

# Can you take a cruise if you



The Celebrity Equinox

Last week we reported on the cruise ship Celebrity Equinox, and told of our personal experience. However, there was one aspect we didn't mention, and it really deserves some detail, because what they have done is outstanding, and that is not what we thought, that is what people in wheelchairs told me. The owners of the cruise line have also equipped this, and many of their other ships, to accommodate the needs of people with visual or hearing disabilities, even those whose condition requires dialysis or oxygen.



A Jacuzzi on board with chair lift.

they were almost 'confined' to their home, but this was a long way from the truth.

The level of support and help was really impressive, right down to being able to ring ahead to a town they planned to visit and an electric mobility scooter would be delivered to the bus they were arriving in, and for a very low fee.

That made us wonder how much support is available in the Algarve, and the local tourist board is putting a lot of effort into improving accessibility, not just to hotels and restaurants etc, but even wheelchair friendly beaches. Once you have become aware of the challenges, especially those faced by wheelchair users, you start to look and notice.

That also made us more attentive to other possibilities, for example, could you take a cruise?

While on a recent cruise with Celebrity Cruises, we were more 'aware' of what was available, and it is impressive.

I had an opportunity to see in some detail one of the disabled facilities staterooms on the Equinox, and after that you start to notice all the other facilities you had not noticed before (all very discreet though).

These staterooms are larger and allow a wheelchair to turn 180°. The stateroom doors are all electric, simply touch the hand pad outside (or inside) and the door opens for you, and stays open long enough for you to get in or out.

On the door itself, not just one, but two spy holes, one at the normal level, and one lower for use from a wheelchair.

The bathrooms are larger with

no steps or barriers of any kind, and the shower is made so you just wheel in and use a built in seat. Even the wash basin is lower, and the mirror angled.

Hand rails are placed in all the right places and there are alarm buttons on long cords in the stateroom and bathroom if for any reason you might need to call for help. Yes, they have put a lot of thought into the design.

On the pool deck, there are hydraulic lifts for one pool and one whirlpool. I noticed one gentleman stop in his wheelchair, and within seconds, four attendants were there to help him onto the lift.

Later we chatted in the pool as we both swam, and he was delighted with the level of service and the thought that had gone into the design throughout the ship.

This made us even more curious, so we spoke to another wheelchair user, who also explained how he was able to use all the facilities on the ship, and take trips as there was always assistance to get a wheelchair on and off at each port.

We also noticed that all the toilets in the public areas around the ship also had the electrically operated doors for simple entry and exit.

Even the theatre has special areas for wheelchairs.

For visually impaired guests, Braille signs have been incorporated in all the important places, and they can even board these guests early so they can attend an 'orientation' tour to familiarise themselves with the ship.

For those who are hard of hearing, a portable room kit in your stateroom is available upon

Two of our relatives in the UK are disabled, and a couple of months ago they were telling us about how much is available to assist disabled people. We thought



People with disabilities need not feel excluded.

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