



Navigating The World with M.S. (And other disabilities...)

Sharing my insight and tips to make
travel easier on you!

By: Anna Bush

Hello there!



M.S. and other disabilities have a way of screwing plans up pretty often but I've been fortunate to enjoy some travel these last few years since my diagnosis of Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. I refer to it as embracing the suck and living forward while I have the ability. Whether it's just a short trip out of town or a tropical destination, we have to prepare for the unexpected and plan for any circumstance so I've provided some tips and tricks for my fellow fighters to navigate the world. I hope you find this helpful and it makes your journey enjoyable!

Anna Bush

M.S. Fighter | Blogger | Advocate

www.HotMesswithMS.com



DID I MENTION PREPARE? 

**It's critical to have a plan in place to prepare
for the what if's. Get ahead of it!**





The whole future lies in uncertainty:
live immediately
~Seneca



The Details

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Before you go....

Before embarking on a journey, I recommend individuals with health challenges speak with their healthcare team. Share your travel plans and ask for guidance on managing symptoms, adjusting medication schedules and addressing any potential obstacles that may arise. Healthcare providers can also provide a letter explaining your condition and the need for specific accommodations or medications while traveling should a situation arise.

Understanding one's specific symptoms and triggers is crucial for ensuring a smooth(ish :) trip. I know personally that my fatigue and chronic pain can get the best of me with a day full of travel whether by car or airplane. Take the time to sit down and create a checklist of all the things to consider for your trip from leaving your home to the return trip including possible delays. I've never heard anyone regret over planning! 😊

Consider Travel Insurance.....

Travel insurance is a must as far as I'm concerned, especially when traveling far from home or out of the country. It provides coverage for medical emergencies, trip cancellations, and unexpected events that may disrupt travel plans. Look for policies that specifically cover pre-existing medical conditions like MS. Review the policy details carefully to understand what is covered and the process for making a claim. I personally have had the best experience with Allianz travel who does have policies that include pre-existing conditions.

Get to know where you go

The key to all travel is getting familiar with where you're going. Research your destination thoroughly to identify accessible transportation and accommodations, medical facilities, and nearby pharmacies. Understanding the local emergency and healthcare system, especially in another country, is essential. The ability to access medical care promptly is vital. It's a good idea to reach out to your hotel or accommodations in advance to discuss any specific needs or requests.

If you're staying at a resort or large hotel, I always recommend requesting to stay near the elevator or closest to most of the activities for ease of access. I also choose to rent a scooter or wheelchair to preserve my energy as much as possible. The hotel staff may often have recommendations for rentals if there aren't any available on site. Additionally, some hotels and vacation rentals are equipped to cater to individuals with disabilities, and booking with this in mind can enhance your travel experience. At this point in my personal journey, I've learned to swallow my pride and accept that these mobility aids can make my trip so much more enjoyable! I still get the "You're too young or you look healthy" glances but I'm past caring about people's assumptions.

What you need along the way

Driving or flying?... Either way, pack to ensure you have everything you need to be comfortable along the way.

Here are some checklist items to think about:

- Comfy, layered clothes and easy on/off shoes
- A pillow
- Headphones with a mellow playlist (I'm a big fan of Enya)
- Medication to curb anxiety or aid in relaxation
- Cooling products for my heat intolerance, A big one for me!
- Water bottle (even when flying, I take an empty bottle to fill up after passing through security to avoid paying \$\$\$ for H2O)
- Essential oils (Roll on/Spray) - I love a good lavender to relax!
- Meds! When flying, DO NOT check your medications.... Store them in your carry-on luggage to prevent loss or damage.

Along with medications, remember to pack additional aids such as:

- Medical equipment (e.g., catheters, syringes)
- Mobility aids (e.g., canes, walkers, wheelchairs)
- Medical documentation (e.g., diagnosis, medical history)
- Emergency contact information even if with a partner (This may include your primary healthcare provider or specialists).

Another tip for when you're flying... take advantage of airline assistance as much as you need. This can mean requesting wheelchair assistance to and from the gate and boarding early to have a few extra minutes to settle. Again, for me, it's all about preserving the energy in my tank so to speak. You can select the special accommodations when booking your ticket.

When in Rome...

(Or wherever you go)

Wherever you're off to, set realistic expectations and embrace flexibility. I get it... when traveling, our first inclination is to plan excursions and to get the most out of the trip but trust me when I say, don't overcommit and be sure to prioritize down time and relaxation. Even if you're with a group, set expectations early so they know you have to ensure time to rest or nap. Everyone in my circle knows even while I'm home, I typically nap like a toddler for roughly 2 hours a day so vacation is no different. For me, its an absolute necessity to avoid fatigue and ultimately exacerbation of my symptoms. You don't want to overdo it one day only to lose the next day or 2 to recovery. A helpful idea is to look for accessible tours and attractions at your destination. Some companies specialize in providing tours tailored to individuals with disabilities, ensuring that everyone can enjoy local experiences and some, at your own pace.

Hydrating and protection from the sun or harsh conditions are usually near the top of the list for any trip. Heat is a real energy sapper for most but, especially for those of us with heat intolerance. Water is essential and stating the obvious here, but especially important when in a warmer climate, taking medications and potentially enjoying a beverage (or 3) so be sure to stay up on your H2O and sunscreen with a hat or spf clothing.



If you don't already, set timers for your medication management. Time zones can affect this schedule so keep that in mind.

If you have dietary restrictions, make that known early to the hotel or restaurant staff. Ideally, you've already prepared for that as part of your before you go checklist and researched the food options available.

Travel products I LOVE

I'm no travel agent, guru or world jet setter but I know what I love when it's time to travel. Here are some products that help me get through the day when traveling...and yep, full disclosure, if you buy it, I get a commission because being on disability doesn't make me a millionaire Click below to go directly to the items!

Handy Dandy.
Rollator

Sassy Cane

Leak Proof
Water Bottle

Cooling Cap

The BEST Travel Pillow!

In Ear
Headphones

Over ear
Headphones

Big Mamma Jamma
Travel Scooter!

Organic Roll On
Lavender Oil

Medication
Organizer

Neck Fan

Womens Zip Up
SPF Shirt

Safe Travels and
Live Forward!

LAST
THING



Give yourself Grace
&
Enjoy
Your
Time



Thank you

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