

# DISABLED TRAVELLERS NOW WITH NEW RIGHTS



A recent story on an AirFrance flight has stirred up the emotions of the world's disabled community. A disabled passenger was boarding a flight from London to Paris when he was told that he should get off the plane as he would put the safety of others in danger. Some would argue that this is a good point. Indeed, people in wheelchairs are less mobile and could prove to be a fatal obstacle to those striving to get out of an aircraft in a case of emergency. However, we should not forget that the UK alone has 10 million disabled citizens, many countries have much

more.

It is not our duty to consider these people as a burden, yet we should adapt to their needs, something which AirFrance has only just started to do. To be honest, most other airline companies are in the same boat.

On the basis of new EU regulations, disabled passengers now have new rights; some say that they have been a long time in coming. As from this year onwards, airport staff must be trained to deal with and respect disabled passengers. This help includes carrying luggage, providing friendlier and more patient services at check points and providing disabled-friendly toilet facilities. On a similar note, wheelchairs and special airport guide dogs should be provided free of charge.

The facts speak for themselves and do not make for pleasant reading. Almost 65% of the respondents in a recent survey stated that they are not satisfied with airport services for disabled people. Even more worryingly, 75% of the airport staff admitted to being incapable of helping the disabled community either while boarding a plane or strolling around an airport. Considering the potential amount of disabled travellers, this is a national and European tragedy, thankfully now being changed.

See a video "Accessibility for All" at

<http://www.tourism-review.com/video.php?cat=management&video=315>

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