

Autism NI is Northern Ireland's main autism charity and works to provide life-changing services for over 35,000 autistic people currently living in Northern Ireland.

Our work wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Your donation can help us continue to provide invaluable autism services, and build an inclusive society where autistic people can reach their full potential.

To make a donation, please visit [www.autismni.org](http://www.autismni.org) or call us on **028 9040 1729**.

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# Autism and holidays



# Travelling to a new destination or country can be exciting and stressful for everybody, but there are extra things to be considered if you are travelling with someone who is autistic.



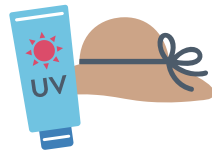
## Preparation



Once you have booked your holiday, you should tell the autistic person that you are travelling, and let them know more about the trip. Autistic people can find change difficult, which may lead to high anxiety or meltdowns. However, by preparing them for change and outlining a clear plan, you can reduce anxiety and fear.

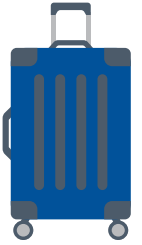
Here are some ideas to try:

- Start discussing the new location as soon as possible, showing photographs and up to date images of the venue or activities that can be done on the trip.
- Bring a small bag including books, fidget items and handheld devices which can help with restlessness or de-regulation during unexpected delays or waiting.
- Compile visual supports which can include a holiday fact file with a map, a basic route of the journey, a picture of the accommodation or a visual time-line for estimated departure and arrival times.
- Bring headphones or ear protectors to shut out surrounding noises and make the journey more comfortable.
- Download a relaxation app to play calming music.
- Bring familiar or favourite foods for the journey, to avoid anxiety in unfamiliar shops.
- Bring supporting documents such as an autism card and a copy of a DLA or PIP award in order to gain adjustments or priority access. This can be screen captured to a mobile device, ensuring it is not misplaced during the journey.



## How to get help at the airport

- The airline you are flying with can be contacted beforehand to book special assistance. To help prepare for your trip and to ensure that your airport experience is as enjoyable and as stress free as possible, request a downloadable guide of the airport.
- All EU Airlines and Airports and most Ferry Ports and Ferries must offer assistance to passengers with a disability or reduced mobility. You should request assistance at least 48 hours before you travel.



## At your destination

Plan ahead and contact your hotel or any attractions beforehand, and ask what support is available for autistic people. Many attractions have a priority pass or fast track system in place. It is important to check eligibility criteria, as you may need to bring DLA or PIP award letter, a blue badge, your autism card or a GP letter.

Other items to bring:

- An autism card, which offers a brief outline of autism and some strategies that will assist the autistic person.
- An I.D. badge which could include a photograph and contact information, in case they get lost or separated from the family.
- A visual planner or schedule to outline activities planned for each day and the day you will return home.
- An autism passport for them which can outline strategies that will positively support others to get to know your child and what works best.
- A social story about going to a restaurant or eating out at new places.



## After your holiday



It's good to take photos of your trip and create a photo album once you return home. This can positively remind the autistic person that although change can be challenging, it can be navigated and you can enjoy the experience.