

Travel with
Confidence

sia spinal
injuries
association
for life after spinal cord injury

BUS AND COACH TRAVEL INFORMATION SHEET



INTRODUCTION

The ability to enjoy all forms of travel is important for the wellbeing of all people with spinal cord injury/CES. Bus travel can be a great way to get around your local area. Coaches can be great for longer journeys. Both are easy to access as a person with SCI/CES. It is a convenient alternative to car and train travel allowing you to be independent and return to work and leisure activities. Whilst there may be unexpected issues that come up, we hope the following information will help you to get ready for your journey.

This information sheet explains how to book your bus or coach travel and how to manage your equipment and personal needs during your journey.

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

Check out [Access All Areas: SIA's Travel and Mobility Video Series](#) on bus and coach travel (insert bus and coach video). You may be using other types of transport as well – we also have videos on train travel, water travel, and air travel (insert links).



PLANNING YOUR DAY OUT

Regulations now mean that all new bus and coaches should be accessible. The GOV.UK website has more information on your rights:

[Buses and coaches: features and help for disabled people - GOV.UK](#)

- Some wheelchairs and mobility scooters will not fit on a bus or a coach. It is helpful to know the measurements and weight of your wheelchair before you travel.
- For bus routes, check Google maps to get an idea of the accessibility of the bus stops that you want to use.
- Contact your local bus company or look at their websites to get access information about the service you want to use.

If you are new to bus and coach travel it might be worth a practice run or your first journey being short and local, so you feel comfortable with it.

- A bus journey does not need to be pre booked so if you know the route you are planning to take and the time of the bus you can show up at the bus stop and wait. Most buses only have one wheelchair space, if this is already taken then you may need to wait for the next bus.
- If you are planning on travelling by coach then you should pre book and give at least 48 hours' notice if you need assistance or plan to travel in your wheelchair.
- Apps such as UK Bus Checker and CityMapper can be useful for checking bus routes and live bus tracking.

WALKER

How can you best tell the driver your needs when travelling by bus/coach? Are you able to stand or walk whilst the bus is moving or do you need to ask the driver to remain stationary whilst you find a seat? Is your balance good enough to manage to stand and hold on during the journey? Do you need to think about taking a wheelchair to use the bus or the coach and complete your journey?

MANUAL WHEELCHAIR USER

Before you set off, know the measurements of your wheelchair so you know whether your chair will fit in the wheelchair space.

POWERCHAIR USER

Before you set off know the measurements of your wheelchair so you know whether your chair will fit in the wheelchair space.

WHAT ARE MY PERSONAL CARE NEEDS

- It can be useful to pack a bag with your personal care supplies (like catheters, leg bags, wipes and gloves), spare clothing and any medication you may need for when you travel.
- Think about how long your journey is likely to be and when you plan to travel to see how these fit with your personal care needs and routine.
- You may want to look up the route and final destination to work out where toilet facilities are available.

TOILETS

- For most disabled toilets you will need a RADAR key to use them. Motability explains the process for getting / using a RADAR key: [radar-keys-explained-what-are-they-where-can-i-use-them-and-how-do-i-get-one/](#)
- If you need an accessible changing room see www.changing-places.org/find
- Most buses do not have toilet facilities onboard. You need to plan ahead and determine where facilities will be before and after your journey.
- Most coaches will have onboard toilet facilities but they are generally not accessible for manual wheelchair users. When booking your coach travel you can discuss your needs and see how they can be accommodated. You can review any stops the coach will make along the journey and whether there will be accessible facilities available at these.
- Most coaches will have onboard toilet facilities but they are generally not accessible for power wheelchair users. When booking your coach travel you can discuss your needs and see how they can be accommodated. You can review any stops the coach will make along the journey and whether there will be accessible facilities available at these.
- If you are able to stand and walk a little, then you may be able to use the toilet facilities onboard a coach. Consider if you would struggle to walk when the coach is moving or if the toilet is accessed by steps for example. You may need to consider alternative options than using the onboard toilet.

PREPARING FOR AND DURING TRAVEL

WALKER

- You may want to think about how you will manage your journey as a whole. If your walking distance is limited, it may be useful to take a wheelchair/mobility equipment with you to manage a day out. This may help with your energy levels and reduce fatigue and pain.
- Some coaches have a transit wheelchair available to use to access the coach or the toilet onboard during the journey. Please ask when booking if you require this.
- If you can stand and step, think about whether you can keep your balance on a moving bus/coach. Would you be able to stand for the length of the bus journey if needed? A mobility aid or wheelchair might help you.

MANUAL WHEELCHAIR USER

- On a coach your wheelchair will get secured down by the driver for your safety. It can be helpful if you know the points on your wheelchair where it is best for straps to be secured to, known as 'tethering points'. The manufacturers website of your wheelchair will show this information if you are unsure.
- On a bus your wheelchair should be positioned in the wheelchair space. You may be travelling backwards. You will need to back up into the space and make sure you but the brakes on for safety.

POWERCHAIR USER

- On a coach your wheelchair will get secured down by the driver for your safety. It can be helpful if you know the points on your wheelchair where it is best for straps to be secured to, known as 'tethering points'. The manufacturers website of your wheelchair will show this information if you are unsure.
- On a bus your power wheelchair should be positioned in the wheelchair space. You may be travelling backwards. You will need to back up into the space and make sure you but the brakes on for safety.

HOW DO I GET TO THE BUS STOP OR THE COACH STATION?

- If you are travelling by bus, get to know your local bus services and stops and whether they are accessible. Google maps can be useful for photos of bus stops so you know what to expect. You can also contact your local bus providers for more information.
- Think about the time it takes to travel to the coach station and leave plenty of extra time. Find out what facilities are available at the coach station such as disabled toilet and parking options by looking at their website. [AccessAble](#) has reviews and information (including photos) of many of the coach stations' which may be helpful.

HOW DO I GET ASSISTANCE?

- When travelling by bus or coach the driver is there to help you get on and off. They will also help to tie down your wheelchair when needed, for safety. However, they will not be able to lift you or any heavy mobility equipment.
- The driver will operate the ramp or lift and explain how to get on and off the bus or coach.
- The driver may be able to help with your luggage if you require.
- Many coach companies allow you to prebook assistance. They will often have a separate phone number or online form which you can complete to explain what help you need.

ARRIVING AT MY DESTINATION

- It is helpful to check what the access is like at your end destination. Check out your options if you need other transport such as a taxi or train once you get to the end of your bus or coach journey.
- Use Google maps to check access at the end bus stop you plan to use and check what facilities are nearby, including toilet facilities.
- Think about your return journey. Check bus times and how often the service runs. Remember at busier periods you may have to wait for the next bus if the wheelchair space is already in use.

USEFUL LINKS

Coach Companies

- National Express- [Accessibility](#) | [National Express](#)
- Mega Bus - [Passengers Requiring Assistance Advice](#) | [megabus UK](#)
- Flix Bus- [Topic Detail](#)

Coach Tours

- [Accessible Coach Holidays](#) | [Coach Tours For Disabled \(limitlesstravel.org\)](#)
- [Accessible Coach Tours \(disabledholidays.com\)](#)

Coach Hire

- [Accessible Travel - Coach Hire With Wheelchair Access](#) | [Centaur Travel](#)



For more information, contact us at:

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About SIA

Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) is the leading national charity for anyone affected by spinal cord injury. We have specialist support available, for free, to support you through the mental and physical challenges you may face, both now and for the rest of your life.

Our support network is coordinated by a team of people, across the UK, who can put you in touch with our network of experts and trusted partners, covering all aspects of mind, body and life, to help you move forward with life. Our partners specialise in services such as legal, care, housing, finance, mental health and much more.

We are the voice of spinal cord injured people, through our expertise and we can connect you to the services and organisations you need through our network for all.

You can join the SIA community by signing up for free online at www.spinal.co.uk

Disclaimer

This factsheet has been prepared by SIA and contains general advice that we hope will be useful. Nothing in this factsheet should be construed as giving specific advice, and it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action. SIA does not accept any liability arising from its use. We aim to ensure the information is as up-to-date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that certain areas are subject to change from time to time. Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement.

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