



Q: To celebrate my retirement, I'm considering going on a first cruise. As much as I hope to enjoy it, I'm a bit hesitant because sometimes I need a wheelchair. Have you any suggestions on how I can cruise in safety and comfort? *RBL, San Francisco CA*

A: Many wheelchair-bound people take cruises. Actually, for the physically-challenged, sea journeys can be much safer and more convenient than vacationing at resorts and big cities. Once aboard, everything is within a few yards or elevator ride away from your cabin. This includes dining, pool, spa, theater, casino and much more.

Most areas of a cruise ship are wheelchair-friendly. However, for insurance purposes, few if any ships will furnish wheelchairs aboard. It's best to take your own or contact a rental company to have one delivered to the dock before you board.

When planning a cruise, it may be more convenient for you to take a relative or paid companion with you, so your comfort and safety are assured at all times. Additionally, cruise pricing is based on two in a cabin, so it won't cost much more for a second person.

Before you sail, learn all safety rules as they apply to your special needs, such as life boat and life jacket drills, so you can be prepared for any potential emergency. And bon voyage!