



ADRINCLUSIVE

Innovative and sustainable tourism offer for equal access
and social inclusion of people with dementia and cognitive
decline to tourist destinations in the Adriatic sea

How can I organise a vacation for people with Alzheimer and dementia?

Imagine a world where everyone can experience the joy of travel, regardless of their abilities





For many families the prospect of organising a vacation with a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's is distant. For a person diagnosed with the disease many doors are often closed for their safety or due to shame, but primarily because outside the home environment caring for a family member involves too many uncertainties that the family cannot handle alone.

Challenges and barriers to overcome

Planning a family vacation when one of its members lives with Alzheimer's disease brings specific needs. While this can be seen as a barrier, on the other hand, being able to provide

an inclusive experience that meets the needs of people affected by this disease is a challenge that can bring numerous benefits.

When talking about Alzheimer's, barriers are mostly not physical but internal to the person, represented by the caregiver's fears and anxieties, such as:

- Living in fear of not being able to manage unexpected reactions of their loved one in public places
- Worry that their loved one might behave inappropriately or make embarrassing comments that may shame the caregiver
- Fear of not being understood in a new place where they need to interact with people who do not know their loved one
- Anxiety about not having everything under control, that their nearest and dearest might get lost or that they might not manage their physiological needs in a different environment
- Fear of not having someone to help them in case of need and difficulty in arranging the stay on their own.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended to be a useful tool for anyone (people with Alzheimer and dementia, families, caregivers, Alzheimer associations, other organisations, professionals or volunteers) who wishes to create inclusive tourism experiences for people with dementia.

The goal is to provide an **initial package of knowledge, skills, daily planning** that will enable the replication and dissemination of inclusive tourism experiences. There is a need for a change in mentality towards disability and above all, to create conditions so that, despite the illness, the person can maintain the right to live a life full of relationships, passions, habits and affections.

Communicating dementia with respect

The words we use matter. Always choose language that emphasizes the person, not the condition or the illness.

Say: "Person with dementia" or "Person living with dementia"

Avoid: Terms like "demented" or "sufferer"



Remember, every person with dementia is unique, with their own life story, preferences, and needs. They need care but also to develop meaningful relationships, recognising that these connections are an essential part of life and of everyone's individual identity. Let's get to know them and create an experience that truly honors who they are.

Understanding Alzheimer and dementia

What is dementia?

Dementia describes an overall decline in memory and other cognitive skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. The principal symptom is deficit in memory, attention and orientation. With the term Dementia, we consider different types of clinical conditions.

Alzheimer's Disease is the most common form of Dementia.

Alzheimer's disease worsens over time, but symptoms can vary greatly, and not everyone will experience the same symptoms or progress at the same rate.

This guide is **intended for people with mild to moderate cognitive decline.**

Living well with dementia

A person with dementia is still an individual with their own life experiences, personality and likes and dislikes. It is possible to live well with dementia. Many people with dementia continue to be active and carry on with the things they enjoy for a long time. Even as dementia progresses, people can lead active, healthy lives, carry on with their hobbies, enjoy friendships and relationships and **going on vacation!**



Planning an inclusive holiday: a step-by-step guide

Step 1

Selecting the right destination

Creating an itinerary for a dementia-friendly vacation requires careful planning to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for both the person with dementia and their caregiver.

Here are some useful guidelines:

1. Choosing the destination

Opt for quiet and familiar places, avoiding destinations and times that are too crowded or chaotic. Prefer the seasons when the climate is milder with pleasant temperatures even outdoors. Seaside, mountain, or countryside locations are ideal. Ensure there are easily accessible healthcare facilities in case of emergency, and that the location is free of architectural barriers.

2. Selecting accommodation

Choose safe and comfortable accommodations with easily navigable environments and quiet and protected common areas, as well as secure gardens, are an advantage. If a vacation involves leisure time at the beach, it is advisable to choose a hotel that is not too far from a beach establishment (or other places where participants can spend free time during the morning). Informing hotel staff about specific requirements can prevent stressful situations.

3. Meal management

Choosing hotels with full board, offering familiar and enjoyable meals with attention to dietary needs and preferences.

Consuming meals at the same time enhance a daily routine that is comfortable for a person with Alzheimer's. Carrying light snacks and drinks is important to avoid dehydration or hypoglycemia.

Step 2

Pre-trip planning

1. Planning activities

Activities should follow a predictable routine and be short and flexible to adapt to the person's mood and weather. Activities that gently stimulate mind, body and interaction, such as walks, art workshops, dance time, playing cards, are recommended.

2. Duration of holidays

A vacation that lasts at least a week is recommended, for many reasons: In the first few days of vacation, you often need time to unplug from the daily routine experienced at home. A short vacation risks ending just when you begin to relax and become familiar with new spaces, places and rhythms.

A longer period allows you to better recover your energy after the

Timeframe

12 - 9 months before the vacation

Prepare a list of possible vacation spots and accommodation

9 - 6 months before the vacation

Book hotels and transports
Prepare a list of local attraction

6 - 3 months before the vacation

Define a weekly plan and eventually reserve beach location and equipment (umbrella, sunbeds)

3 - 1 months before the vacation

Reserve visits to local attractions

fatigue of the trip and allows you to balance moments of relaxation with more dynamic activities.

However, if you have little time available, even a short weekend in a nearby place can be beneficial, but 4 days – a week is the ideal time for an immersive and well-structured experience.

2. Flexibility

It is essential to be ready to change plans if necessary, to maintain a positive experience. Involving the person with dementia in the planning, if possible, can help create an itinerary that reflects their preferences.

3. Contingencies and safety

Having an emergency plan that includes contact numbers and access to medical care is crucial. The person should carry identification devices and contact information.

Step 3

Arranging transportation

Organising transportation well in advance will give you the best choice of options and prices. How long the person with dementia can travel will be a deciding factor in choosing vacations. Some people might not enjoy long trips because they could become disoriented.

By car

If traveling by car, the first piece of advice is to have three people, so the caregiver is not the one driving. The journey should not last more than four hours.

Here are some tips:

Plan the trip in advance: choose a familiar and predictable route with scheduled stops for regular breaks. Be prepared to adjust plans

if the person seems too stressed or fatigued, considering breaking the trip into shorter segments if necessary.

Avoid peak hours: travelling during busy traffic times can be stressful. Try to start your journey during quieter times to minimise anxiety and distractions. Plan a stop approximately every 2 hours.

Bring familiar items: having familiar items like a favourite blanket or pillow can provide comfort and reassurance.

Food and drinks: bring light snacks and beverages to keep the person hydrated and satisfied during the trip.

Safety: ensure the person wears their seatbelt and that the car environment is safe and free from items that could fall or distract.

Music or audiobooks: listening to relaxing music or audiobooks can help keep the person calm and positively distracted during the trip.

By bus / coach

If the vacation is organised by an Alzheimer's association or another organisation, or if it's possible to share the trip with other persons, this way is the best one. The caregiver is not engaged in driving and can focus more on the needs that may arise during the trip, as well as support in organising activities to make the journey more pleasant. This option also has a

much lower environmental impact compared to using a car.

Here are some useful ideas for planning activities during the trip helpful to minimising stress levels during transportation:

- Allow participants to introduce themselves and get to know each other to break down barriers and create a group spirit
- Break the ice with riddles or jokes
- Remind everyone of the day and the season
- Provide brief historical and descriptive notes about the place being visited, highlighting its features
- Point out and observe the changing landscape outside the window together
- Print lyrics of songs in large font for group singing
- Suggest stretching exercises for the neck, legs, hands, and feet even while seated
- Plan a stop approx. every 2 hours.

Traveling Green

Pack Light: Reduce fuel consumption by bringing only the essentials.

Choose Sustainable Options: Opt for fuel-efficient vehicles, carpool, or use public transportation.

Drive Mindfully: Drive with caution not too fast but also not too slow.

Reduce Waste: Pack snacks and drinks in reusable containers.

Step 4

Craft a programme

Planning a vacation for individuals with dementia requires careful consideration to ensure a positive and enriching experience. It's essential to strike a balance between activities and opportunities for relaxation and self-direction, recognizing the unique needs and preferences of each participant. Creating a well-structured daily program is thus a crucial step in planning a successful vacation for people with dementia.

Key consideration:

- Maintain consistent meal times and locations
- Allow ample time for transitions and rest
- Offer a variety of activities, both indoors and outdoors
- Incorporate free time and flexibility
- End the day with a relaxing activity.



Sample daily programme

7:30 AM: Breakfast (allow at least an hour)

9:00 AM - 11:30 AM: Leisure time (with light activities and a short walk)

- go to the beach
- do card games
- do crosswords puzzles

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Prepare for lunch and travel to the restaurant

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM: Lunch

1:30 PM - 3:30 PM: Rest and free time

3:30 PM - 6:30 PM: Afternoon activity (alternate between in-hotel and out-of-hotel activities)

- visiting a museum or place of interest
- taking a walk in a park
- going to a market or local event
- boat trip
- creative or artistic workshop (create a souvenir of the holiday)

6:30 PM - 7:30 PM: Prepare for dinner and travel to the restaurant

7:30 PM - 8:30 PM: Dinner

8:30 PM - 10:00 PM: Light evening activity (e.g., drinks, walk, games)

10:00 PM: Return to rooms

Step 5

Understand how to address needs expressed through behavior

People with dementia may exhibit behaviours that are inappropriate for the context or that may cause us discomfort. In most cases, the person is expressing to us a need or annoyance with respect to some internal or external factor that he or she, however, cannot explain or interpret in the right way because

of cognitive decline. It is up to us to identify the source of discomfort and cope with it to prevent or calm that behavior whenever it occurs. We know that, in most cases, if the person exhibits inappropriate behaviours, it is because they are experiencing some negative situation at that moment, indicating that something unpleasant is happening.

In any case, it is important to know strategies that are effective in managing this challenging behaviour.

Wandering

The most common behavioural disturbance in people with Alzheimer's is wandering. If a person suffers from wandering and tends to roam, give special attention because during idle moments or times of boredom, they are likely to feel the need to walk and may wander off.

Understanding the emotion behind the behavior is essential to offering the best support. Anxiety, if not managed properly, can lead to a vicious cycle that increases the person's distress and confusion. The approach should always be empathetic, attentive to those small changes in the environment that can alleviate anxiety and allow for calmer behavior management.



Identifying Triggers

Often, the emergence of inappropriate behaviours or behavioural disturbances is linked to an external factor commonly referred to as a "trigger," which is a stimulus that triggers an inappropriate reaction in terms of content or intensity. Some triggers are relatively easy to predict as they are intuitive to understand. A fall, someone shouting, the loss of a personal item, etc., are all stimuli that might activate challenging behaviours. However, some triggers are more "sly" and can trigger problematic behaviours without us noticing. These are some cases when a person with dementia perceives some form of discomfort that they do not understand or cannot explain:

Environmental factors: noise, crowds, changes in routine, or unfamiliar surroundings.

Physical discomfort: fatigue, pain, hunger, thirst, or medication side effects.

Emotional states: anxiety, sadness, frustration, or fear.

Effective Strategies

Distraction: redirect attention to a more positive activity or topic.

Sensory Adjustments: modify the environment to reduce overstimulation or create a calming atmosphere.

Emotional Support: offer reassurance, validation, and a listening ear.

Communication: use clear, simple language and avoid confrontational tones.

Post trip evaluation and feedback

Plan a rest period upon return and reflect on what worked and what could be improved for future trips. Use photos or videos to capture special moments and spark conversations about the holiday, or encourage them to share their experiences through personal diaries or drawings.

Post-vacation reflections:

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Well-being: did the vacation meet the needs and preferences of our beloved with dementia?

Caregiver satisfaction: did the caregiver or family member benefit from this vacation or did they return more stressed than before?

Ways to improve: what can be adjusted or enhanced to create an even better experience in the future?

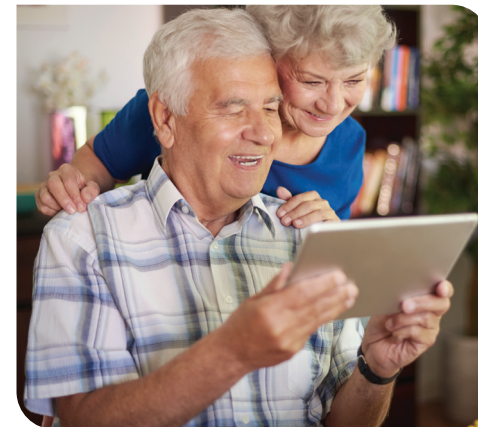
* Add text to Post-vacation reflection?



Share your holiday

Spread the word

Share the most significant moments of your holiday on social media, tell your friends and relatives about this holiday experience: to demonstrate that it is not only possible but also necessary and beneficial. Going on holiday can become normal for many people living with dementia and for their families and caregivers.



Inclusive tourism matters

- **Boosts well-being:** travel can be incredibly enriching, offering new experiences, social connections and a sense of purpose. It's a powerful way to improve quality of life for people with dementia.
- **Fights social exclusion:** inclusive tourism challenges stereotypes about dementia and promotes a more inclusive society where everyone feels valued and respected.
- **Strengthens communities:** when we create accessible travel experiences, we build stronger, more welcoming communities for everyone.
- **Accessibility beyond the basics:** it's not just about ramps and accessible restrooms. We need to consider the cognitive needs of people with dementia, ensuring clear signage, calm environments, and supportive staff.
- **Travel as a welfare intervention:** inclusive tourism is more than just a vacation. It's an investment in the well-being of people with dementia, promoting social inclusion and a sense of belonging.

It is in this paradigm shift that the ADRINCLUSIVE project fits, guaranteeing the right and offering the possibility for people with Alzheimer's and their families to live this moment to regenerate in a context that is as safe, comfortable, welcoming, and stimulating as possible.



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can make travel
accessible for
everyone!*

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