

NEW ORLEANS

Not long ago, I was asked to contribute to this newsletter. I gave a lot of thought as to what I could offer in the way of “*insight or wisdom*” and was able to add in a little humour, too.

A recent week long holiday in New Orleans came to mind as an excellent backdrop for this article.

While I am far from a world traveler, I have had opportunities to travel outside of my own province/country. For the most part, my travels have been a resounding success. *This* particular trip, however, made me aware of numerous areas to watch for when traveling with a disability.

One of the first lessons learned, was to travel as lightly as possible so that anyone traveling with you isn't bombarded with not only their carry-on luggage but the bulk of yours (plus a cushion, an extra purse, etc), at least until you've been settled on the plane/train/bus/back into your chair. A companion would likely not mind lending a hand, but both arms, their shoulders and probably their backs should not enter into the deal.

Once arriving in New Orleans, it became evident that persons with disabilities were not a common occurrence. This was made especially clear when virtually every cab driver at the airport, who saw my chair refused to take my fare. While we did end up getting to our hotel, another lesson learned, was to know several alternate routes to get back from where you came from - if, oh say, the elevator that got you up three levels was no longer working, when you came to go back down. I did find my way out of that one, but I've decided I'm somewhat directionally challenged, as well -- or a problem solver -- it's all in how you look at it.

I had twelve hours to reflect on the third most valuable lesson learned from this trip.

If your travel agent possibly can, I would recommend that you have more than an hour allotted for you to make any connecting flights. Going down to New Orleans, we had an hour and things worked out famously (other than my having to once again explain that my chair was owned by me not the airport, and I really wanted it to join me in New Orleans.) Coming back, we had an hour, but bad weather and bad timing quickly ate that hour down to ten minutes. Typically, those who require assistance, are first on the plane and last off. Because of this, we got off our plane with about 5 minutes to make our connection (which just happened to be located at the opposite end of the huge airport -- the Murphy's Law Lesson is just too big to put into this half page article.) All things said and done, we missed our flight. We were able to pick up a connecting flight, twelve hours later! All in all, things worked out on that score, but more connecting time is a really good thing.

Aside from a few mishaps, this trip was fun. Bourbon Street and Jackson Square were an awesome sight to behold and the food and drink was truly spectacular!

Donna Bulger

