



TRAVELLING DOWN UNDER



SIA member **Tony Morris** wasn't sure if he would be able to visit relatives in Australia following his injury. After doing a bit of research, he had all the information he needed and was soon planning his trip down under.

TONY MORRIS – SIA MEMBER

On 23 June 2014, I was cycling along the road when I was run over from behind by a lorry, breaking my back in seven places and my neck in one. This incident left me with a T4 complete injury and a whole new life.

My wife's brother lives in a small village two hours south of Perth in Australia, with his wife and their two young daughters. We had not seen them since 2011 so, in June 2015, a year after being injured, we decided to go. However, I had not been on a plane since being injured. I first wondered if it would be possible

and then questioned how I would go about organising the trip. My wife started to research flights on Google and read different articles explaining how I could fly with airport assistance. I spoke with my SIA Peer Support Officer, John, about flying and my concerns regarding bladder and bowel regimes, as these were my main concern. John soon put my worries at ease and talked me through different ways of managing, based upon what I was already doing at the time.

After looking at different airlines we decided to go with Emirates, as their reviews looked very good online.

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We also spoke to the airline over the phone regarding assistance at the airport, logistics when boarding the plane and accessibility of the toilets. They told me that once I booked in at their booking desk they would assist me all the way through my journey, including the stopover at Dubai airport, which they did very well, I must say. I was able to use my own chair to wheel onto the plane and I then transferred to a small chair that they used to wheel me down the aisle to my seat. This was really easy to do and I was allowed to keep my chair on the plane with me in first class, so when we arrived in Dubai I could use it while there. If you have to give up your own chair I would remove your cushion and any other loose items to ensure nothing gets lost. Every time I needed to use the toilet I just called a hostess and they brought the aisle chair and pushed me into the first class spa, so I had more than enough room to use my catheter. The staff at the airport were really helpful and there are designated staff to assist you to boarding gates and around the airport in general.

I was very lucky that I was staying with my brother-in-law and therefore was able to arrange for equipment to be delivered to his address prior to my arrival, such as a commode, sliding board, standing frame and electric

scooter. I found the providing companies on Google and emailed them to find out what they could do for me. I'm sure they would deliver to a hotel if needed. Also, as I knew that I was staying at his house for a month, I also posted him all my catheters, personal care items and personal medication, to save me having to pack everything and carry it during the journey. I must admit it did take quite a bit of planning but we just wrote down all the issues and dealt with them one by one, and we soon found that everything was covered.

The trip went really well and I found Australia a very well equipped place and very wheelchair friendly. The beaches even had big wheelchairs you could use for going over the sand and also into the sea, which was my biggest highlight. There's nothing better than swimming in the warm Indian ocean on Christmas Day!



INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT AUSTRALIA

- It takes approximately **22 hours** to fly from the UK to Australia
- Australia is the world's **6th largest** country in the world
- It has a population of **22 million people**
- More than **80%** of Australians live within **100km** of the coast
- Australia is home to more than **16 world heritage sites**
- **91%** of Australia consists of **vegetation**
- Outside of Greece, the largest **Greek** community can be found in **Melbourne**
- **Anna Creek cattle station**, the largest in the world, can be found in South Australia and at more than **34,000 square km**, it is larger than Belgium.

USEFUL LINKS:

www.sydneyforall.com
www.travability.travel
www.travellersaid.org.au
www.visitvictoria.com
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