

Navigating neurodiversity abroad

Karl Taylor talks to Greg Wingham, from TUI's Neurodiversity Community Network, to get his top tips on travelling with a neurodiverse child.



"I created the Neurodiversity Network – one of several employee network groups at TUI – with two colleagues, as a safe space for us to be ourselves and to connect with other people who have similar lived experiences. My son, Teddy' who turns seven in June 2024 was diagnosed with autism at the age of two. It was very much a journey in to the unknown at that time as we knew so little on the subject but it went some way to explaining why doing things that others would term as 'normal' was, at times such a challenge for Teddy. Things like going on holiday. That's where the Assisted Travel Team at TUI come in – they're trained to provide support for customers with a neurodiverse condition. Here are some of the things they can help with..."

At the airport



"Teddy struggles with queues, noise and busy places so the team helps us make the airport experience easier for him by keeping us updated on when we'll get to board the plane and where we'll sit. Not knowing what might happen and when can be stressful for Teddy so this goes a long way in helping reduce that anxiety. They can also send a sunflower lanyard to your home address – it helps both the airport and TUI staff know the person wearing it may need a helping hand."

On holiday



"Teddy is also quite particular about his food and, like many other neurodivergent people, likes routine and familiarity. To help us get around this, we give the Assisted Travel Team a call before we go to add extra luggage - it's free if you or somebody you're travelling with has a neurodivergent condition. It means we can bring those home comforts, like familiar food, blankets and cuddly toys away with us. If you're heading to a hotel with a TUI Kids' Club, you can chat to the Kids' Club team once you arrive too. They can help make the sessions run as smoothly as possible."

For more info on travelling with a neurodivergent condition, give our Assisted Travel Team a call on: 0800 145 6920

Useful links to airports' Special Assistance information regarding services such as:

- How to get a sunflower lanyard
- Separate, quiet departure lounges or sensory rooms
- Social stories about going through airport security and other processes
- Access to Fast-Track Security

LONDON LUTON:

<https://www.london-luton.co.uk/special-assistance-landing/non-physical-disabilities>

LONDON GATWICK:

<https://www.gatwickairport.com/passenger-guides/special-assistance.html> (scroll to the bottom for information about the North Terminal Sensory Room)

LONDON HEATHROW:

<https://www.heathrow.com/at-the-airport/assistance-and-accessibility/non-visible-disabilities>
(including information about a free Sensory Objects Pack that's available)

LONDON STANSTED:

<https://www.stanstedairport.com/help/special-assistance/hidden-disabilities/>