

Have you Heard? A Listening Project
Episode #15 – Travel Tips for People with Hearing Loss
Hosts: Audra and Alle

(0:02) Audra: Hello and welcome to “Have you Heard? A Listening Project.” On this podcast we’re going to share tips, stories and practical advice to help people with hearing loss stay connected. If you or a loved one have a hearing loss or you know somebody with a hearing loss this is absolutely the podcast for you. Today we’re going to talk about the best U.S. vacation spots for people with hearing loss along with sharing tips and technology to help enhance your travel experiences and we’re super excited to have you guys join us. I’m Audra, I’m one of your hosts, and I’m also joined today by my good friend Alle (Alle...Hello) we both work together at OEI as hearing health advocates and we’re super excited to have this conversation today. So, I feel like at this point a lot of people or rather a lot of states have lifted a lot of their Covid restrictions so I kind of think people are champing at the bit to get out and go explore which is wonderful. Do you have any favorite travel destinations that you like to go visit?

(1:04) Alle: I definitely do, and you know I cannot wait to travel a little bit more but I would have to say my husband and I both love to camp so we love different camping sites, we especially love Sequoia National Park which is just so gorgeous — the Sequoia trees are amazing — and we also love Hawaii, so it’s a very special place to us because we had our honeymoon there and I had a babymoon there, so we love, love going to Hawaii, how about you?

(1:31) Audra: Two of those places are actually on my bucket list, not the camping — that is not on my list at all — but Sequoia National Park is on there and then my husband and I share a birthday and we’re hoping to have our 40th birthday in Hawaii with like my parents and family just trying to do like the big family trip cause those are my best, my best memories growing up was like going on family vacations and I really want that for my little one, so that should be fun. (Alle...I love that, really fun, how exciting) What about crazy travel stories, you got any crazy travel stories to share?

(2:03) Alle: Oh my gosh, who doesn’t have a crazy travel story. Well, I have two that I can think of that I like to share because, why not? So, one of them includes when I went on an anniversary trip with my husband and I booked us to go on a cruise and I take control of everything, which he should never let me do, so when we arrived to our, our, you know, accommodations we were way below deck. Our room was so far down we had no windows, it was so suffocating but not only that there were bunkbeds, there were bunkbeds and this was an anniversary trip

(Audra...on your honeymoon trip? Oh your anniversary trip with bunkbeds!) same thing, I mean, you know, it was hilarious we laughed but it was definitely uncomfortable and but we laugh about it today. Another one is, actually involves my babymoon to Hawaii a couple of years ago. Again, just out of the blue I said, we're going, we just have to go. I was getting these crazy ideas and I was eight months pregnant which I was really big (Audra...oh gosh) really big. So we get on the plane and we're about 45 minutes up into the air and wouldn't you know it, I fainted on the plane (Audra...oh my goodness that's horrible) so I caused a huge, huge ruckus on the plane and my husband was scared for my life and his unborn child's life it was just crazy, so (Audra...and he still let you plan vacations after that, huh) you know, I've kind of taken a step back from doing that but (Audra...ha ha ha, I can't say I blame you or him)

(3:25) Audra: I have never fainted on a plane so (Alle...oh thank goodness) yeah, I can, I've nothing to say there. But I did a conference for working moms a few years ago and I had to fly to Salt Lake City from Florida which, there's nothing direct because it's so far away. So on my way back, there was a huge storm and I think I was supposed to fly into Austin or something for a connecting flight but I had to go to Dallas, I'm pretty sure it was Dallas-Fort Worth because the airport was big. I thought the Orlando airport was big, this is the biggest airport — and I'm from Chicago — this is the biggest airport I have ever been to in my entire life. They changed our gate four times (Alle...no) and it wasn't like, oh here's a gate, no wait we're wrong, it was like walk 16 miles to this gate get there no were kidding walk another 20 miles to this gate. Here's the problem: I have asthma and halfway through all the walking, I had an asthma attack (Alle...oh no) and so like I'm schlepping my stuff trying to find my inhaler like to get on this plane, I can't breathe, it was awful. By the time I finally got home and back from this conference, I landed in Orlando drove 2 hours home it was 6 o'clock in the morning when I got home and of course my 5 year old was like, oh mommy I'm so happy to see you and I'm like I guess I'm not sleeping (Alle...that's terrible, I'm sorry to hear that) it was awful it was horrible. But that kind of (Alle...can you laugh about it now though? Is it funny?) I can, I absolutely can and it's kind of cool that we're talking about this because could you imagine if I had had a hearing loss and then now they're telling me all these 15 different gates we have to change to and it's like back to back to back and so stories like that are kind of the whole reason why we are recording this episode. It's because like we need people to know how to navigate all these things with a hearing loss (Alle...yes, exactly) so one of the things that I did see and I thought that was really cool cause one of the biggest problems if you have a hearing loss that you will likely have in an airport is getting through security and being able to hear the TSA agent speaking to you because everybody still wearing masks (Alle...right) last thing you want is for TSA to be mad at you because they think you're not listening or not complying when in reality you just may not hear them. So what

we found out is that you can actually contact TSA about 72 hours before your flight and let them know that you do have a hearing loss and that you will be coming through security protocol and they will get you what's called a TSA notification card and that way you can show that and I'm pretty sure it's digital, you can show that to any TSA agent. It lets them know that you in fact have a hearing loss and that you may need some accommodations (Alle...that is so cool) it's really awesome and I think that it'll make it a lot less stressful for the person flying and for the TSA agent (Alle...yeah a hundred percent) Another thing that you guys should know if you're flying and you have a hearing loss is that you are not required at all to remove your hearing aids or your cochlear implant. So, you do not have to take them out, you do not have to put them in the machine or anything. You can keep them in and so if there's any type of screening that needs to be done they're able to do it slightly differently for you so that your hearing aids or your implant doesn't set off the metal detector and that's all the kind of stuff that they know to do when you notify them, they can make sure that they accommodate you for that so keep that in mind.

(6:38) Alle: So, that's really, really important Audra because I know actually a few people that think or thought that they had to take the hearing aids out and then you can't hear a single thing and then you're, you know, worried and scared and it just goes from there, so I really appreciate that you pointed that out.

(6:52) Audra: Definitely have to have it and it's good know your rights cause if you know you're right it's going to make things a lot easier. So when you're traveling with the airline one of the best things to do always no matter what airline you're traveling on is download their app because if there is a gate change instead of having to listen for the 15 gates they're going to give you gate changes will usually populate inside of the app. A lot of these apps for different airlines also have what's called a text feature so if you're not quite sure what's happening you can always use the text feature inside of that airline's app to connect and chat directly with the airline to get any kind of updates that you need about the flight. You also want to make sure and it's the same thing, you can contact the airline again before the flight let them know that you have a hearing loss. A lot of airlines what they'll do is when they have somebody who is flying with a hearing loss is that they'll put you as part of the pre-boarding. So pre-boarding is usually for people with small kids cause they need more time to, you know, get the kids set up or anybody who's going to need more time. This way if you let them know you have a hearing loss they can do different screenings for you so when you're on an airplane and they give that security check in the exits are here and this is that and that is this they can do one specifically for people with the hearing loss if you let them know and that will happen in that pre-boarding time. So you want to make sure that you take advantage of that. So that you are aware when you get on the plane what you need to do specifically before everybody else gets on and

the flight attendants may not know that they need to make sure that you understand everything that they're saying. So those are some great tips for you guys to hold on to when you're flying. But when you're done flying now you're at your wonderful destination and you need a place to stay this is going to be very important because I don't know if you guys know this but hotels do have a lot of different accommodations for people with hearing loss. So Alle, if somebody has a hearing loss, what kind of accommodations can they expect if they're staying at a hotel?

(8:53) Alle: Well first of all, I want to say that again you should never expect that they will have them mainly because you want to call ahead. You want to call ahead and see what accommodations they might have because I have to point out while I was doing this research I did call a few hotels and there were a few that really didn't know what I'm about to explain it's called an ADA kit (Audra... okay) they didn't know what it was they didn't know who to go to for it so therefore I just want to stress the fact that you really want to call your hotel or your Airbnb wherever you're staying to see do they have something for you to help with your hearing loss. So, in regards to the ADA kit is in reference to the Americans with Disabilities Act hotel kit specific for hearing loss and what it is, it includes so many different types of resources and I'll name a few. There's a flashing strobe wireless light that will help indicate on the lights when someday is either knocking on the door. There's also a timer that helps, the timer will connect to the light as well so if your timer is going off the lights will also flash (Audra... that's cool) there's a TTY. The TTY machine is a really, really cool tool that helps people with hearing loss or who are completely deaf communicate through a federal relay third person operator. Also an amplified telephone also a bed shaker also a door knocker (Audra...okay) so these are just some of the things that are included in the kit. But again I do want to stress, please call ahead of time and ask for the ADA hotel kit see if they have it. I do want to say there were some hotels that were great and it happen to be some of them were chain like hotels that knew exactly what I was talking about but definitely call ahead and see if they have that available.

(10:36) Audra: Yeah, that's really cool and I think, as you said you said, as you're doing that research beforehand it just saves you from being frustrated later because you did a little, you know, you did a little bit of that research it just makes thing easier (Alle...so much easier) So now we've got them on the plane, we've got them in a wonderful hotel so the next thing when you're flying you obviously want to know where you're going to go? What are you going to do in this wonderful vacation that you're taking? So what I though was really neat is that there are a lot of hearing loss friendly places in the U.S. and I think that one of them in particular just really stands out from the rest. Now, full disclosure, I'm kind of partial to it because I do live in Florida and it's, you know, it's in my

backyard sort of speak and that place is Walt Disney World. So Disney really goes out of their way to make things magical and that definitely does include for people who have hearing loss. When you get to Disney notify a cast member that you have a hearing loss and they're going to give you a hearing device that's tailored to your type of hearing loss and that device will go from mild to moderate hearing loss and they also provide an assistive listening system which basically just amplifies sound through headphones or an induction loop which you can use, you know, through your hearing aids. Another thing that Disney provides, in this is actually really cool, it's a handheld captioning device that displays text wherever closed captioning is not available so they really do try to make that extra effort. And one of the things that I mentioned that Disney does provide and I want to kind of highlight this a little bit because a lot of places have it, it's called a looping system. So what a looping system is, it works with what's called a t coil, that's in all cochlear implants and in a lot, not all but in most hearing aids and essentially what happens is that when sound is broadcast so whether that's a speaker using a microphone or performance or sometime or a performance of some kind it's fed directly to the hearing aid or cochlear implant so that there's no background noise so you're not hearing it, you know, over a loudspeaker you're hearing that direct speech or performance directly to the t coil loop inside of your hearing aid or inside of your cochlear implant (Alle...that is so cool, I'm sorry I just have to say that, that is really, really cool, yeah) isn't that awesome, so instead of hearing over loud speaker there's distortion people are talking you get that sound streamed almost directly into your brain via this t coil so I think that's really awesome so guys (Alle...that is cool) yeah, you guys, you know, look for these systems so there not only at Disney World but a lot of meeting rooms, auditoriums, theaters, movie theaters, places of worship and things like that are going to have those things so that's just an aside about t coils. And then one last thing on Disney, if you're staying at any of the properties in the Walt Disney World Resort you can request extra amenities so a lot of those things are like what Alle was talking about earlier so a TTY machine if you need one any type of strobe light, light detector or strobe light smoke detector any phone amplifiers they do really have a lot of things. So make sure that you talk to Disney and again let the resort know if you're staying on property that you need some things and they can also provide for you a sign language interpreter which I thought was really awesome. So Disney takes the cake as one of the best places to go if you have a hearing loss (Alle...sounds like it) yeah they're pretty awesome. And now, a word from our sponsor.

*** Commercial...We were excited when dad finally retired. More time for golf and the chance to move somewhere warm. What I didn't count on was how hard it would be to stay in touch. Dad's hearing loss makes phone calls difficult at best. I have to repeat myself on every call and I'm pretty sure he doesn't get what I say. But now dad's audiologist gave him a CapTel Captioned Telephone. It

works just like captions on TV only for phone calls. If dad can't hear what the caller says he just reads the captions. Dad's local CapTel outreach person took care of everything. She helped set up the phone, explained about the free captioning service and made sure he was comfortable reading the captions. Now we're back talking every weekend. I know he's catching every word I say and I'm hearing a lot more about his golf scores. If someone you care about has difficulty hearing over the phone find out how a CapTel Captioned Telephone can help, visit oeius.org for details.

(15:04) Audra: And welcome back to Have you Heard. So Alle, we just talked about Disney, what other places can people go if they have a hearing loss to have a really great vacation?

(
15:15) Alle: Well, let's talk about some National Parks because I know that those are very near and dear to my heart (Audra...yeah) I love to camp as I said, I've been to a few National Parks including Sequoia including Yosemite, I mean, I really want to go to Yellowstone but, anyways, there's a lot of them that actually have accessible accessibility for people with hearing loss and I just want to name a few so that people are aware. Number one being the Arches National Park which is in Utah (Audra...very cool) Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska, oh I want to go there so badly (Audra...yeah me too it's on my list) yes, the Glacier National Park in Montana and I know that that was known for this wide-open spaces so if you're looking to kind of just, you know, be together with nature and then maybe hear nature more, that's a great one too to go to. The Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, I hope I'm saying that right (Audra...Teton, I think) oh is it? okay. Yellowstone National Park of course in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming dying to go there and Yosemite National Park which is in California and again I have the best memories of being a kid. We used to go there as a family and camp and the trees are just phenomenal. So what you really want to do is again call ahead but I have found that a lot of the places in a lot of the National Parks have actual built-in resources for people with hearing loss. You want to check in with the Rangers when you get there and just ask them, again, advocate for yourself to see what they have available for you at these parks when you stay there whether you're camping or not.

(16:46) Audra: I love that you mentioned National Parks Allie because, you know, when you're out in nature you don't have to worry about trying to hear, you know, what people are saying you can just simply sit and enjoy the fact that you're in nature because it's so quiet you should be able to pick up all kinds of interesting sounds while you're out there so I think for people with a hearing loss like the National Park the best thing about it is the view, that's what you're going for. You're going to look you're going to experience you're going to be one with nature and be outside and enjoy it. So that's a great place to go because there's

not as much to hear as there would be if you're going to see a Broadway show or something like that.

(17:22) Allie: Right. And I just want to point out, there are so many National Parks in the U.S. so anyways, just check them out.

(17:29) Audra: There's really something for everybody because our country is so big, there's really something for everyone. So, what if you are dying for a vacation but it is just not in the cards and it's just not going to happen, so one of the things that, you know, we kind of want to bring up too is, is little staycation. things, things that you can go and enjoy while you're home and you don't necessarily have to be out of, you know, town to do it so one of those things are just restaurants and theaters, it's always a nice place to be able to go to kind of take a break from real life for a couple of hours and just enjoy yourself (Alle... yeah) but restaurants specifically tend to be very, very loud even if you don't have a hearing loss, they're incredibly loud so I have a couple of really cool tips for you guys if you're going to a restaurant. So tip number one, if you have a choice between a table or a booth pick a booth. It's going to give you a little bit of damper from other people talking around you cause booths tend to be a little bit higher so that'll help a lot. You also want to look above make sure you're not sitting underneath an air conditioner or a really loud fan or a musical speaker. Definitely kind of to keep your eyes peeled and don't be afraid to tell your waitress like, hey, we can't sit here I have a hearing loss I'm not going to be able to hear so definitely make sure you say that. If you're hearing aids have directional microphones, you just want to make sure that you put the biggest amount of noise behind you so if there's like a bar or a private party and they're really loud make sure that your back is to that private party or that, you know, the people at the bar so that you're not getting all of their excess noise. If you're going out with a large group and maybe you are that private party that's making all the noise, you definitely, cause I've been there I think a lot of us have been with that loud party at the restaurant sit in the middle it's so much easier to hear what everybody is saying if you're sitting in the center, if you're sitting on the end even if you don't have a hearing loss, cause I did this last week, you can't hear people on the other side so sit directly in the middle if you can. You always want to make sure to look at the person who is talking. We get a lot of cues from people's lips when they're speaking so if somebody's talking to you just know as a person with the hearing loss you want to make sure you're looking directly at them and don't be afraid to pick your seat it's not 5th grade we don't call dibs, if you need to sit closer to somebody just advocate for yourself and let, you know, let them know that you need to sit in this specific spot so that you can hear things. And very last, don't feel embarrassed to call ahead and let the hostess know when somebody is making reservations that somebody with a hearing loss is going to be there cause that gives the restaurant an opportunity to make as

many accommodations they can for you so that you have a good time cause if you're out with your friends and you're having a dinner party you want to have fun to so make sure that you do that.

(20:16) Alle: Especially after Covid, you definitely want to make sure your experience are everything you want them to be, right.

(20:22) Audra: We've been waiting so long for this you don't want it to be subpar so you can't hear so definitely, definitely do that. And when it come comes to theaters the cool thing about movie theaters especially the ones that are opening now they usually offer free captioning devices so that's another thing you want to check out go to their website see what they have but they will often have captioning devices for all their shows so you can find out more about that either by calling or going to the information booth or concession stand you know, to get more information or even borrow one and then you just bring it back at the end of the movie (Alle...so cool) yeah I think that's super neat.

(21:00) Alle: I just wanted to point out a quick story, my grandfather when he used to go to the theaters is the movie theaters before the pandemic, they would provide him with caption glasses so some of the theaters actually have caption glasses which means you wear the glasses and you can see captions directly of the movie that's being watched so just look out the theaters that might have those as well.

(21:19) Audra: That's really cool. I didn't know that, I'm kind of jealous. I would like some captioning glasses when I go to see movies with my loud five year old and I can't hear things...caption glasses would be awesome. So when you're thinking of live performances cause I say theaters, I always think of movie theaters, that's because I live in a small town but for those of you who live in bigger cities and you have actual live theaters keep in mind that a lot of live performances also have some of those options we've mentioned either infrared headsets, some of them will have FM systems, many of them will also have that looping system that I talked about earlier. Some of them will even be captioned and even a few will have like American Sign Language performances so if you're looking to hit the live theater definitely check out the venue check out what they offer and just don't cross it off as something you can't go to because, you know, you have a hearing loss know that live theater is definitely alive and well for people with hearing loss cause there's a lot of accommodations that they make for, you know, for people. And another place museums near and dear to my heart Alle you like museums? (Alle...I love museums, yeah) I am a huge museum nerd. Again, I'm from Chicago and I used to go the Field Museum all the time, so with museums, they're going to be very similar - they have a lot of accommodations. And again, if you're looking for looping systems, FM systems,

check the website but some of the best museums in the nation that have special accommodations for people with hearing loss are going to include the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., which I actually got to, and the Seattle Art Museum. So those are going to be the top ones. When you get to these locations you can usually pick up an assisted listening device right at the front desk and a lot of them will also have looping system so again, definitely check the website to see what's available for you.

(23:17) Alle: I just want to point too really quick, I recently went to the Natural History Museum here in Los Angeles and they too had these FM systems that you could pick up or if you have hearing loss which I actually suffer with a little bit of hearing loss, as I mentioned before, and it's really cool. You just put the earphones or the earbuds right in your ear and you get to listen as you go, which is really helpful instead of having to listen to a loud (Audra...yeah) speaker or someone speak - you get it right in your ear so (Audra...that's really awesome) pretty cool.

(23:44) Audra: And all of these devices that we're mentioning - FM systems and mini mics, table mic things like that - you guys can definitely talk to your audiologists or your hearing health professional about these options cause they should be able to recommend what's going to be best for you based on the type of hearing aids that you have, so definitely bring these questions up to your audiologist and we even have a couple of face to face communication tools that can just help. Yeah, I didn't know that, this is kind of news to me. So if you have a hearing loss, there's some really cool apps that you can use that will make your life a little bit better. One of them is not an app, it's actually a feature that is only available on iPhones, and it's called Life Listen and so if you turn that feature on it basically acts like a microphone and it'll send sound either to your airpods or to your hearing aids so that could be something even if you are at that restaurant like we talked about earlier and you're having trouble, you know, hearing people on the other side of the table, that might be a really good option for you to use. Another option that's mostly available on the Play store but there may be some on the, the iTunes store as well, these are just kind of transcription options so these will be great if you, you know, you have to communicate with somebody but it's just not working, they can actually speak to your cell phone it will print out captions of what they're saying and it'll make communication really great so that might be something if like the hearing aid, the battery in your hearing aid dies and you're trying to get directions or something this is just a nice backup so (Alle...oh yeah, that's great) right, like wouldn't that be awesome (Alle...yeah) it'll just make life easier. So those apps are, the first one is called Live Transcribe there's another one called AVA, it's A-V-A, the third one is Text Here and the last one is Otter.ai. So definitely check out those apps, it's a good backup to have in case, you know, you need to communicate just give you some more options.

(25:45) Alle: Definitely. Well let's go over some overall tips, some overarching tips because we did discuss a lot today, lot of really (Audra...yeah we did) helpful information, yeah so here's just a few helpful tips. So remember to learn technology ahead of time, don't wait - try to learn it ahead of time before your trip. (Audra...absolutely) Yes, bring ear protection for yourself and or your companions and bring those extra batteries for your hearing aids, don't forget. Pack a hat, pack an umbrella keep your hearing aids dry, that's a really important one (Audra...that's a good one, that's a great one) big time. Advocate for yourself. Don't forget to tell people what you need and look for what your needs are. When you go to the hotel call ahead so do that. Also, remind people what you need, same thing but don't be afraid to remind people what you need. If you know, Audra, like you were saying at a restaurant if you're sitting in a booth or a table where there's just too much air conditioning making too much noise don't be afraid to ask to move just ask, ask, ask and also don't forget to get a paper map (Audra...yes) then people can actually point to the route when you need direction. That's a really interesting one that I think people probably don't think about a lot today.

(26:52) Audra: I would say 'cause we're so used to everything being on our cell phone, but you know how much easier it would be with a giant fold out paper map to be like, you are here, go here (Alle...yes) that's (Alle...oh yes) so much easier than having you know, the electronic stuff. So those are really awesome tips. And the only thing that I would add to that is just have a contingency plan and I think that, that's what the some of those apps we talked about and even the map really are — and this is why Batman is my favorite superhero because Batman always has contingency plans — and you definitely want to have that, especially if you were out of state, if you are not home and you're planning to do all of this really fun stuff on vacation but you don't have a contingency plan if your hearing aid batteries die or this or that happens. It's just going to make you really frustrated. So be like Batman have a contingency plan and possibly even a utility belt. I can't see that that would be a bad thing to have if you're traveling with a hearing loss (Alle...I love it, I love it, it's great), right! So that is actually all we've got for today, thank you Alle so much for being with me on this episode it's been a pleasure chatting with you.

(27:56) Alle: Oh I loved being on it with you Audra, and I really hope that some of our tips will hit a lot of people in a good way and help them prepare for their travel.

(28:04) Audra: Absolutely. So for more information on hearing health resources be sure to visit our website at oeius.org, that's o-e-i-u-s dot o-r-g and this actually concludes our first season of Have You Heard? A Listening Project. (Alle...wow)

Yeah it feels like I can't believe it's over (Alle...I know) but this has been such a great experience for all of us at OEI and we are super, super excited to launch our next season which is going to be coming up in the fall (Alle...yes, definitely) So, please subscribe to this podcast so you don't miss out when we come back and in the meantime, I'm Audra, (and I'm Alle,) and we just want to thank all of our listeners for joining us today on the Have You Heard? podcast. And please remember stay safe and stay connected. Bye.

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