make sure your vehicle ramp is clean and properly working
- Carefully plan out the places you want to see and look into what accessible hotels are nearby
- Get an email address for the hotel or short-term rental where you will be staying so that you can send over questions in writing and request to see photos of the room to ensure their accessibility features meet your needs
- Whenever possible, book your accessible short-term rental or hotel in advance
- Do some research for other accessible hotels nearby, as a backup just in case something goes wrong
- Make a list of accessible restrooms to stop at along the way; when possible, try planning a route that utilizes major highways, as rest stops on those highways are required to have Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) public facilities!
- Try researching the location you'll be traveling to online for additional views of the space



Check out the SMashing My Limits Travel Questions resource for a list of questions you can ask to prepare for your upcoming travel



Power, Charging, and Backup Considerations

- Make a note of the battery type and watt-hour rating for all of your power-dependent equipment to ensure your accommodation(s) have proper charging capabilities
- Confirm your accommodation has accessible outlets near the bed before you book
- Pack all chargers, cables, and adapters in a bag carried close by
- Bring a portable power bank for devices that may need charging on the go



Medical Equipment Transport and Documentation

- Request a Letter of Medical Necessity from your physician for all medical equipment; while not always required, it can help prevent delays
- Have a list of your current medications and a brief medical summary outlined in one easily accessible place
- Add information like serial numbers, make, and model for all medical devices, to your Notes app, in case of damage or loss
- Pack all medications and critical supplies in an easily accessible bag
- Save the name and contact information for a medical facility near your destination



Cory's Tip: Pre-Trip Prep

When it comes to travel, preparation is everything. My routine always starts with double-checking my wheelchair. I make sure it's fully charged, in good working condition, and that I've packed any spare parts I might need.

Taking the time to prepare ahead of your trip gives you more freedom to relax and actually enjoy the experience once you arrive.



Who to Call...

...you can't get medical documentation in time: Contact your care coordinator or physician's office directly and explain your timeline. Ask whether a portal message or fax can speed up the process.

...you need to verify battery regulations: Call your airline's accessibility line directly and reference Transportation Security Administration (TSA) guidelines at [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov). Also, check with your device manufacturer for your battery's watt-hour specifications, as airlines will ask for this.

Transit

Navigate your journey with confidence

Getting from point A to B with a mobility device takes a bit of planning and knowing how to advocate for yourself along the way.



Mobility and Equipment Needs

- Research paratransit or accessible rideshare options (many require advance registration)
- Call your transport's dedicated accessibility line (rather than general customer service) at least 48-72 hours before departure to confirm all accommodations; keep that phone number handy in case you need to reach them while traveling
- Call ahead to restaurants, venues, and attractions to confirm step-free access
- Identify accessible restroom locations at planned venues before you go
- If your equipment is damaged during travel, be sure to report this damage right away; many places require you to report damage within a very short window



Request the Right Support

- Be specific about the assistance you need, including boarding help, a vehicle lift or ramp, or transfer support
- Confirm the vehicle can accommodate your mobility device's specific dimensions and weight



Have a Backup Plan

- Identify a backup transportation option before you leave home
- Save accessibility contact numbers for each provider in your phone before you depart



Cory's Tip: Navigating Transportation

The most important thing to know when traveling is to never assume that accessibility is guaranteed. Always confirm everything in advance and then confirm it again closer to your departure.

And always have a backup plan. Delays and issues can happen, but being prepared helps you stay in control of the situation.



Who to Call If...

...your accommodations are denied at the gate: Ask to speak with the airline's Complaint Resolution Official (CRO). All US airlines are required to have a CRO available who has the authority to resolve issues on the spot.²

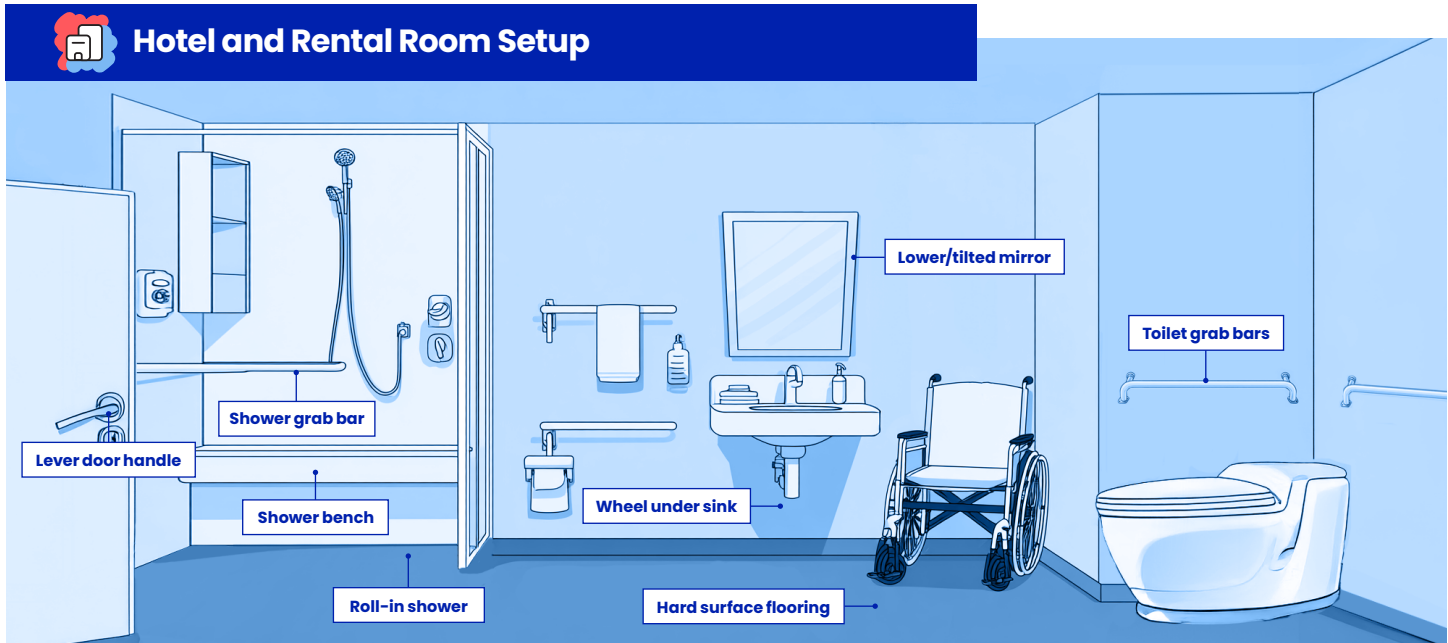
...your accessible transportation doesn't show up: Contact the provider's dispatch line immediately and document the missed pickup. Have a backup option, like an accessible taxi or rideshare, identified before your trip.



Accommodations

Know what to look for and what to do when things don't go as planned

As of 2023, there are 1.5M short-term rentals (STRs) actively available in the United States at any given time. However, less than 1% of all US housing is accessible to wheelchair users, and many lack the full spectrum of features and amenities required for the SMA community.^{3,4} **Becoming rentABLE** goes beyond a standard “accessible” label by verifying over 63 mobility and cognitive features so renters can find accessible short-term rentals that fit their specific needs.



Cory's Tip: Booking an Accessible Rental

When booking a short-term rental, my non-negotiables are a step-free entrance, a roll-in shower, proper bed height, and enough space to comfortably maneuver my wheelchair throughout the property.

I always ask for detailed photos or videos before booking.

The key is to ask questions, be specific about your needs, and never rely on accessibility labels alone.



Who to Call If...

...your accommodation doesn't match its accessibility listing: Contact the booking platform right away and document any discrepancies with photos.

...you experience a power outage affecting medical equipment: In case of emergency, call your medical equipment provider or supplier first. Most offer 24/7 emergency lines for situations like this and can often provide quick repairs or replacements.

Report the outage and any equipment damage to the property owner or hotel management immediately.

...you need emergency medical assistance: Have the address and phone number of the nearest hospital or urgent care saved. Always carry your insurance card, list of medications, and a brief medical summary.

Visit **www.SMAshingMyLimits.com** to sign up for updates and be the first to know when new resources are available.

References:

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3. Congress.gov. Short-Term Rental Markets: A Primer. Accessed April 2, 2026. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12920>
4. U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. Chairman Bob Casey's Opening Statement, "Laying the Foundation: Housing Accessibility and Affordability for Older Adults and People with Disabilities." Accessed April 2, 2026. https://www.aging.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/f73b728c-061b-fdfd-48ca-037ac3fbe801/Opening%20Statement_Casey%207.20.2023.pdf