

Break away

Planning a
dementia-friendly
holiday



For family carers



Enjoy a break away



Everyone deserves to get away from it all from time to time, and it's no different for people living with dementia. A holiday offers the chance to explore new places, meet new people and enjoy new experiences or even reminisce about old times. It needn't be lavish or far-flung. Just a change of scene can do wonders, both for you, as the carer, and your loved one with dementia.

The importance of planning

We've put together this guide about planning a holiday with a person living with dementia as we believe this is the most crucial step in the whole process.

Planning everything carefully – and well in advance – should mean that you and your loved one really can relax and get the most out of the time away.

However, it's also important to build in an element of flexibility. Things don't always go according to plan, and allowing for this will mean you can still enjoy yourselves even if you're not following plan A, or even plan B.

Counting the pennies

If you care for someone living with dementia, and you would love a holiday but you're not sure you'll be able to afford it, you may be able to get financial assistance from a charity. Tourism for All publishes a guide with details of charities that may be able to help with the cost of a holiday or respite care. For details, see the 'useful information' section page 22.



Where to go?



If you really want to be able to relax on the holiday, it's worth including another person on the trip, who can act as a co-carer with you. That way, you can have some time to yourself, and there won't be so much pressure on you.

What's more, a person who is independent in familiar surroundings may need extra support when coping with a new environment or changes to their routine. An extra pair of hands could be really useful, but it will obviously need to be someone your loved one knows and trusts.

You may have a burning desire to go to a particular place – your loved one may have too. Choose a destination that they will feel comfortable in. What are their interests and preferences? How does their condition affect their daily life? These will influence your choice of where you go and the accommodation you choose.



Like the sound of independent travel?

This is a great idea if you're looking for choice and flexibility, but it does require quite a lot of planning. Where will you be staying? Will the staff understand your needs? Is the layout of the accommodation straightforward or confusing? Going out of season will mean accommodation will be quieter and staff should have more time to help.



Staying with friends or family

If you're conscious of budget, this could be a good option, particularly if the people you'll be staying with can help with caring for your loved one, or can at least help with some aspect of the day to day routine, like cooking meals.



Consider a specialist leisure provider

Increasing numbers of companies are offering holidays for people with disabilities and their carers, including Revitalise (see 'useful information' on page 22). Many mainstream holiday providers also have special teams to help you when booking, and during your stay. Haven Holidays is one example.





Let a package deal take the pressure off

With everything arranged for you, a package holiday can be a tempting option. Talk to your travel agent or holiday company before you book so you're sure that they'll be able to meet your needs.

"Choose a destination that you'll both feel comfortable in."

Be clear

Whatever type of holiday you're planning, a good idea is to make a list of your requirements and ask the provider how they can help you. Be clear about potential difficulties or limitations so that everyone's clear on what to expect.



Getting there



How long the person living with dementia is able to travel for will be a big deciding factor in your holiday choices. Some people may not enjoy long journeys because they may become disorientated. Arranging transport well in advance will give you the best choice of options and prices.



Planes...

Airlines generally state that people who travel with a 'permanent or stable condition' do not require medical clearance, but do check when you make your booking. British Airways has a Passenger Medical Clearance Unit, which offers a free advisory service for anyone who is planning to fly and who has a disability.

Airports and airlines should provide help with things like getting to check-in, getting on and off the plane, and with finding your way around the destination airport. Some of these services need to be arranged at least 48 hours before you're due to fly.

Compare what's on offer from different airlines before you book, and check

whether the cost of any special assistance is included in the price of your ticket. Many airports publish information about facilities at the airport, including information for people with special needs.

On form

It's well worth asking your GP to complete an incapacitated passengers handling advice (INCAD) form and/or a medical information form (MEDIF). These are available from travel agents and airlines and can be useful in helping you to get the support you need. They last for only one journey, but some airlines provide frequent travellers with a Frequent Traveller Medical Card (FREMEC).



If the person you're supporting uses a wheelchair, check the policy of your airline as you may be expected to transfer to an airline wheelchair at check-in. If your flight is cancelled, ask the airline to make special arrangements if the person needs to rest.

"Arranging transport well in advance will give you the best choice of options."



Trains...

Rail companies will usually meet a person at the departure station and escort them onto the appropriate train if they are informed at least two days in advance. This support can be booked through the National Assisted Passenger Reservation Service. National Rail Enquiries can give you the contact details of the rail company you're travelling with. Disability Onboard also has details.

Eurostar provides a complimentary assistance service for passengers with special needs, and assistance can be provided at any Eurostar terminal. This service can be arranged when you book or at least 48 hours before the journey.





...and automobiles

If you're planning a long car journey, make sure you stop at least every two hours. Plan your journey carefully, factoring in regular breaks from driving, and listen to traffic updates before you set off.

Motorway service stations are easy to get lost or disorientated in. You might want to ensure your loved one has a note of the model, colour and registration number of the car, or, better still, a photograph of it.



By coach

Many coach companies have teams to support travellers with special needs, for example, National Express has an assisted travel team. There are also a number of specialist companies that offer UK and European coach travel with fully accessible vehicles, for those who use a wheelchair. Tourism for All (see 'useful information' on page 22) has more details about these.



By sea

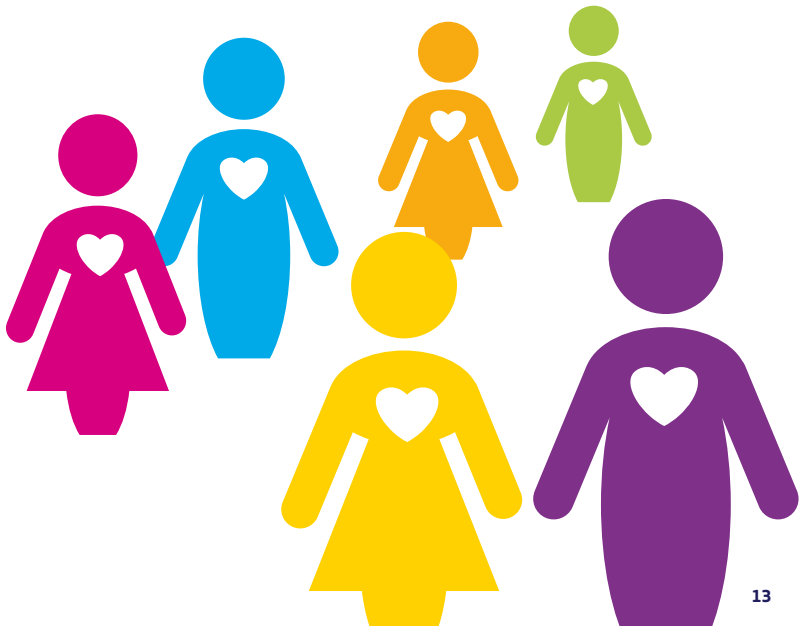
When you book your ticket, check with your operator to see if they require medical clearance for the journey and tell them what assistance you will need. Some UK-based ferry companies offer discounted fares for disabled people, although you may need to apply in advance to qualify.

Confirm any arrangements the day before setting off and make sure you have arranged assistance for the return journey.

Transport hubs, whether they're airports or train stations, are busy and confusing places where it's easy to get lost. Try to remember what your loved one is wearing, and carry a recent photograph of them. Make sure your loved one has a photo of you too. Consider travelling at quieter times, avoiding weekends and the height of summer.



Things to do





Even though it's tempting, once you've got to your destination, to just 'let it happen', it's important to find out everything you can about your destination before you go.

- Will it be easy to get around?
- What activities are there? Are they accessible/open?
- What will you do if the weather's poor?

The ideal option is to be able to do a site visit in advance. But if that's not possible, local tourism offices can be very helpful. If you're holidaying in England or Scotland, **www.visitengland.com** or **www.visitscotland.com** have lots of advice and suggestions.

Talk to the person you care for about your plans for the holiday so you can address

any concerns they might have. They may have ideas of what they'd like to do. Regularly share brochures and pictures of where you're going so they're prepared.

Our 'Good to go' guide to dementia-friendly days out has lots of handy ideas of different ways to spend days out with loved ones living with dementia. You can download it from **careuk.com/goodtogo**.



Packing your bags



As with every other aspect of your holiday, preparing what you'll need to take well in advance will make everything go smoothly, particularly if you need to build in time to get passports updated.

Passports

If you're going out of the UK you'll need passports – and often flights within the UK will ask for a valid passport as a proof of identity (they'll also accept photo ID like a driving licence). Check the passport expiry date of everyone travelling several months in advance as you'll generally need to have several months' validity remaining on them. Make copies of all your important documents, take one copy with you and leave one with someone at home. Write down the phone numbers of places to call if documents or bank cards get lost.

A MedicAlert bracelet or similar identification may be useful for a person living with dementia in case they become separated from you, or they experience communication problems.



Medication

Keep medication with you at all times, along with a list of the medicines and dosage routines. If any medication needs to be kept refrigerated, and you're travelling by plane, tell the airline in advance. Make sure you will have access to a fridge where you are staying.





Travel insurance

Having sufficient travel insurance cover is a must. Some policies do not cover claims arising from a 'pre-existing medical condition or defect', which could mean that any illness or accident linked to dementia may not be covered. Policies

that do not have this clause sometimes have higher premiums, so it's worth shopping around. There are specialist insurers that cater for people with special needs. Check whether they cover you for travel delays.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

Inside the European Economic Area – the member states of the European Union, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – if you're a UK citizen with an EHIC you're entitled to free or reduced-cost emergency treatment. Apply for the card directly from the NHS. It's free and is valid for up to five years.

The EHIC does not cover all medical treatment, so check the terms and conditions carefully, and it's not an alternative to travel insurance. You will still need insurance to cover eventualities such as repatriation.

*"...with an EHIC
you're entitled to
free or reduced-cost
emergency treatment."*

Outside the EEA

You may be entitled to some health care. The UK has reciprocal healthcare agreements with certain countries for the provision of urgently needed medical treatment either for free or at reduced cost. Either way, you still need to carry sufficient insurance.

Paper work

- Write a list of what you'll need to take and allow time for updating passports or obtaining travel documents.
- Compile a list of emergency contact numbers, including the locations of medical facilities in the area you're visiting.
- Clearly label your luggage with your name and address and put a sheet of paper with your name and address on it inside each separate bag or suitcase in case labels are removed or lost.



Beside the **seaside**

Denise Findley, home manager of Care UK's Hadrian Park care home in Cleveland, explains why residents always look forward to their annual holiday.



“Residents love their holidays and get so much out of them that it’s worth the work involved in organising the trips.

In 2013 we took a group of residents to a Haven Holiday site in Northumberland and in 2014 we decided to try Haven’s Primrose Valley site near Filey in North Yorkshire. It’s a beautiful area and we knew that the team at Haven would ensure residents had a great time.

Location is key: we always choose somewhere within a two hour drive of the home in case we need to get back quickly. We then have chats with residents to see who is interested in coming on the holiday.

We have access to a minibus and we made sure that we booked it early. Our activities co-ordinator did a site visit and spoke to the Haven team about our residents’ needs. She looked around the accommodation and was able to reserve caravans near the main facilities to minimise walking. She also looked at the available activities so we could plan our days in advance.

Only five of the original ten residents who were due to go on the holiday were well enough to make the trip, and they were accompanied by four staff members. The benefit of a caravan holiday meant that the team didn’t need to cancel any rooms – they just had more space.

The residents who came with us could choose what they wanted to eat and helped shop for the meals we prepared in the caravan. Everyone loved the activities we had organised and some even danced until the early hours! Many residents tried quad biking, making clay pots, and played bingo and enjoyed walks in the surrounding countryside.

During our holiday, a social worker who was having a break with her family, approached us to say that she’d never known a care home to support residents to go away on holiday. She praised us for the wonderful job we were doing. Above all, residents thoroughly enjoyed their holiday and brought many happy memories away with them.”

Useful information

British Airways Passenger Medical Clearance Unit

020 8738 5444

pmcu.pmcu@ba.com

www.britishairways.com

Advises travellers about whether they consider patients with certain medical conditions to be fit to travel with them.

Dementia Adventure CIC

01245 237548

info@dementiaadventure.co.uk

www.dementiaadventure.co.uk

A community interest company that delivers short breaks and holidays for people living with dementia and their carers to enjoy together.

Haven Holidays

0800 072 9496

www.haven.com

Medic Alert

ID bracelets, necklaces and watches that help to make sure that you receive treatment in an emergency.

medicalert.org.uk

National Express assisted travel team

08717 818 181

(24hrs a day, 7 days a week)

Use the enquiry form on the website

www.nationalexpress.com

Provides specialist support on coaches across the UK.

Disability Rights UK

020 7250 8181

enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

disabilityrightsuk.org

Information about the Radar National Key scheme which offers independent access to locked public toilets in most parts of the UK.

Tourism for All UK

0845 124 9971

info@tourismforall.org.uk

www.tourismforall.org.uk

Holiday and travel information service for disabled and older people, and their carers.

Revitalise

030 3303 0145

info@revitalise.org.uk

www.revitalise.org.uk

A national charity providing essential breaks for people with disabilities, and visual impairments, and their carers.



Care UK
Connaught House
850 The Crescent
Colchester Business Park
Colchester
Essex CO4 9QB

Tel: 0333 321 0933
careuk.com/dementia

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We would like to acknowledge that some material contained within our guide is accredited to the Alzheimer's Society's 'Travelling and going on holiday' factsheet.

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