



## Gordon's Cruise to Hawaii

*This is an article by Gordon Bornkamp, an HTC member who recently took a cruise to the beautiful Hawaiian Islands to be with family.*

Over the past year, my wife Laura and I have taken two cruises together, and I wanted to share our experiences traveling while living with ALS. I am 86 years old and was recently diagnosed by the VA with ALS after previously living with PLS for several years. I can still walk short distances with a walker, but I am no longer able to speak. For travel, I rely on an electric wheelchair.

Our first cruise was a 31-day Princess Cruise sailing from California. We booked an accessible stateroom with a balcony. At that time, I was using a 55-pound electric wheelchair that was 25 inches wide. I am 5 feet 9 inches tall and weigh 155 pounds.

This cruise went very well from an accessibility standpoint. I could enter and exit the balcony in my wheelchair, and there was plenty of room in the stateroom. I was able to shower using the grab bars and transfer from my wheelchair. The toilet was challenging but manageable by using the grab bars and positioning my wheelchair close beside it. I could also transfer into bed by parking the wheelchair close and sliding sideways after lifting the armrest.

Because of the motion of the ship, I did not use my walker on either cruise. We chose not to dine with others because I have difficulty swallowing and can choke easily. Instead, we ate mostly at the buffet, where I had no trouble maneuvering my wheelchair around the tables.

Getting off the ship was generally not a problem. I was able to use the gangway—even when the end had about a 30-degree incline—by using the braking effect of the wheelchair's motor. However, at some island ports we were unable to go ashore when smaller tender boats were required.

This year we took a 14-day cruise from California to Hawaii on Carnival's Radiance. The Radiance headed out to sea from Long Beach, California with island stops at: Kahului on Maui, Honolulu on Oahu, Nawiliwili on Kauai, and Hilo on Hawaii. We met our son for lunch in Honolulu, which was very special.

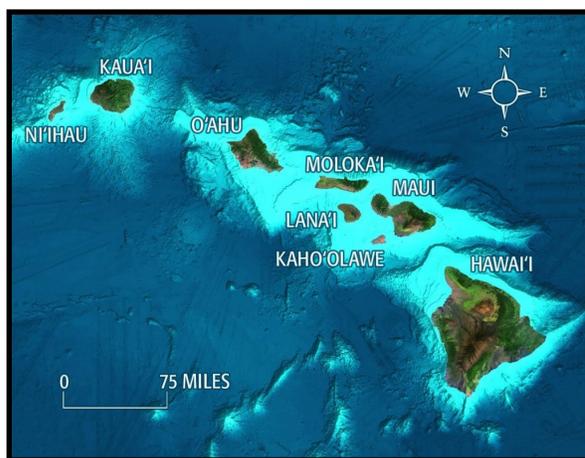


We again booked an accessible cabin, though it was noticeably smaller than the Princess stateroom. By this time, Medicare had provided me with a Quantum wheelchair weighing about 155 pounds, which is very comfortable. However, we encountered a new challenge when disembarking. The final eight feet of the gangway had about a 45-degree angle. At that angle, the wheelchair automatically shut down and locked. I became stuck halfway down, which was frightening, until we learned how to unlock the wheels and guide the chair down manually. Fortunately, returning up the gangway was not a problem.

Despite these challenges, the islands were warm and beautiful, and it was wonderful to travel together. It is always good to be back home after our adventures. Even while we are cruising we keep it in touch with our children on zoom every weekend; we've been doing this for 4 or 5 years.

By Gordon Bornkamp

*Gordon and his wife Laura have been HTC members since 2019. They're RV travel history includes over 20 years of experience ... traveling in the United States ... California, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, Alaska, Maine ... and the Maritimes, and Mexico.*



Carnival Cruises: <https://www.carnival.com/>

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