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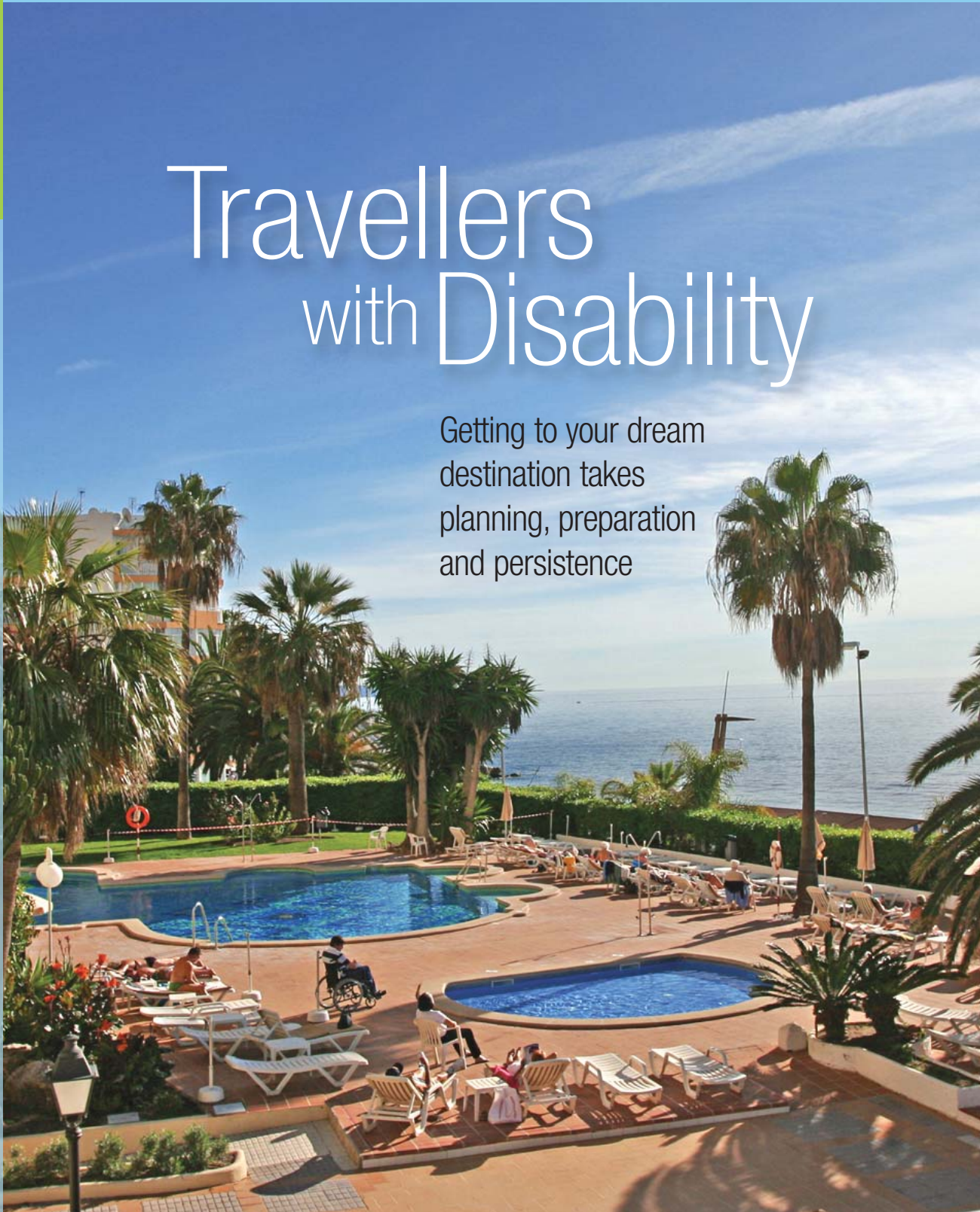
P E R S O N A L I N J U R Y L A W Y E R S

ENews

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Travellers with Disability

Getting to your dream destination takes planning, preparation and persistence



TRAVEL TIPS: Ask Disability Advocates Rich & Dianne • **Accessible** Travel Reference Books, Hotels + More



Travel Tips

Disability Advocates
Rich & Dianne



Q

Hi Rich and Dianne,

We are planning a vacation this year. Where can I find out about hotel accommodations and ratings for my wife who is a paraplegic?

A

We've found that conversations with others who have travelled, as well as the internet, are the best sources for this kind of information. We were able to find some useful websites that featured specific information on wheelchair accessible accommodation when travelling.

"Out of print", "not available" and "discontinued" were common responses we received when looking for written information (much of this content goes directly online, without a printed version), but there are publications, both old and new, that list resources for the traveller with a disability.

Personal Contact

Hearing from others about their experiences is the best research you

can do. Kevin Rogers at the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario (CPAO) gave some excellent advice. "Some people leave the rehabilitation facility with plans to travel right away," he explains. "Others take a considerable amount of time to make their first travel effort." Rogers recommends a simple trip the first time; a cruise for the first time traveller.

Legal Rights

Before selecting the location of your vacation and making travel arrangements, it's wise to consider the laws that are in place in other countries for the traveller with a disability.

Unlike the United States, with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its legislated standards for public places to ensure accessible accommodations for people with disabilities, Canadians do not have a national position. Accordingly, when planning to visit a remote location it's unlikely that you will have a law governing accessibility on your side.

But remember, even in the U.S., these laws may be effective in making change and removing barriers but may only meet the minimum requirement of that law. Being listed as "accessible" does not necessarily mean





Need help finding a good wheelchair accessible hotel?

Visit these website under **Hotels and Wheelchair Accessible:**

- > www.accessatlast.com
- > www.disabledtravelers.com
- > www.disabledaccessholidays.com
- > www.mobility-advisor.com
- > www.waeurope.com
- > www.whenwetravel.com



"accessible for your circumstances;" nor does it mean that the location "promotes independence."

Transportation

Many hotels offer a pickup service if close to an airport. Inquire if it is a wheelchair accessible transportation service. Some rental car companies offer accessible vans but a notice of two weeks may be necessary. Look into accessible parking and location of the parking (near ramp or near lobby) if travelling in your own vehicle. Remember to bring your parking permit with you – it's valid virtually anywhere in North America.

Measuring Up

Knowing the dimensions of your wheelchair in advance will help on many fronts. The most important measurement is taken at the bottom of your wheels - the distance from the outside of your left push rim to the outside of the right push rim. Consider the width of the doorways throughout the hotel and hotel rooms. If the doorway into your hotel room's washroom is too narrow or opens blocking the tub, you may ask the hotel to remove the door which will give you an addition of two inches of doorway width.

Other questions to ask include: Is special equipment available in the room or does it need to be rented? Does the room have a roll-in shower with bench or tub and hand rails? Does the bench have armrests? Is it padded? Are you able to reach the shower controls when seated on the bench if it is attached to a wall? (If the room is not set up with a shower bench, a poolside chair may be an

option with additional towels for a cushion.) Is there a raised toilet seat and grab bars and extra room to transfer? Can you fit your knees under the sink? Is there an emergency button available? What is the height of bed for transfers? Inquire about the fire escape plan.

Local Attractions

What attractions are in the surrounding area? Are they accessible and how will you get to them? Find out whether you need to book ahead for specific events and accessible seats. It doesn't hurt to ask whether any special rates are available.

Extra Caution

Pack enough supplies and meds for an extra few days. Call to check on your reservation at least 48 hours prior to your arrival. Finally, always request a written confirmation notice that includes the specifics of your reserved accessible room as well as the name of the agent you spoke with when making the reservation. When people know you have their name, they tend to do a better job.

Taking small steps to plan ahead for your accommodation needs will help to make your vacation an enjoyable experience. Bon voyage!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rich VanderWal (shown left) is a Rehabilitation Advisor with Gluckstein & Associates LLP, and has been a T-4 paraplegic for nearly 16 years, travelling to eight countries since his injury.

Dianne Henderson, R.N., B.A. Psych, M. Ed., is a Medical Consultant with Gluckstein & Associates LLP.

Rich and Dianne can be reached at info@gluckstein.com, or visit www.gluckstein.com **G&A**



Travel Books

Gluckstein & Associates LLP
has donated the following
travel books on accessible travel
to the Canadian Paraplegic
Association (Ontario), CPAO:

Yes, You Can!!!
**Go beyond physical adversity
and live life to its fullest.**
Dietz, J., (2000), New York:
Demos Medical Publishing

Barrier-free Travel:
**A nuts and bolts guide for
wheelers and slow walkers.**
The definitive guide to
accessible travel.
Harrington, C.B., (2005),
2nd edition, New York: Demos
Medical Publishing.

There is Room at The Inn:
**Inns and B&Bs for Wheelers
and Slow Walkers.**
Harrington, C.B. (2006), New York:
Demos Medical Publishing

101 Accessible Vacations:
**Travel Ideas for Wheelers
and Slow Walkers.**
Harrington, C.B. (2008), New York:
Demos Medical Publishing

When Walking Fails
**Mobility problems of adults
with chronic conditions.**
Iezzoni, L.I. (2003), California:
University of California Press.

**Gowrings Mobility Smooth Ride
Guide: United Kingdom**
Ramsey, J., United Kingdom:
Gowrings Mobility.

Easy Access Europe:
**A Guide for Travellers
with Limited Mobility.**
Steves, R. & Plattner, K. (2006),
California: Avalon Travel Publishing



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