



## TRAVEL CAN BE TRYING,

especially for those with physical disabilities, and those who are in good shape at the outset will stand a better chance of maximizing the experience.

While most of us have little desire to shoot whitewater rapids, bungee jump, or pull ourselves inch by inch up Mount Kilimanjaro, there are lots of opportunities for less extreme exercise and recreation, both close to home and on the road. Like other Americans, people with physical disabilities don't get enough exercise and are even more prone to weight gain.

This can seriously impact activities of daily living, lead to secondary disabilities like rotator cuff injuries, diabetes, or high blood pressure, and result in loss of independence.

Finding a workout routine or activities you enjoy and can incorporate into your daily or weekly schedule is important for long-term health and well-being. Bocce, billiards, bowling, cycling, swimming, golfing, kayaking, or just walking or hiking are all considered lifetime sports, activities that can be enjoyed at any age. For local adaptive programs and facilities, contact your parks department, YMCA or YWCA, rehabilitation center, or Center for Independent Living. When visiting other cities, such organizations can direct you to pools with lifts, bowling alleys with ball ramps, bike rental centers with handcycles, golf courses with adapted carts, or accessible hiking trails. Convention and Visitors Bureaus are also increasingly aware of which facilities in their communities provide wheelchair access.

## PARK AND RECREATION RESOURCES

A wonderful online resource is the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD), which lists hundreds of adaptive recreational programs by state and city. If you plan to visit Miami, for example, and want to see if an adaptive sailing program is available, in a few mouse clicks you'll have all the information on Shake-A-Leg Miami's various offerings and how to get in touch to arrange an outing.

Using the NCPAD database, you'll be surprised how many programs and organizations are now available. For example, a search for adaptive kayaking near Boston turns up a nonprofit named Outdoor Explorations, which offers beginning and intermediate instruction as well as advanced day and overnight trips. This is just one of their adventure programs for people of all abilities.

Families on a budget should definitely not overlook state and national parks when exploring recreational op-

## Recreational Resources

### Centers for Independent Living Directory

[www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html](http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html)

### National Center on Physical Activity and Disability

[www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)

### National Parks: Accessible to Everyone

[www.nps.gov/pub\\_aff/access/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/access/index.htm)

### California State Parks Access

[access.parks.ca.gov/](http://access.parks.ca.gov/)

### Washington State Accessible Outdoor Recreation Guide

[beta.parks.wa.gov/ada-rec/about.asp](http://beta.parks.wa.gov/ada-rec/about.asp)

### Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

[www.dnr.state.md.us/accessforall/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/accessforall/)

### Massachusetts State Parks Universal Access Program

[www.mass.gov/dcr/universal\\_access/index.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/universal_access/index.htm)

### Cruise Ship Accessibility

[www.vacationstogo.com/special\\_needs\\_cruises.cfm](http://www.vacationstogo.com/special_needs_cruises.cfm)

portunities. The National Park Service now has a Web site where visitors with disabilities can easily locate accessible trails, programs, activities, and other features at their facilities nationwide. The site also has details on how to acquire a free Access Pass. This lifetime pass provides significant savings since it admits up to four adults per car—children under 16 are free—with a 50-percent discount on some park amenities such as camping.

Locating accessible state park facilities is also easy thanks to NCPAD, which has a searchable parks database, again organized by state. Just scroll down their home page to “highlights” to find the link. This resource is a huge timesaver since most states do not provide this type of detailed information online. One exception is California, which, thanks to a lawsuit, now has a very user-friendly Web site. Another is Washington State, long a leader in accessible outdoor recreation. Others include Maryland and Massachusetts.

## FITNESS AND TRAVEL

Traveling can be arduous, and if you also plan to take on new, more-vigorous recreational activities during the trip, then it pays to get in shape beforehand. The NCPAD Web site lists a variety of adaptive exercise videos geared to different disabilities. For people who prefer to work out at home or don't have adaptive fitness classes in their area,

these videos can become the cornerstone of a personal fitness program. For example, NCPAD's “Exercise Program for Individuals with Spinal Cord Injuries: Paraplegia,” developed in conjunction with the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and funded by the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, includes aerobics, strength training, and flexibility segments, as well as warm-up and cool-down exercises. The only equipment required is elastic resistance bands and free weights. If you'd prefer to dance your way back into shape, there are videos for that, too.

It's important to keep up exercise routines when traveling, especially since eating out tends to pack on the pounds. If you like to swim, then do seek out hotels with accessible pools. The new Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), soon to be adopted by the Department of Justice, mandate that swimming pools have one or more accessible means of entry such as a pool lift, sloped entry, or transfer system. Major U.S. hotel chains such as Hilton, Hyatt, Sheraton, and Embassy Suites already have pool lifts installed at some of their properties. So do cruise lines such as Royal Caribbean, Princess, Holland America, and Norwegian, with ship by ship details available online at Vacations to Go.

The new ADAAG has revised standards for many other types of recreational facilities as well, including exercise machines. Clear space will need to be provided either for transfer to or use of the equipment from the wheelchair, as appropriate. At present free weights are typically the only accessible equipment at fitness centers. Unfortunately, many hotels have phased out free weights in the past few years due to liability issues. Some travelers now use water-filled dumbbells for strength training. Resistance bands are also easy to

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pack as are exercise DVDs and audiotapes. Some hoteliers may be willing to provide dumbbells if they have no equipment that can accommodate you. It can't hurt to ask.

One of the best ways to stay fit while traveling, of course, is to get out and explore the destination. Even foreign cities are now installing curb cuts and providing better pedestrian access. Given the size of modern cruise ships, just getting to and from the dining room can be a workout, although many also offer accessible running tracks. And we won't even talk about how far it is to and from the boarding gates at major U.S. airports! ✈