# Holiday Planning and ideas

## Going on holiday

Everybody needs a holiday from time to time. A change of air, a different environment, meeting new people or simply taking time for yourself can really lift your spirits.

In this factsheet we give you some useful ideas about choosing a holiday and making arrangements, as well as who to contact for more information.

Please note that the mention of any company here does not constitute a recommendation by RNIB.

## Choosing a holiday that suits you

Here are just a few ideas to help you decide what break is right for you.

“The first few trips are about confidence building. It doesn’t matter where you go as long as you go somewhere… Blind people tend not to want to explore for obvious reasons, but those who do have a fantastic time. They really gain a lot from it.”

**Ocean, holidaymaker**.

### Activity holidays and themed breaks

Many specialist hotels offer activity holidays and themed breaks, such as music and walking holidays, among others. There are also holiday venues around the UK offering you a range of options if you are feeling a bit more active.

For example, three Calvert Trust Centres in Northumberland, Cumbria and Devon offer options such as abseiling, archery and swimming for people with disabilities, including blind and partially sighted people.

Higham Hall in Cumbria and Knuston Hall in Northamptonshire are just two of many residential colleges throughout the UK that welcome blind and partially sighted participants, on courses ranging from poetry to Tai Chi, and languages to local history.

#### Higham Hall College

(Courses, summer schools and day courses in a variety of subjects)

Bassenthwaite Lake, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9SH

t: **01768 776 276**

e: **admin@highamhall.com**

w: **highamhall.com**

#### Knuston Hall

Irchester, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN29 7EU

t: **01604 362 200**

e: **enquiries@knustonhall.org.uk**

w: **knustonhall.org.uk**

More information can be found by contacting individual organisations, including:

#### Holidays with Help

31 Kilnhurst Road, Todmorden, Yorkshire OL14 6AX

t: **01706 815 251**

e: **holidayswithhelp@gmail.com**

w: **holidayswithhelp.org.uk**

The Calvert Trust ([**calvert-trust.org.uk**](http://www.calvert-trust.org.uk)) has three centres:

* Exmoor, **01598 763 221**
* Kielder, **01434 250 232**
* Lake District (Keswick), **01768 772 255**

### Residential homes

A short break at a residential home could be a good option if you or your partner need more care and attention because of mobility problems or other disabilities.

Healey House (Hastings and Rother Voluntary Association for the Blind)

3 Upper Maze Hill, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex TN38 0LQ

t: **01424 436 359/ 01424 433 762**

e: **hrvab@freeuk.com**

w:[**hrvab.org.uk**](http://www.hrvab.org.uk)

There is a large garden and facilities such as hairdressing and chiropody are available. Social activities and outings are arranged.

#### Darsdale Home

Chelveston Road, Raunds, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN9 6DA

t: **01933 622 457**

e: **info@darsdale.org.uk**

w: **darsdale.org.uk**

Darsdale Home is a residential home with 30 bedrooms (not all en-suite), set in three acres of gardens. There are two communal lounges, a conservatory and an enclosed courtyard.

#### Read House (Essex Blind Charity)

23 The Esplanade, Frinton-on-Sea CO13 9AU

t: **01255 673 654**

e: **info@essexblind.co.uk**

w: **readhouse.org**

Read House is situated near to the shops, churches, parks and the beach. There is a choice of spacious lounges, chiropody and hairdressing services and all special dietary needs are catered for.

#### Torch Holiday and Retreat Centre

4 Hassocks Road, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 9QN

t: **01273 832 282**

e: **torchhrc@torchtrust.org**

w: **torchtrust.org**

Torch HRC provides Christian hospitality, situated in a village which has a long-standing history and lots of character with pleasant walks in the surrounding countryside. There is a large lounge with a grand piano and a south facing sun lounge, which leads to a well-kept garden as well as a chapel for communal worship, private prayer and meditation. Outings are arranged.

## Planning a holiday

The key to having a great holiday is in the planning. Here are some aspects to consider.

### Information services

There are many sources of information to help you plan a holiday. Your local travel agent can help and there is plenty of information on the internet.

The main UK tourist boards will be able to give you details of centres in your local area.

#### Visit Britain and Enjoy England

t: **020 7578 1000**

w: **visitbritain.org** or **visitengland.com**

#### Scottish Tourist Board

Visit Scotland, Ocean Point One, 94 Ocean Drive, Edinburgh EH6 6JH

t: **0845 859 1006**

e: **info@visitscotland.com**

w: **visitscotland.com**

#### Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Belfast

10-12, Linum Chambers, Bedford Square, Bedford St, Belfast BT2 7ES

t: **028 9023 1221**

e: **info@tourismni.com**

w: **discovernorthernireland.com**

Dublin

Northwood Ave, Santry Demesne, Santry, Co. Dublin, Ireland

t: **+353 (0)1 865 1880**

e: **discovernorthernireland.com**

w: **infodublin@tourismni.com**

#### Welsh Tourist Board

t: **0333 006 3001**

e: **info@visitwales.co.uk**

w: **visitwales.co.uk**

#### Tourism for All UK

1 Pixel Mill, 44 Appleby Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 6ES

t: **0845 124 9971**

e: **info@tourismforall.org.uk**

w: **tourismforall.org.uk**

#### Booking

There are several options when it comes to booking your holiday. You could contact your travel agent, book online or speak to the hotel of your choice directly.

When booking your holiday, it’s advisable to inform the hotel or tour operator of any special requirements you have so that they can accommodate your needs.

“I like going on mainstream holidays because they treat you like any other guest. If you ask for help they give it. You need to tell them that you have a sight restriction and you need to tell them what you need in terms of support.”

**Ocean, holidaymaker**

#### Passport and visa

When travelling abroad, your passport must be valid for the duration of the holiday; however some countries also require a longer validity than the holiday duration. Ensure that you meet any visa and health requirements, such as inoculations. Contact the Foreign and Common Wealth Office and the country’s embassy for more information. Your travel agent should also be able to give you advice.

#### Insurance

It is advisable to take out medical and personal insurance to cover you whilst you are on holiday. Ensure that the company you choose is a member of the Association of British Insurers. You will need to inform them of details, such as medical conditions and your age.

#### EHIC

You can use the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to cover any necessary medical treatment due to either an accident or illness within the European Economic Area (EEA). The EHIC entitles you to state-provided medical treatment within the country you are visiting.

For more information, including how the UK leaving the EU will impact on the use of an EHIC call **0300 330 1350** or visit **ehic.org.uk**

## Travel by coach, rail, sea and air

The majority of coach, rail, ferry and airline companies do offer reliable assistance, but it’s important to let them or the travel company know in advance what assistance you require.

“On my flight, I was delighted to find that all the instructions on things like safety procedures were available in braille. The staff were very helpful, they showed me where the buzzer was to call them and told me to let them know if I needed any help. I also loved the champagne!”

**Bella, holidaymaker**

#### National Express Coaches

t: **0871 781 8181**

w: **nationalexpress.com**

Contact form is available on the website

Any special requests must be made at least 36 hours in advance via the Disabled Persons Travel Assistance Line **0371 781 8181**.

#### National Rail Enquiries

t: **03457 484 950**

w: **nationalrail.co.uk**

National Rail Enquiries can help plan your rail journey and give information on how to arrange assistance with getting on and off a train. We recommend you do this as far in advance as possible, giving at least 24 hours notice.

#### Disabled Persons Railcard

PO Box 6613, Arbroath, DD11 9AN

t: **0345 605 0525**

e: **disability@raildeliverygroup.com**

w: **disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk**

#### Specialist tour operators

Here are some specialist tour operators in the UK who arrange individual and group holidays overseas for people with all types of disabilities. Some are able to provide escorts, others welcome friends and family. For more information, please give them a call:

#### Access Travel (Lancs) Ltd

6 The Hillock, Astley, Manchester M29 7GW

t: **01942 888 844**

e: **office@access-travel.co.uk**

w: **access-travel.co.uk**

#### Can Be Done Ltd

Equity House, 128-136 High Street, Edgware HA8 7EL

t: **020 8907 2400**

e: **holidays@canbedone.co.uk**

w: **canbedone.co.uk**

Can Be Done specialise in holidays for people with disabilities, offering a range of holidays from day trips, self-drive and tailor made itineraries. Holiday destinations include: UK, Europe, North America and the rest of the world (long haul) and various cruises.

#### Traveleyes International

PO Box 511, Leeds LS5 3JT

t: **0113 834 6094**

e: **Contact form is available on the website**

w: **traveleyes-international.com**

Traveleyes offer group holidays that are designed specifically for people with sight loss and pair up blind and partially sighted people with sighted companions. The holidays, which go to a range of UK and worldwide destinations, vary from relaxing beach breaks to more active holidays that explore famous landmarks and historical sites.

#### Seable

35 Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, London E28AA

t: **0203 375 6947** or **0789 1546 211**

e: **Contact form is available on the website**.

w: **seable.co.uk**

Seable specialises in sensorial leisure active holidays for blind and partially sighted people. It works in association with accessible providers of travel-related products and services, in particular, with the Sicilian charity LIFE (Life Improvement for Everyone).

This charity has developed a number of sensorial activities that have proved to enhance your holiday experience while gaining new skills.

Activities include:

* scuba diving
* olive oil making
* fishing with Sicilian fishermen
* visit the tactile museum
* make your own pizza competition
* driving in Europe’s highest active volcano.

## Assistance and personal help

### How to find a sighted guide

If you need a sighted guide or assistance to help you travel, there are a variety of agencies that provide sighted guides and assistance. Services vary and may incur a cost.

#### Volunteers

A volunteer is usually an unpaid companion, although you may be asked to meet any travel and subsistence expenses. Volunteers are mostly available for short periods of time only.

#### Companion Service

There are several companies around the UK that offer a companion service. The cost of this can vary greatly and it is important to clearly state the duration of time and the level of assistance needed in order to get an idea of the price. As this is a paid for service you can expect the companion to provide company, conversation, assistance and accompany you shopping or on excursions etc within the assigned period.

#### Nursing and care assistants

Numerous established agencies offer nurses/care assistants and the price can vary according to the agency and service required. A care assistant will, in addition to providing companionship, assist with dressing and undressing, washing and mobility difficulties.

#### Guiding services

A guide will offer information and advice on a certain destination or area. For example a guide can provide a descriptive tour of a town, indicating historical and tourist attractions. Guiding services usually offer tailor made tours to suit the individual or group.

It is always best to book these well in advance of your holiday dates, to give the organisation as much notice as possible to help you have a relaxing holiday.

### General advice when searching for a volunteer or companion

* If there are a few of you travelling, find out the number of people that require a guide
* It is important to clearly state disabilities, medical conditions and daily requirements
* Contact several agencies to compare prices before booking

#### Organisations that can help with a volunteer or escort

#### NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)

Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

t: **020 7520 2552**

e: **ncvo@ncvo.org.uk**

w: **ncvo.org.uk**

Contact NCVO to find details of your local Volunteer Centre. Although they may offer a guiding service, every bureau is different and the amount of notice needed varies.

#### British Nursing Association (BNA)

Group House, 92 - 96 Lind Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4PL

t: **0871 873 3324**

e: **info@bna.co.uk**

w: **bna.co.uk**

BNA have branches around the UK, Highlands and Northern Ireland and offer a full and varied service. They can provide trained nurses or auxiliaries. Charges vary according to the level of service you require, but in all cases the escort’s expenses must be met.

#### Universal Aunts

P.O. Box 70056, London SE15 9DY

t: **020 7738 8937**

e: **aunts@universalaunts.co.uk**

w: **universalaunts.co.uk**

Universal Aunts offers a range of charged services including “meet and greet” services and transfers at airports or train stations. They are unable to offer medical care.

## Finding funding

If you are unable to take a holiday because of your financial situation, there are different types of organisations you could approach to get financial assistance.

1. Try your local authority first. The help that they will give varies across the country, but they may be able to provide you with financial assistance.
2. There are a range of organisations in the UK that offer grants for holidays. Each organisation has its own rules for who they can help and under what circumstances, and they may also need a social worker (or similar) to apply for you. Call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** and we can find out which organisation may be able to help you.
3. Local societies and organisations for people with sight loss can sometimes offer financial assistance or they may organise their own group holidays. Call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** to find out where your nearest society is situated and what they can provide. You can also search the Sightline Directory for the same information: **sightlinedirectory.org.uk.**
4. Other local charities may be able to provide funding:

#### Lions Clubs International

257 Alcester Road South, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6DT

t: **0121 441 4544**

e: **enquiries@lionsclubs.co**

w: **lions.org.uk**

### Discrimination on holiday

If things do not go quite as expected, let your hotel or tour operator know exactly what the problem is straight away. Should you feel you have been discriminated against and would like some advice, call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.

## Other useful contacts

RNIB

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

t: **0303 123 9999**

e: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/leisure**

#### English Heritage

t: **0370 333 1181**

e: **Contact form available from website**

w: **english-heritage.org.uk**

English Heritage produces a guide for visitors with disabilities. This is available in alternative formats.

#### The National Trust

PO Box 574, Manvers, Rotherham S63 3FH

t: **0344 800 1895**

e: **enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk**

w: **nationaltrust.org.uk**

The National Trust produces an information booklet each year for visitors with disabilities. The booklet is available in alternative.

#### Break

Schofield House, Spar Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR6 8BX

t: **01603 670 100**

e: **reception@break-charity.org**

w: **break-charity.org**

Break is a registered charity that provides holidays and respite care for children and adults with special needs. They have holiday homes in Hunstanton and Sheringham in Norfolk.

#### Deafblind UK

National Centre for Deafblindness, John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

t: **01733 358 100**

txt: **0790 357 2885**

e: **info@deafblind.org.uk**

w: **deafblind.org.uk**

Deafblind UK supports thousands of deafblind people. They have three self catering caravans which have accessibility features.

#### DIAL Doncaster

Unit 9 Shaw Wood Business Park, Shaw Wood Way, Doncaster DN2 5TB

t: **01302 327 800**

e: **advice@dialdoncaster.co.uk**

w: **dialdoncaster.co.uk**

DIAL Doncaster, the disability advisory service, operates a purpose built three-bedroom holiday lodge situated on the Haven Holiday Park at Marton Mere near Blackpool.

#### Leonard Cheshire Disability

66 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL

t: **0203 242 0200**

e: **Contact form available from website**

w: **leonardcheshire.org**

Leonard Cheshire Disability is the leading charity provider of services for disabled people in the UK, offering respite and residential care.

#### Sense

101 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LG

t: **0300 330 9256**

txtph: **18001 0300 330 9256**

e: **info@sense.org.uk**

w: **sense.org.uk**

Sense offers a variety of holidays for deafblind children and adults, including activity centres, cottages, farms, and holiday villages.

## Connect with others

Meet or connect with others who are blind or partially sighted online, by phone or in your community to share interests, experiences, and support for each other. From book clubs and social groups to sport and volunteering, our friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable team can link you up with opportunities to suit you. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call **0303 123 9999.**

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