

Healthy Travel and Special Needs

Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind.

—Seneca



our good health is one of your most important assets. You guard it in everyday living, and you must also protect it when you are traveling. When traveling overseas you may need vaccinations and medications that you don't need when traveling domestically. As usual, the Internet comes through with information on what's needed for each country. You can also surf the Web to find what to put in your travel first aid kit and how to prepare for travel if you or a companion are disabled.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Safeguarding Your Health
- Supporting Travelers with Special Needs
- Traveling with Children

Safeguarding Your Health

Sometimes the most reasonable, commonsense practices are the ones most often overlooked when you are on vacation or on the road. This often happens because we travel to destinations that are foreign to us.



Sandy's tip

Read travel blogs and message boards to learn about the health-related experiences of others who have visited the location you will visit. Often this can help you prevent or prepare for potential problems.

For example, most people remember to use extra sun protection when they visit tropical areas, but they may not realize that this is also necessary for ski resorts.

You should always read as much as you can about your destination to determine what extra supplies you might need to take to protect your health. With Internet resources, it's easy to find this type of information.

Health Information for Your Destination at Travel Health Online

A great place to start is the Travel Health Online website at www.trip-prep.com. This website requires registration, but it is free. The website is easy to use, and it contains a wealth of information that travelers will find informative for protecting their health.

The Destination information of the Travel Health Online website, shown in Figure 8.1, covers destinations from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe and everything in between. The information for each country is invaluable for travelers. The status of the medical care in each country is detailed. The problem diseases and recommended and required vaccinations are listed. There is also information on insect-borne, and food and water-borne, diseases of the country. There is also information on weather and crime. In addition, the site lists each country's consular information, including the address, telephone number, and email address of the U.S. and Canadian Embassies.

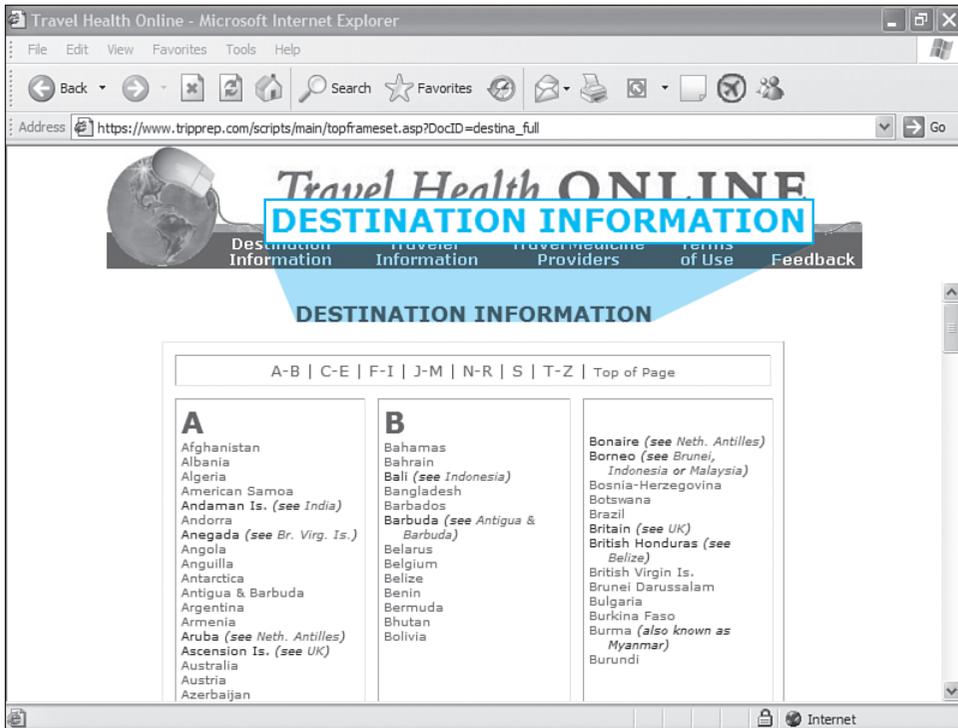


FIGURE 8.1

The Destination Information section of the Travel Health Online website is a “don’t miss” area for international travelers.

While you are at the Travel Health Online website, be sure to check out the Traveler Information and Travel Medicine Providers areas. The Traveler Information area provides data on everything from altitude illness to yellow fever. The Travel Medicine Providers area gives addresses and contact information for medical providers in the U.S. and countries around the world. The website states that the medical providers’ information has not been verified nor their medical status reviewed, but in an emergency, it may be beneficial to have a medical contact, especially in a foreign country.

Advice from the Centers for Disease Control Website

When looking for health information for an upcoming trip, don't overlook the excellent information provided by the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov. Its Travelers' Health area (www.cdc.gov/travel/), shown in Figure 8.2, is filled with useful health information.

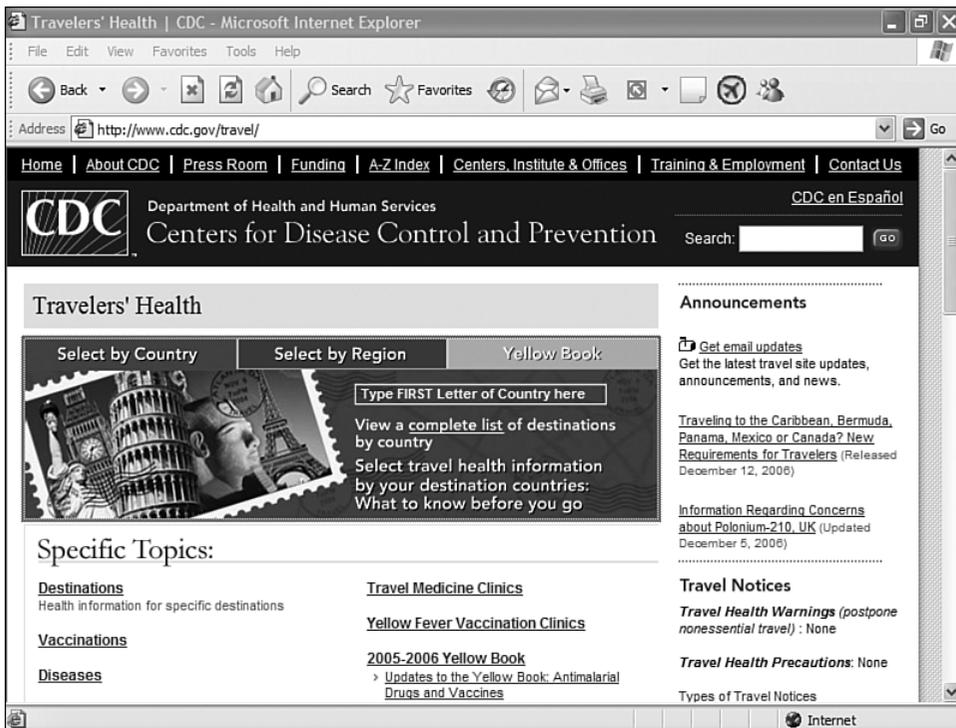


FIGURE 8.2

The Travelers' Health area of the CDC website has valuable health information for travelers.

The Illness and Injury Abroad section of the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel/illness_injury_abroad.htm is a great resource for travelers who visit foreign countries. It covers travel-specific warnings but also has information on medical emergencies. Perhaps even more important is its information on planning for healthy travel and its tips on being prepared for health-related emergencies.

Even if you are not traveling abroad, you may want to visit the CDC website for its informative articles on healthy travel and its travel health kit information. This information, as shown in Figure 8.3, is in the Illness and Injury Abroad area at www.cdc.gov/travel/illness_injury_abroad.htm, but it is pertinent to all travelers.

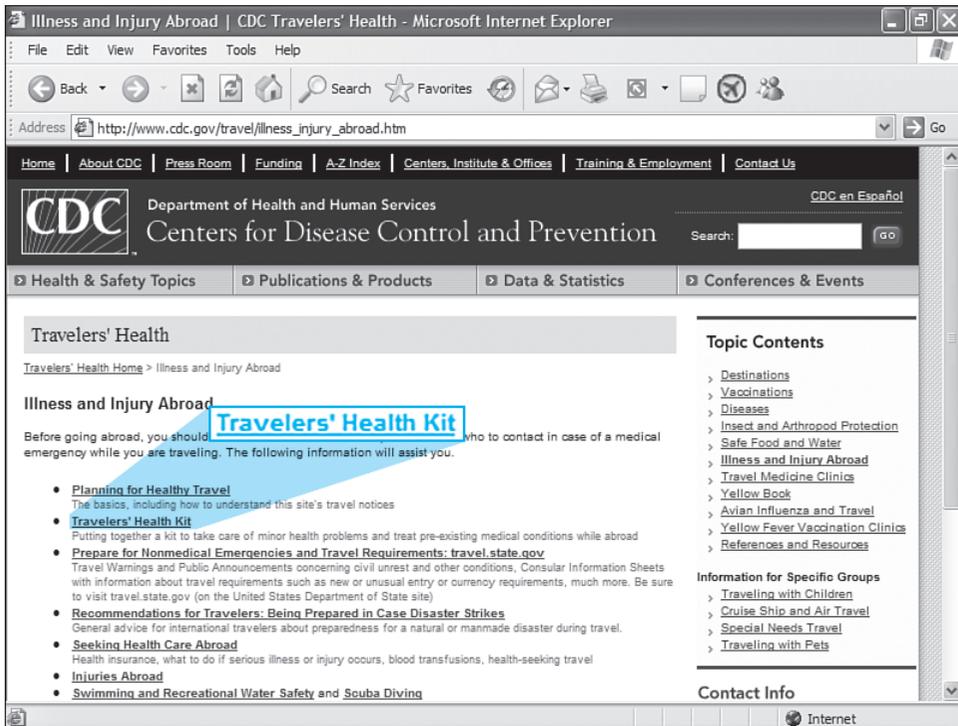


FIGURE 8.3

The Travelers' Health Kit recommended on the CDC website is useful for all travelers.

Here are the medications that the CDC recommends you take with you when you travel:

- Personal prescription medications (also carry copies of all prescriptions, including the generic names of medications, and a note from the prescribing physician on his or her letterhead for controlled substances and injectable medications)

- Antimalarial medications, if applicable
- Antidiarrheal medication (such as bismuth subsalicylate or loperamide)
- Antibiotic for self-treatment of moderate to severe diarrhea
- Antihistamine
- Decongestant, alone or in combination with antihistamine
- Anti-motion-sickness medication
- Acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, or another medication for pain or fever
- Mild laxative
- Cough suppressant/expectorant
- Throat lozenges
- Antacid
- Antifungal and antibacterial ointments or creams
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Epinephrine auto-injector (such as EpiPen), especially if you have a history of severe allergic reaction. Also available in a smaller-dose package for children.

Here are some other important items that the CDC recommends:

- Insect repellent containing DEET (up to 50%)
- Sunscreen (preferably SPF 15 or greater)
- Aloe gel for sunburns
- Digital thermometer
- Oral rehydration solution packets

- Basic first-aid items (adhesive bandages, gauze, ace wrap, antiseptic, tweezers, scissors, cotton-tipped applicators)
- Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Moleskin for blisters
- Lubricating eyedrops (such as Natural Tears)
- First-aid quick reference card

Every two years, the CDC produces the Yellow Book, which details health information for international travel. You can order this book, but it also is posted online free of charge. Even though the book is written for health-care providers, it uses fairly simple terminology and can be useful to any international traveler. Chapters include Pre and Post Travel Recommendations, Geographic Distribution of Potential Health Hazards to Travelers, Prevention of Specific Infectious Diseases, Yellow Fever Vaccine Requirements by Country, Conveyance and Transportation Issues, International Travel with Infants and Young Children, and Advising Travelers with Specific Needs.



Sandy's tip

To ensure your health care while on the road, you may want to bring a copy of your health records along when you travel. This is of particular importance to anyone with chronic health problems.

As noted in the CDC travelers' list, don't forget to take sunscreen. Also remember simple things like warm clothing for cold areas and sun-protective clothing for sunny places. Although layering your clothing to keep warm is always a good idea, today you can find artificially heated clothing.

For clothing with built-in sun protection, see websites such as Coolibar (www.coolibar.com), shown in Figure 8.4. This Australian company creates soft, pliable clothing that blocks the sun's burning rays.



Sandy's tip

Before leaving your own country, be sure to purchase health insurance that will cover you in the event of a medical emergency.



FIGURE 8.4

The Coolibar website provides soft, comfortable, sun-protective clothing.



Sandy's tip

Take along extra prescriptions for any necessary medications in case the medications become lost, and keep them separate from the medications themselves.

Preparation is the key when talking about staying healthy while traveling.

Consult the World Health Organization for International Travel

The World Health Organization lists a variety of travel-related health topics on its website at www.who.int/topics/en. As shown in Figure 8.5, this website has an alphabetical listing of health-related topics. It is very helpful in that you can look

up any health problem you may have, such as asthma or diabetes, to get information about that disease and how it has affected people globally. The World Health Organization website also has specific

information about disease outbreaks in all areas of the world. This includes full coverage of the avian influenza.



FIGURE 8.5

The World Health Organization website lists health topics alphabetically.

Supporting Travelers with Special Needs

Let's face it. No two travelers are alike. Everyone has his or her own unique needs. Technology and the Internet can help you arrange everything from wheelchairs to special meals for your distinctive travel needs.

Online Resources from the Access-Able Travel Source

If you or someone you are traveling with is physically challenged or has special needs, it is always good to check out the places you will visit for accessibility and special accommodations. One of the best Internet resources is the Access-Able Travel Source (www.access-able.com), shown in Figure 8.6.

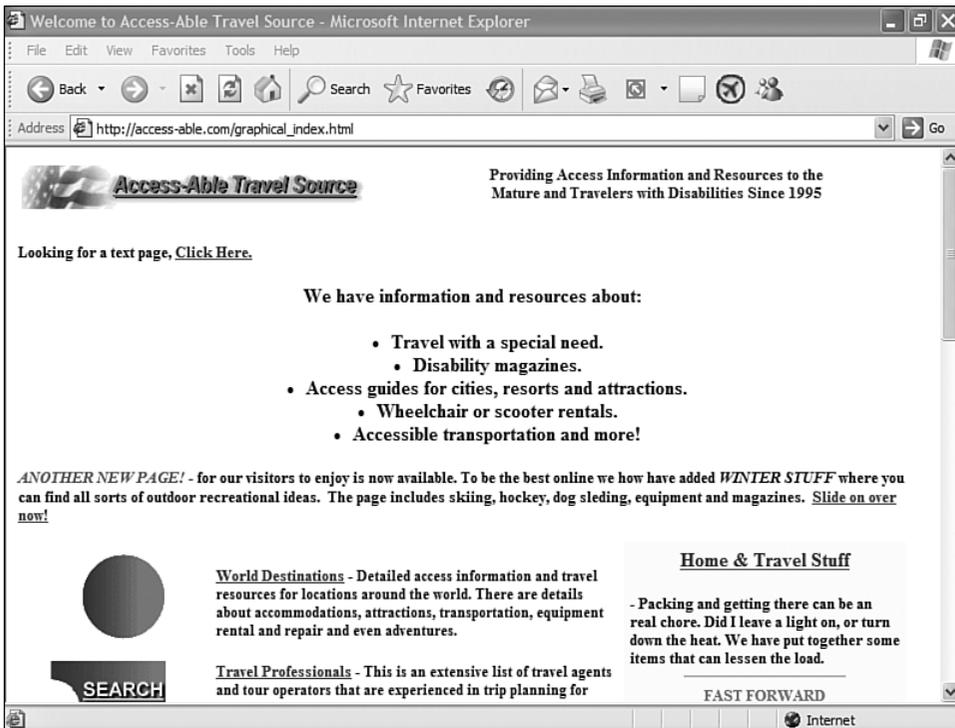


FIGURE 8.6

The Access-Able Travel Source website has detailed access information and travel resources for those with special needs.

This website was created by Bill Randall and his wife Carol, who has multiple sclerosis. They have done a great job of developing detailed access information for locations around the world. They offer many details about accommodations, attractions, equipment rental, and transportation. They also have honest assessments of cruise lines and

airports. This website also contains two valuable lists. It has an extensive list of travel agents and tour operators who are experienced in trip planning for travelers with disabilities. It also links to more than 400 other websites in this area of expertise.

Online Resources from Frommer's

The Frommer's website also has valuable information for disabled travelers. Surf to www.frommers.com, click the Trip Ideas tab, and choose the Disabled menu item. Or you can access this Web area directly at www.frommers.com/trip_ideas/disabled.

As shown in Figure 8.7, at this site you find a link to a very useful and comprehensive article titled "Disabled Travelers: A Compendium of Trip Planning Resources." It lists agencies and operators who specialize in accessibility during travel. It also lists organizations that can help with your travel planning and execution.

Learning from others who are in the same position is always beneficial. The Frommer's discussion board for disabled travelers at <http://www.frommers.com/cgi-bin/WebX?14@@.eead217> is a place where you can read about and learn from the experiences of others. You will find excellent information on these message boards. They discuss everything from tips on traveling with oxygen to traveling on dialysis to using an electric wheelchair in Europe.

Online Resources from the Seniors Travel Guide

Although many of today's hotels and resorts have accommodations for those with disabilities, it can be beneficial for the disabled traveler to check out those that cater to this clientele. The Seniors Travel Guide at <http://seniorstravelguide.com>, which is part of the Wired Seniors network, has a listing of accommodations and lodgings called disabilities resorts, as shown in Figure 8.8.

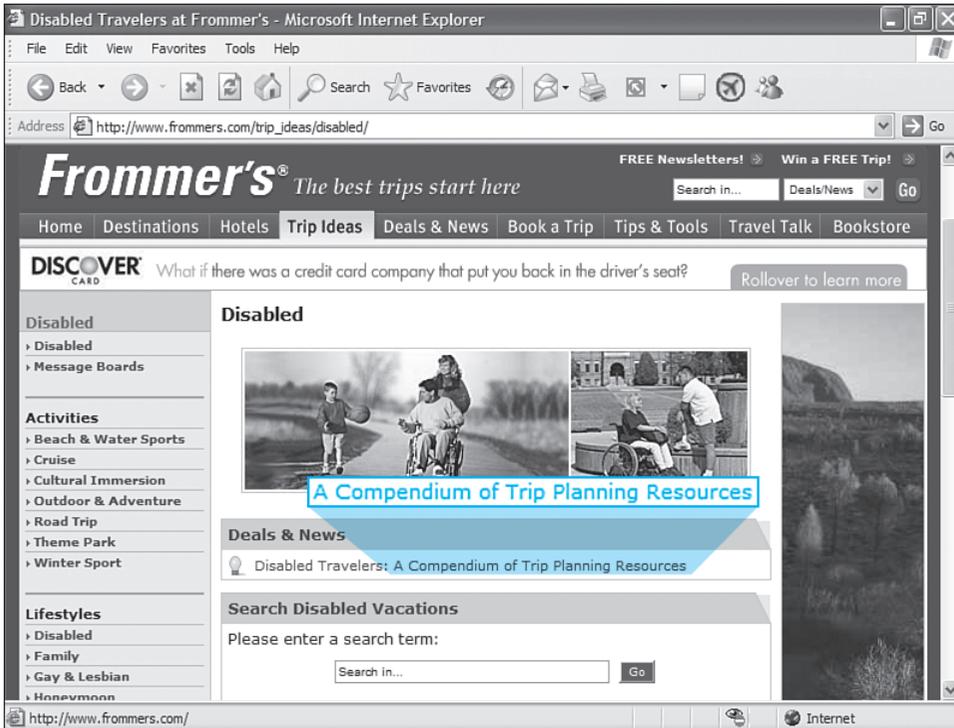


FIGURE 8.7

The Frommer's Disabled area has much comprehensive information in the article titled "Disabled Travelers: A Compendium of Trip Planning Resources."

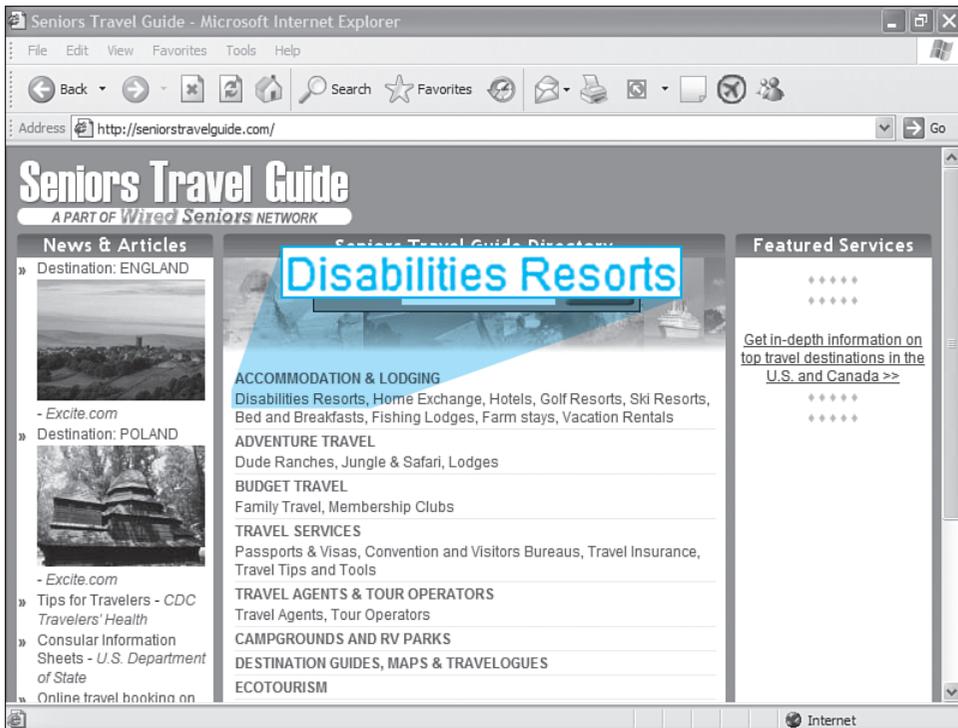
Online Resources from Emerging Horizons' Accessible Travel



BLOOPER ALERT

Foreign air carriers that fly to the U.S. do not have to adhere to the detailed disability laws that U.S. airlines must follow.

For more information on accessible travel, you may want to subscribe to the Emerging Horizons Accessible Travel magazine. It is geared toward people with mobility disabilities and includes everyone from slow walkers to wheelchair users. The Emerging Horizons website at <http://emerging-horizons.com> contains worthwhile sample articles and columns.

**FIGURE 8.8**

The Seniors Travel Guide lists disabilities resorts.

Other Online Resources for Travelers with Disabilities

You may also want to visit several other websites that specialize in assistive technology products and information on accessible travel. The ABLEDATA website provides information about assistive technology products for travelers in a special section at www.abledata.com. The link to this information is shown in Figure 8.9.

Some websites focus on just about every disability you can think of. Many of these sites have information on traveling with the many different types of disabilities. For instance, the Accessible Journeys website at www.disabilitytravel.com, shown in Figure 8.10, focuses on wheelchair travel. It has travel planning information and lists accessible group tours and cruises, special travel resources, and licensed travel companions.

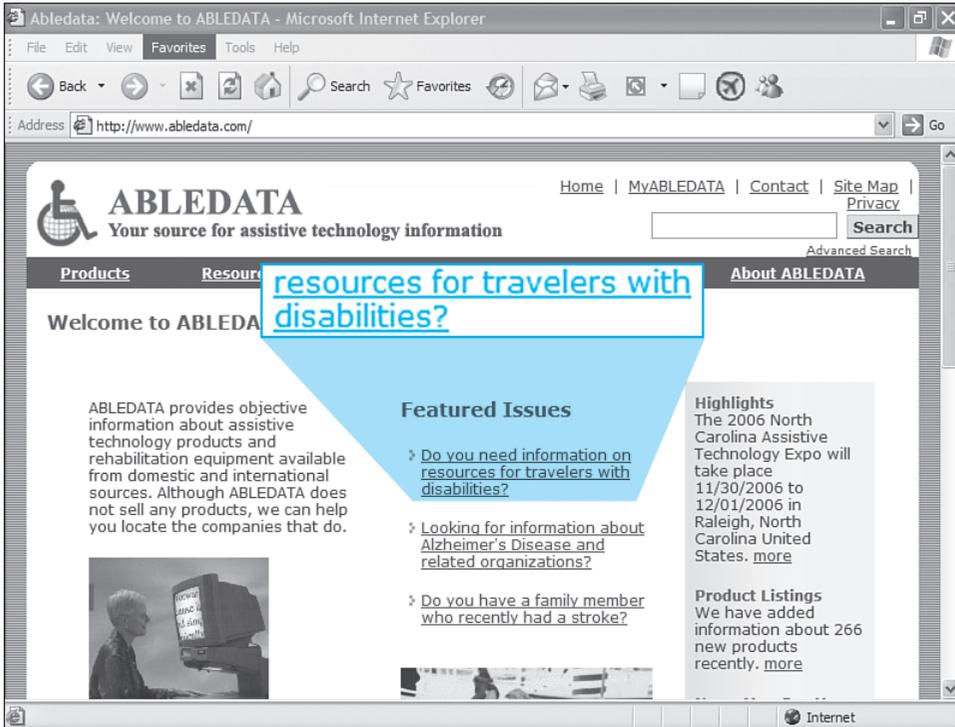


FIGURE 8.9

The ABLEDATA website has information and resources for travelers with disabilities.



BLOOPER ALERT

Some air carriers and other services require 48 hours advance notice for special accommodations that require preparation time.

The Trips Inc., Special Adventures website at www.tripsinc.com focuses on vacations for special travelers with developmental disabilities.

When dealing with disabilities, you can also use travel agents who specialize in making travel plans for people with physical disabilities. One such travel agency is Flying Wheels, which you can find at www.flyingwheelstravel.com.

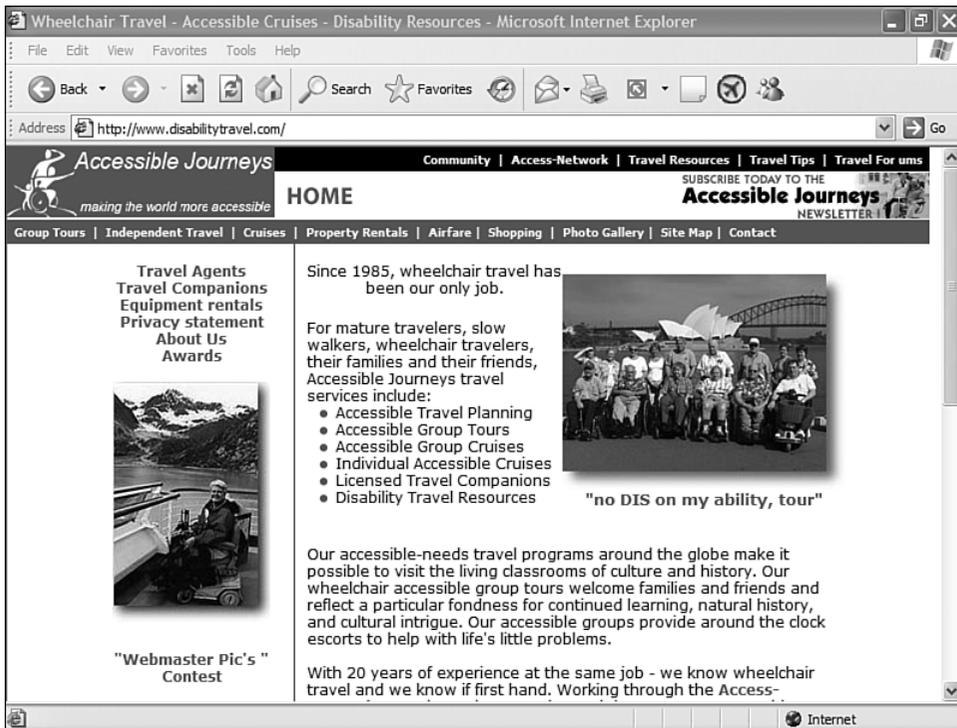


FIGURE 8.10

Wheelchair travel is the focus at the Accessible Journeys website.

Don't forget that you can often find information on traveling with disabilities by looking through the information for your destination. For instance, the All Go Here website at www.allgohere.com has an extensive directory of UK hotels and hospitality-related services that are disability-friendly. It also features an airline accessibility guide.

The Rotterdam accessibility guide at www.accessible.rotterdam.nl gives information on accessibility for all public buildings in Rotterdam.



Sandy's tip

To find information of this type, use a search engine such as Google at www.google.com. Type the name of your destination and the word "accessibility" in the search field.

Also be aware that websites that have information on disabilities can also lead to travel information. For instance, the Mobility International USA organization at www.miusa.org is a group that advocates international exchange and international development for people with disabilities. As shown in Figure 8.11, from this website you can search for other disability organizations and exchange programs, view new items, and see other information.



FIGURE 8.11

Mobility International USA is a great place to find out about exchange programs for people with disabilities.

As you know, air travel has changed dramatically since 9/11. Rules for travel can change at a moment's notice, so it is advisable for travelers with disabilities to check the current rules and regulations before they reach the airport. The Transportation Security Administration website

has an area at www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/index.shtm that has detailed information on screening procedures. You will also want to read its advice on how to declare and pack medications.

Traveling with Children

Preplanning is especially important when traveling with children. If you haven't traveled with kids since your own children were young, you may have to search your memory to recall all the things you did to help make the trip more enjoyable.

Remember that preparation is the key to traveling with children. Try to anticipate all the things that could go wrong and then take whatever you need to be prepared. Kids use a lot more Band-Aids than adults. Non-stinging anti-bacterial ointment is a must. And I always throw a few lollipops in a first aid kit for kids to help sweeten things up when cuts and bruises abound.

While you look for diversions and entertainment for the kids, don't forget that safe travel includes precautions that you take for safe travel with kids. The CDC has an excellent resource for traveling with children at www.cdc.gov/travel/child_travel.htm.

If you will be traveling by air, a lot has changed since you traveled with your own children. Be sure to check out the Transportation Security Administration's "Traveling with Children" bulletin at www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/children/index.shtm. It gives information you need to know about the screening process, as well as travel tips and special information on children with disabilities.



Sandy's tip

If you will be taking children through airport screening, be sure to talk to them about the process in advance. It can be a little intimidating, even for some adults!

Another useful website for information on traveling with children is the AirSafe.com site at www.airsafe.com/kidsafe/kid_tips.htm, shown in Figure 8.12. Its "Top 10 Safety Tips for Traveling with Children" will help

you in your quest to keep everyone safe and sound while having a great vacation.

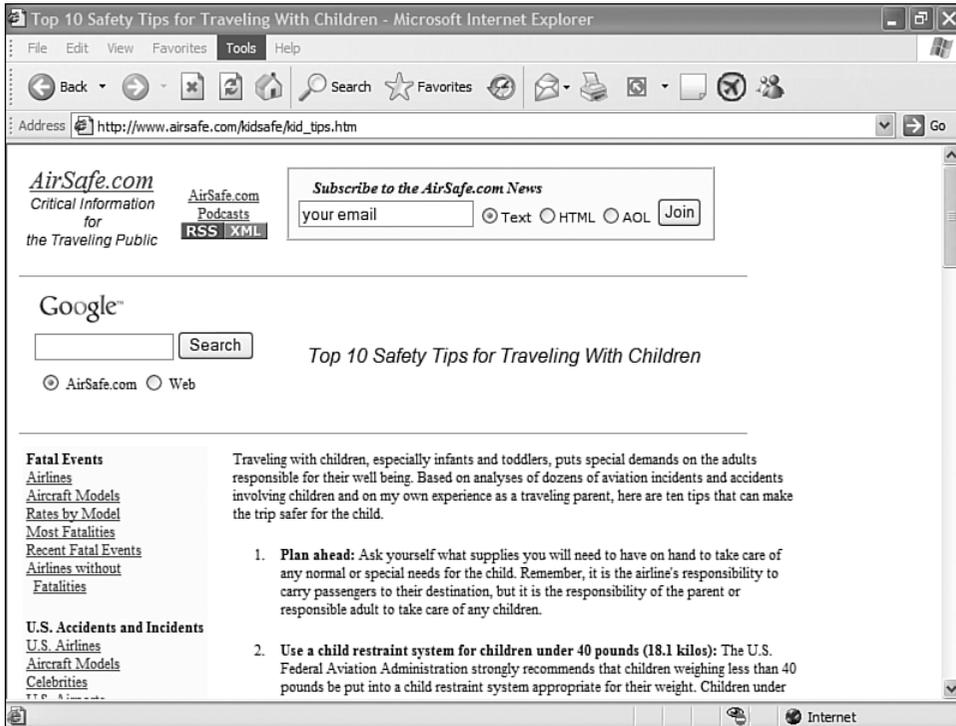


FIGURE 8.12

The AirSafe.com website has tips to make your trip with children safer and more fun.



Sandy's Summary

Even those with health problems are not ready to sit at home in a rocking chair. Nor should they have to. Today there are many resources for the traveler with special needs.

No matter what the status of your health, you will want to guard it on the road through proper preparation. Many online resources can help you prepare for a healthy and happy trip.

Internet resources also can help you with any special needs. From traveling in a wheelchair to obtaining special meals, these resources tell you what to expect and how to go about making the necessary arrangements.

Although traveling with children can be wonderful, they have special needs. Times have changed, and traveling with children is now quite different from when you took your own children along. Don't worry, though. Internet resources will help you get the kids organized and ready to hit the road.

Sandy Berger

