

FAMILY, PARTNERS AND LIFE ADMIN · 10.9

Travel, Holidays and Neurodivergence: Planning That Actually Holds Up

Travel works better for autistic and ADHD travellers when the planning is front-loaded. Airports are sensory hostile, time zones interact badly with stimulant medication, and what holds at home does not always hold in a hotel room.

FOR

Families and adult travellers

AUDIENCE AGE

All ages

REVIEWED

18 May 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

Travel, Holidays and Neurodivergence: Planning That Actually Holds Up

What helps before you leave

- **A written itinerary, day by day.** Times, transport, key addresses, where you will eat dinner. For autistic children especially, a printed version they can refer to is reassuring.
- **Accommodation chosen for the room, not the brochure.** Air conditioning that works, blackout curtains, a kitchen if eating out is unsustainable, a quiet space if needed.
- **A slower itinerary than feels indulgent.** Sensory load accumulates. A day per major activity, not three. Plan the post-holiday landing as deliberately as the holiday itself.

Airports, lanyards and medication

- **The Sunflower lanyard.** A discreet green and yellow lanyard signalling hidden disability to trained staff. Recognised at most UK airports and increasingly at train stations, supermarkets and theme parks. Free from many participating airports.
- **Airport special assistance.** A formal service booked through the airline at least 48 hours ahead. Can include a quiet waiting area, fast-track security, a staff escort and pre-boarding. Several UK airports run pre-airport familiarisation visits for autistic travellers.
- **Stimulant medication needs paperwork.** Carry the prescription, the original pharmacy packaging and a clinician's letter naming the medication, dose, condition and travel dates. Always in hand luggage. For trips over three months, a Home Office personal export licence is required.
- **Destination-side rules vary widely.** Schengen short trips usually accept a UK prescription and clinician letter; longer stays may need a Schengen certificate. Japan, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Singapore are stricter, and some stimulants are effectively prohibited. Check FCDO country-specific advice.
- **Family travel often breaks on arrival day.** Sensory cascade plus tiredness plus unfamiliar environment plus hunger. Plan for it: a quiet hotel room, familiar snacks, an unstructured first afternoon.

How we can help

- **Talk to your prescriber well in advance.** Medication continuity, time-zone effects on stimulants, the clinician's letter for customs. Ask early; the letter takes time to issue properly.
- **Use FCDO and Home Office routes for the formal stuff.** Foreign Office country-specific advice for destination-side medication rules. Home Office personal-licence team for trips over three months.
- **Pre-airport familiarisation visits.** Where the departure airport offers them, they are often the single most useful preparation for autistic travellers. Contact the airport directly.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your prescribing clinician well before travel about medication continuity, time-zone shifts and any required documentation. For controlled-drug travel queries, the Home Office personal-licence team handles the formal route; FCDO country-specific advice handles the destination-side rules. For pre-airport familiarisation visits, contact your departure airport directly. For acute mental health crisis abroad, the FCDO emergency helpline is +44 20 7008 5000.

SOURCES

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower; CAA CAP 1411; gov.uk Travelling controlled drugs; Home Office; FCDO; NAS; ADHD UK

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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