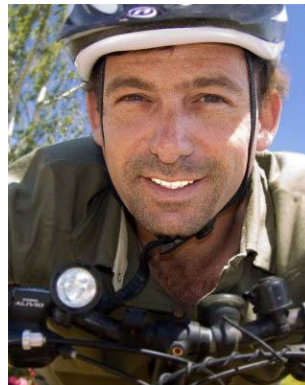


## Travelling with CF

*The following useful guide for PWCF travelling on international flights has been compiled by an expert in this field who has clocked tens of thousands of air Kilometers. He is Dutch born Walter van Praag, now residing in Tasmania, Australia, who with a small team of supporters completed a 4000 km bicycle ride (the Great COFE) from Paris to Istanbul last year. Walter is 42 years old and a great example of living with CF by coughing the distance. A documentary and book describing the Great COFE is being produced, these are sure to be an inspiration for PWCF, both young and old. For more great tips from Walter, visit his blog at <http://www.cofe4cf.blogspot.com/>*



Walter van Praag in his cycling gear

1. **Talk** – to your CF clinic staff, discuss all the things that you may need to consider, and think about the possible complications you may have and what you plan to do in worst case scenarios.

2. **Travel Insurance** - It is very difficult and expensive to obtain travel insurance to cover CF as a pre-existing condition. Check with your CF Association for options. My advice is to get a fancy credit card that offers automatic travel insurance for all travel purchased with it. This way you do not have to declare you have a pre-existing condition - this can be a Gold Visa or Amex, and it is no problem if you are only a secondary card holder (ask dad to get one!). They often cover rental car insurance too but never pre-existing conditions!

Always come home urgently as soon as you think you are developing an infection that requires hospitalisation as you will certainly not be covered for any pre-existing condition! If applying for regular travel insurance speak to your travel agent when booking your holidays. Apply at least 90 days before you plan to leave and apply to a number of travel insurance companies at the same time. If you are rejected by one, you will have to disclose that fact when you apply with the next insurance company.

3. **Plane Seating** - The air in airplanes is re-circulated and only a small percentage of fresh air is added each cycle. In cheaper airlines this percentage is lower! No airline will admit to this or publicise the figure. Furthermore the fresh air is released at



certain points, one always being right in the front. Try and get as far in the front of the plane as possible as a general rule, and aim for an aisle seat for when you suddenly need to cough and go to the loo! You can use your nebulizer and cough in the plane toilet without being heard.

**4. Lounge Access** - A special privilege that pays off, is an airline club membership. You get additional luggage allowance (very useful), business class check in, preferred seating, and lounge access where everything is clean and fresh. Great way to avoid airline crowds, and have a shower and clean toilet in transit. Also a great advantage if you need urgent flight changes! It is not cheap to sign up first time, cheaper to renew the following year, but is worthwhile if you plan to travel regularly or intend to do a round the world trip with many stops.

**5. Letter from Specialist** - obtain a letter from your CF specialist providing details of your state of health, a list of your current medications, your treatment plan and your medical history. This can be useful when entering countries with an assortment of drugs in your luggage!

**6. Oxygen** - If you are likely to need oxygen on flights, speak to your clinic and to your airline company.

**7. Medication** - Ensure you have more than sufficient supplies of the harder to obtain medication. Make sure you carry your prescriptions as this will allow you to get new medicine in case of emergency in some countries and make it easier in others. Remember that other countries do not give subsidized medicine so be prepared to pay.

**8. Travel pumps** - Check with your CF clinic for lightweight, multi-voltage car or battery operated travel pumps for loan. These can be in great demand, and are expensive to buy so ask as soon as you know your dates.

**9. Carry on luggage** - Recent restrictions on luggage may make it difficult for PWCF. Remember to pack all liquids together in a clear plastic bag, and avoid containers over 200ml. Carry enough medication for your flight and a few extra days as you may just lose your luggage!! You cannot carry all your medications as the airline only allows you enough medication as can be reasonably needed for the trip and a few spare days.

**10. Cold chain** - If you have medication that requires refrigeration you can buy Liquid Nitrogen bricks from BOC Gas. Wrap the bricks in newspaper and into your luggage. Works for about 24-48hours, does not make your suitcase wet when it melts, but does require a Dangerous Goods Clearance Certificate which you can obtain from the airline by phone.

**11. Language** - The word cystic fibrosis is not widely understood. It would be a good idea to get a translation of it for the countries you are going to! Mucoviscidosis is a term familiar to doctors from many European countries.

**12. Pollution** - Other countries may not be as clean as you are used to, and you may have an adverse reaction to the air in some locations. Keep an eye on your health when approaching these and get out before you get into trouble.