Leaving MS in the Dust: How to Have an Incredible Road Trip

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Great Road Trips Start With Great Planning

"Luck favors the prepared." ~ Edna Mode (The Incredibles)

The summer is here and I am ready for another great road trip! Soon I am traveling up to Toronto with my friend Heidi and I am sure we are going to get into lots of fun/trouble while we're there!

I have taken some time to think about all the arrangements — having multiple sclerosis has turned me into an uber planner! I have to have everything I need in place, just in case anything were to go wrong or, God forbid, I had some new symptoms to contend with. The only choice, really, is to plan; staying home and foregoing the trip is not an option.

Before You Leave

Firstly, I have to make sure all of the basics are covered:

- I have to have a cooler, loaded up with lots of water and iced tea to keep me and my friend cool and hydrated.
- I need a nice selection of fruits and other healthy snacks to have on hand. Going on a trip does not mean that I am leaving behind the nutrition that is helping to keep my relapses at bay.
- I need my music selection to be in order. I use a lot of smartphone apps that will get me to at least the border of Canada.
- I need to make sure that my cellphone plan is set up for international usage. The last time I took the ferry from Port Angeles, WA up to Victoria Island, BC, I was taught the lesson of showing up unprepared. Fortunately, it was only a day trip, but I could never spend days without my phone. I am tethered to it, like so many of us are nowadays. Fortunately, wifi is available in the hotel we will be staying in and FaceTime is free, so I should be all right for this trip.

Plan Your Comfort Stops

Nothing, and I mean NOTHING, ruins a good road trip for me more than having to go to the bathroom in a terrible place that stinks to high… well, you know what I am getting at. One of the most annoying problems from my MS is the fact that I have to go to the bathroom much more often now. I can play it off as just being a woman who has had a kid and needs to pee all the time, but I am pretty sure MS is the reason for at least part of my problem.

When I travel, I need to know where the bathrooms are and I need to know that they are going to be clean. I admit, this is a very hard task to master but I have a few ways of sifting out the absolutely terrible places that I have been forced to use in my time:

- If you know that you are going to be driving this path again sometime, make note of all of your favorite

places to stop and keep them handy for the next time you travel this way.
- Pay attention to your favorite gas station or restaurant chains. Chances are that the standard of care and the layout of their facilities will carry over throughout their establishments.
- Use the government-run rest areas and make note of where you will find them along your drive. Often times the rest stops along the highways are a great places because they are frequented by a large number of people every day and therefore they are cared for on a more frequent basis.

Next page: finding food and keeping fatigue at bay.

Find Food

Food is a huge requirement on any trip. Not only is it necessary for sustenance but it is also necessary for fun. Yes, I equate food with fun. I admit it, I am a foodie. My favorite thing to do on any trip is to try new foods. I love that I am in a new place, with new people, and I love learning how other people feed themselves and enjoy their meals. I truly believe that you can learn a lot about people by eating the food they make.

When I travel, I arrive with a list of places that are on my 'foods to try' list. I already have that list ready for this trip. It is full of lots of tasty, healthy and fun places that have been suggested to me by my friends or found on yet another one of my smartphone apps. I am not going to share my list with you, but you get the picture. I have also been sure to include lots of fun places to stop and eat along the way. My friend and I will be well fed and we will have extra en route fun to boot!

Keep Fatigue at Bay

Yet another huge thing for me in regards to my MS is my fatigue. I have it with me every day. I know that it will come out, raging, if I don’t give it the care and caution necessary to keep it at bay. Usually, I ride in the passenger seat during our family road trips. I will relax, take photographs of the passing scenery and take a nice long nap in the air conditioning as the miles roll past.

This time, I will be driving, so the benefit of an on-road nap will not be available. We will have to head out early in the day, after a good breakfast. The driving time for this trip is somewhat short, only five hours, so we can have lunch along the way and land at our hotel before dinner. This way I will still have plenty of energy to enjoy a night out on the town and I will be able to avoid any unwanted night driving. My vision is affected by MS and night driving can feel like a nightmare. Nightmare = not fun.

Have Fun!

Finally, don’t forget the whole purpose of the trip. You are going on a road trip to have fun. It isn’t called The Great American Road Trip for nothing — you have to use the miles that you have. You are getting out of your routine and into this big, wonderful world that we live in! It is your responsibility to enjoy every minute of it that you can!

I am planning on having a great time! I am planning on getting into all sorts of wonderful trouble with my wonderful friend. I am going someplace to make some memories and I refuse to come back home without a few great stories or without meeting a few great people to add to the many that I have already met in my life. This road trip is a reminder that my journey is not over, that my world is not contained within the boundaries of my home, that my stories are not boxed up and locked away as past event.

I have a journey in my future. I have many journeys in my future. I have a road trip in my future.