



AIR TRAVEL: PREPARATION: BOOKING AND ASSISTANCE INFORMATION SHEET

This information sheet contains information for people with spinal cord injury (SCI) or cauda equina syndrome (CES) who want to travel by air. Good planning and preparation is important to make your journey as smooth as possible. There may be many processes to follow but air travel can open up the world to you. SIA are keen to encourage everyone to travel by air if they want to.

This is the first Air Travel information sheet in this series. For more useful advice, hints and tips see: 2 - At the Airport, Security and Boarding, 3- Managing your Equipment and 4 - Managing your Health. Also, check out SIA's Travel and Mobility Video Series on air travel, and listen to our podcast series Access all Areas.



BEFORE YOU BOOK

Choose your destination! What's it like? Think about

- The weather (how would you manage in the heat or the cold?)
- The facilities (medical care, accessibility and equipment)
- The activities you'd like to do

How are you going to get there?

- Are you flying direct? Direct flights may reduce the stress of transfers
- If you do need to have connecting flights, try to avoid short connections times between flights
- Do you need to travel with a companion? (e.g. if you need assistance with personal care and the going to the toilet during the flight, or assistance in an emergency)

If this is the first time you have flown since your SCI, consider whether a shorter flight might be advisable whilst you work out what does and doesn't work for you. Please see information Air Travel: Managing your health pre and in flight.

Which airport do you want to fly from?

- Does your closest airport meet your needs best?
- How will you get there?
- Are the flight times offered by a different airport going to suit you better?
- Which airport has the best drop off or parking facilities that might suit you better?

When you would like to fly?

- What time of day is best for your new routines to make flying as easy as possible (for example your bladder and bowel routines)
- Will there be a time difference at your destination and how might it effect you?

Talk to other people about where they've travelled to and what they recommend. Look at reviews of places, airports and airlines to get as much information as you can.

TRY BEFORE YOU FLY

If you would like more information, practical advice or assessment about your needs then you can contact the Queen Elizabeth Foundation (QEF) who offer an Accessible Aviation and Tryb4uFly service.



They have a full-size model of an aircraft cabin and you can book an appointment to discuss your needs or an assessment. An assessment gives you a healthcare professional's advice on how best to manage being on the plane. They have three centres:

- **QEF Mobility Services in Carshalton in Surrey**
- **The William Merritt Disabled Living Centre in Leeds**
- **RDAC in Birmingham**

Please note there is a charge for this assessment.



BOOKING YOUR FLIGHT

You can book through a travel agent or directly with an airline. If you would like assistance at the airport you need to book it with the airline AND the airport at least 48 hours in advance. The more notice you give, the better. If you are booking through a travel agent we still recommend that you contact the airline to tell them separately so they know you are travelling and need assistance. Think about the assistance you need.

They might ask:

- Will you need to use a wheelchair for all or part of the time?
- Will you need assistance to get on/off the aircraft?
- Will you be bringing other disability/mobility equipment?

If you are bringing a wheelchair you need to have the measurements of it (it's length/height/width and weight). If you are bringing a powered wheelchair you need to know what type of batteries it uses (see Powered Wheelchair information sheet).

All airlines have an accessibility page on their website. This means information on the type of assistance that is available getting to and from the aircraft and also on board the aircraft. Many have a helpline available on the phone.

Each airport has an accessibility page on their website. This means the type of help available at the airport. The website might have maps, tours and videos. Many have a helpline available on the phone.

You may be asked to give this type of information at several points during your journey through the airport to make sure the airport and airline can plan assistance accordingly and make your journey as smooth as possible. This is because airports and airlines have lots of different companies, departments and people working in them and you are the holder of the information. If you have all your information handy it will make this process much easier.

WHAT NEXT ...

- Once you know your airline and aircraft type you can use Seat GURU (www.seatguru.com) to look at the aircraft layouts and see which seat would be best for you.



- Remember by law you are NOT allowed to sit in an Emergency Exit row.
- Think about how you will get to the airport and what parking or transport you may need. The extra cost of premium/valet parking nearer the terminal may be a good idea as it's easier to manage your luggage and you won't need to use buses to the terminal.



You can connect with people who can share their experience and advice via your local [SIA Community Support Group](#) and [SIA Support Network Facebook Group](#)

For more information, visit our [Travel Hub](#) or contact us at:

Spinal Injuries Association, SIA House, 2 Trueman Place, Oldbrook, Milton Keynes, MK6 2HH

e: travel@spinal.co.uk t: 0800 980 0501 (freephone support line: Monday - Friday 10.00am-4.00pm)