

PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

TRAVELABILITY
THE INTERSECTION OF TRAVEL AND DISABILITY

mélange

Accessible Journeys

APRIL 2024

**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
ARE REDEFINING THE CONCEPT OF
LUXURY
VACATIONS**



EXPLORE ACCESSIBLE DESTINATIONS

Colorado Springs

Greater Fort Lauderdale

Arizona

Lansing, Michigan



Ximuwu Lodge: Premier Accessible Safari Experience

Ximuwu Lodge, awarded the highest honor for accessibility by the tourism grading council, offers unparalleled, wheelchair-friendly safari adventures in the Greater Kruger, South Africa. As the only lodge in a vast expanse, we specialize in personalized, private experiences for up to eight guests in our luxurious suites. Embrace the ultimate in privacy and bespoke wilderness journeys, ensuring an unforgettable adventure in one of Africa's most majestic settings. Discover the pinnacle of accessible luxury with us. Visit www.wheelchairsafari.com for details.



Special Offer for Accessible Journey Readers:



Valid until 1st December 2024.
Terms and Conditions Apply!



Ximuwu Lodge: Where Luxury Meets Accessibility.



Table of Contents

IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE COVER: Tarryn Tomlinson
at Aquila Luxury Safari Lodge, Cape Town.
Couture designer: Jacques La Grange.



Cienna Ditri Embracing life, travel and fashion, with grace and confidence despite her disability

- 6 Note from Guest Editor**
Tarryn Tomlinson
- 8 Luxury vacations**
by Nancy Baye
- 10 Redefining luxury**
with Tarryn Tomlinson
 - 10** Tips for stylish travel
 - 13** What does luxury travel mean to you? South African travel podcaster, Lois Strachan, offers her view
 - 16** Jessica Jordan Ping's luxury vacations make her feel included
 - 23** Musa Motha proves he's *Got Talent* as he dances to his own beat
 - 26** Cienna Ditri Embracing life, travel and fashion, with grace and confidence despite her disability
 - 30** A luxury vacation is all about the abundance and richness of the travel experience
 - 32** Unveiling Cape Town's 'Limitless' Horizons: A Commitment to Universal Access in Tourism
- 40 Family Fun, No Limits**
with Jennifer Allen
 - 40** Chasing the luxury of travel
 - 42** Luxurious accessible stays for families with disabilities
 - 44** Better Together Disability Q&A
 - 46** Lost and found: protecting your special needs child during travel
- 48 Adaptive outdoor enthusiast, Tanelle Bolt, thrives in the Great Outdoors**

DEPARTMENTS

- 08** Redefining Luxury
- 40** Family Fun, No Limits
- 48** Adaptive Adventures
- 54** Journeys with Autism
- 58** Invisible Disabilities
- 70** Features



Breaking Barriers Ximuwu, the epitome of luxury and accessibility in Kruger National Park
by Tarryn Tomlinson



Elisa Richards: Authenticity, nature and silence—a redefinition of luxury travel

- 81 No Limbits' Erica Cole is passionate about travel**
- 84 Empowering the visually impaired through tandem cycling in New York**
- 90 Aspen Sage Baxter shares her favourite accessible cruising stories**
- 98 Jessie, the blind, fearless sole traveller**

- 90** Cruising Corner
- 98** Beyond Sight
- 100** Silent Adventures
- 104** Bloggers, Vloggers and Instagrammers
- 112** Tech-Enabled

MÉLANGE ACCESSIBLE JOURNEYS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Editorial Director
Debbie Austin | Guest Editor
Tarryn Tomlinson |
| Associate Publisher
Becka Stair Gill | Designer
Trish Palma |
| Editor-in-Chief
Jake Steinman | Editorial Staff
Marina Apperley
Lucky Mae Fornoles |
| Senior Editor
Nancy Baye | |

Contributing Writers

- Nancy Baye
- Tarryn Tomlinson
- Jennifer Allen
- Bert Burns

We want to hear from you. Do you have something that would be a good fit for *Accessible Journeys Magazine*? Send us an email:

Story submissions:
guestarticle@readmelange.com

News and product recommendations:
news@readmelange.com

Questions and comments:
questions@readmelange.com

Want to be featured?
feature@readmelange.com

We try to present information that is current and accurate, but errors can occur.

If you've found an error in the magazine, please email:
marina@readmelange.com

Accessible Journeys is published quarterly by:

Mélange Publishing Group
300-3665 Kingsway
Vancouver, BC.
Canada V5R 5W2
1 (866) 384-8257
www.melangeandco.com

Mélange does not own the rights to any of the photographs and videos in this publication. Ownership belongs solely to the subjects portrayed. Photographs and videos are used only to provide a visual of whatever is being referenced in the interest of directing readers to subjects website or social media accounts.

Note from the Guest Editor



TARRYN TOMLINSON

Welcome to the spring edition of our *Accessible Journeys* Magazine. My name is Tarryn Tomlinson, a wheelchair user, writing to you from sunny South Africa. As your guest editor, it is my pleasure to guide you through the exciting landscapes of accessible luxury travel and share the remarkable stories that I hope will inspire you with new ideas as you head into spring.

I was a teenager when I first watched the movie, *Under the Tuscan Sun*, a romantic comedy starring American actress Diane Lane. In the movie her character was a heart-broken writer who said yes to a crazy idea, ditched her old life and moved to Italy. It seemed to me like a pretty logical thing to do and so, I decided to follow in her footsteps.

The storyline captured my imagination and cinematography captured all my senses and my heart. Set in some of the most beautiful villages and towns in Italy, I fell in love. I fell in love with the beautiful scenery, the culture, the language, the architecture and beautiful men. I decided there and then that I too would go to Italy. I wanted to live longer than a year and I

wanted to live in absolute luxury. A believer in the Law of Attraction, I started to visualize myself in Italy and began to plan for my eventual landing. I learned the language and started to research the places of interest I would visit. Whilst I was preparing, I came up against the disbelief and ridicule of family and friends. "How are you going to get to Italy," they asked? I'm sure to them that sounded like a pretty logical question, one I didn't know how to answer. I mean, I didn't have a job, nor a trust fund and I was a wheelchair user living with rheumatoid arthritis. I simply told them, "The Universe will sort it out".

I didn't know how but my faith paid dividends, one by one a magical trail of coincidences led me down a path and within one year I was living on a luxury estate of one of the most famous Italian lyricists of all time. I 'gotta to eat', the best foods, drink the finest wines, travel to destinations I've always wanted to visit and boy, oh boy did I live in luxury for nearly two years.

My friends and family members were gobsmacked (many were jealous). They could not believe that a woman who uses a wheelchair could live such a rich experience! Living a dream that they would dare to dream.

And my question to them and to all other people with that same disbelief is, Why not?. Why can't someone who uses a wheelchair or has any other form of disability desire the absolute best life can offer? We are equally as entitled to and worthy of the abundance offered by this Universe. Why do we only need to think about what is possible for us as opposed to what we want for ourselves.

Travel is a universal desire that transcends physical and cognitive differences. It's about discovering new cultures, forging connections, and creating memories that last a lifetime.

One of the most heartening developments is the increasing number of destinations embracing universal design principles.

From accessible transportation and accommodations to inclusive attractions and activities, you will find out how Cape Town Tourism is becoming Limitless ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, can fully enjoy the wonders Cape Town has to offer.

I will also take you on an adventure into the bush to visit Ximuwu Luxury Safari Lodge and hear from the owners about their commitment to creating inclusive spaces. I have highlighted some of my favourite luxurious countries and experiences and will introduce you to some interesting people along the way.

I am also going to share some of my favourite designer fashion items that I never leave at home when I go on holiday.

In this edition I want to ignite the spark within you, the reader, to dust off your travel bags and dream bigger than you ever thought possible. Because as cliché as it sounds, If I can do it, then so can you!

XOXO,

Tarryn

Welcome TO ACCESSIBILITY FOR EVERYONE



In Greater Fort Lauderdale, we're excited about welcoming everyone under the sun and providing access for all, from beach wheelchairs and accessible pathways to the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program at FLL airport. Learn more about local resources and plan your trip at [VisitLauderdale.com/Accessibility](https://www.visitlauderdale.com/accessibility).



Leading Off: Luxury Vacations

People with disabilities are redefining the concept of luxury vacations

Spring into luxury—however you define it

By Nancy Baye

For the Spring 2024 issue, *Accessible Journeys* leans into luxury travel with a happy sigh. Who doesn't love a little luxury? And we

all deserve it. Even if our mobility or budgets are limited, as long as we keep our minds flexible, we can all have a bit more luxury. And in recent years, luxury travel options for people with disabilities have exploded.

Guest Editor Tarryn Tomlinson pilots us through this edition, where we venture to the idyllic Maldives, heal with therapy horses in the British Virgin Islands, and safari in Kruger National Park at Ximuwu—a luxury lodge built with accessibility in

mind. Tarryn sets the tone by asking the provocative question, "Why do we only need to think about what is possible for us as opposed to what we want for ourselves?"

The answer is that we don't need to limit our thinking or desires to what is possible. At *Accessible Journeys*, we know that anything is possible. That's why we continue to feature contributors who not only find the possible but push its boundaries, making everything a little more possible for a lot more people. We are grateful to them all.

We asked our contributors to define luxury travel and were inspired by their replies. Kristin Secor's take on luxury travel is the



luxury of having accessibility. Being on the frontline, she knows that global accessibility still has a long way to go, adding, "Finding your dream destination that is accessible and can meet your needs, that is luxury because it doesn't exist everywhere." Jessica Jordan Ping echoes that sentiment, saying, "A luxury vacation has to make me feel included." Elisa Richards defines luxury travel as the opportunity for open unscheduled time. In *Authenticity, nature and silence*, the hard-of-hearing advocate calls her silence meditative, giving her, "the choice to completely turn off the noise and allow my other senses to step in."

Besides the critical components of accessibility, inclusivity and open time, we hear more definitions

of luxury travel in other pieces, showing that luxury is within reach for all of us—and it starts with our perspective.

To address the obvious concern, luxury travel doesn't need to have a high price tag, which is great news for those of us concerned about budgets. We're lucky to have saving tips that you'll want to bookmark from Jennifer Allen in *Chasing the luxury of travel*. Jennifer also shares some accessible luxury travel recommendations from families.

As always, our publication goes beyond travel tales, offering high-value information from people with lived experience. Christine E. Staple Ebanks shares her list of best practices to protect a special needs child during travel. Don't wait to put her sage advice into practice—get informed now by reading *Lost and found*.

Dance icon Musa Motha is sure to thrill our readers, as he thrilled hordes of fans on *Britain's Got Talent*, and beyond. For Musa, luxury travel involves meeting inspiring people. For Limbit's founder Erica Cole, luxury is experiencing local culture and having the chance to scuba dive.

Our final note is one sung by many of our writers, and which Jessica Jordan Ping echoes: "If I can help at least one disabled person to say, 'I am important, I matter, I have inherent value,' then I've done my job for today . . . Give yourself the space and the grace to look at who you are and what you want."

Dear reader, you matter. And we wish you luxury: in time and space, in heart and mind, in peace and wellness. And definitely in accessible travel. Be sure to tell us all about it and send photos! ■

Luxury is within reach for all of us—and it starts with our perspective.

Nancy Baye

WEEKEND GETAWAY?

 LANSING'S MY CHOICE

Choose 
LANSING
MICHIGAN

Learn more





Tips for stylish travel

By Tarryn Tomlinson

Being a person with a disability does not mean that you cannot look stylish when you travel! Whether or not you are a wheelchair user like me, maintaining that chic, sophisticated look while travelling at home or abroad is possible.

Embarking on a journey is not just about discovering new places—it's also an opportunity to express oneself through personal style while on your journeys. Now, although I am no fashionista, I do wear clothing and accessories that enhance my comfort, confidence, and accessibility when travelling.

Here are some essential fashion tips and some of my favourite fashion pieces to make your travel experience both stylish and accommodating.

COMFORT IS KEY

Prioritize comfort when selecting your travel wardrobe, there is nothing worse than being stuck in tight and uncomfortable clothing in a foreign country where you don't speak the language, can't find a loo and don't have access to your favourite stores. Opt for soft, breathable fabrics

that allow for ease of movement. Consider adaptive clothing options with features like magnetic closures, elastic waistbands, and adjustable closures, ensuring comfort throughout your journey.

Liberare has a range of underwear and sleepwear that provide extra accessibility, perfectly suited for travel.

BE BOLD AND BEAUTIFUL

Just because you need to be conscious of comfort does not mean that you need to look like a wallflower, you can be comfortable and stylish too. Something I learned about fashion when living in Italy, is that looking elegant is all about the tailoring of the fabric and not being afraid to be bold.

Make sure that your clothing fits your body type. Find a local seamstress if you cannot find clothing in the store that suits your body. Are you an amputee? Check out No Limbits for stylish, comfortable jeans. They've got adaptive clothing as well.

Also do not be afraid of colour! Colour used correctly can make you

people turn their heads for all the right reasons when you walk or roll into a room. Be the blossom Babe, not the wallflower!

I am blessed to have some of my dresses made for special events by my friend, international award-winning luxury designer, [Jacques Le Grange](#).



ACCESSIBLE ACCESSORIES

Accessories are not just for style; they can also serve a functional purpose. Invest in stylish but practical accessories like crossbody bags for easy accessibility and hats or scarves for sun protection.

Now, you may not think of your makeup brushes as accessories, but they are. I keep one with me always just in case I need a touch up. When touring a new destination I am often out for hours, sometimes sweating in the hot sun, so a touch up from time to time is much needed. My treasured accessories for these are from the inclusive beauty brand, [Khol Kreatives](#). They ship internationally.

ADAPTABLE FOOTWEAR

Comfortable and supportive footwear is crucial for travellers with disabilities, although in many cases, barefoot works perfectly fine too! When wearing shoes, opt for those that provide stability, and consider slip-on or adjustable styles to make the shoe-changing process more manageable. Even if you have no mobility and must use your wheelchair to get around, who says you can't wear stylish shoes?

I need my wheelchair, but I am addicted to [Coast and Koi's](#) pumps,

as well as sandals, espadrilles and brogues. They are unashamedly bold and luxurious and every bit as comfortable. I wear them with jeans, dresses, formal pants and sometimes in my birthday suit (wink, wink)! Though handmade in South Africa, you can purchase them in various other countries.

ACCESSORIZE WITH CONFIDENCE

Express your personal style through accessories like statement jewellery, sunglasses or a stylish hat. These small details can elevate your entire look while being easy to incorporate into your travel attire.

South Africa is home to The Cullinan Diamond, one of the biggest



diamonds ever found. We are also home to [The Diamond Works Institute](#), the first diamond workshop and showroom to include the blind in their tours by creating braille tactile signage.



CHOOSE WRINKLE-RESISTANT FABRICS

Select fabrics that resist wrinkles, ensuring your outfits maintain a polished appearance throughout your journey. This eliminates the need for extensive ironing and allows you to focus more on your travel experiences.

Remember, fashion is a means of self-expression, and it should adapt to your needs and preferences. By incorporating these tips into your travel wardrobe, you can confidently embark on your adventures with style and in comfort. And do not allow your disability to be a deterrent!

Safe and stylish travels! ■



“All travel is luxurious but it’s not all high end.”

[To Table of Contents](#)

What does luxury travel mean to you?

South African travel podcaster Lois Strachan offers her view

By Tarryn Tomlinson

From a stretch limo airport pickup in New York to being taken on a private museum tour in Greece, Lois Strachan and I unpacked what luxury travel means to us and some of the surprising benefits that come when travelling as a person with a disability.

When Lois was six years old, she proudly proclaimed to her parents that one day she would go to every country and meet every person. A rather ambitious goal for a six year old. She had a curious and adventurous spirit, so when she became blind at the age of 21, it may have seemed to others that her dreams would never come true.

However, Lois thought differently. She realized that she had a choice, she could let her blindness determine the rest of her life, or she could go out and see what was still possible for a blind woman in a sighted world.

Lois is an author, speaker, disability advocate, travel writer, podcaster and sometimes rock musician. She has been to four continents and has visited 21 countries. Lois Strachan has proved that, indeed, a lot is possible for a blind woman in a sighted world.

I wanted to get a sense of who Lois is and so I asked her to tell me more about herself. She said, “I think if we’re talking about who I am fundamentally, I am a person who is adventurous, despite having a very reserved kind of brain and childhood. Travel is the one area that I have always loved, since I was about six years old. I said to my parents that I wanted to go everywhere in the world and meet everyone.” She chuckles and says, “I was obviously quite a pretentious child as well.”

Watching her and having spoken to her on many occasions, I can assure you that Lois doesn’t have a pretentious bone left in her body. I imagined that for such a curious child, however, becoming blind must have felt like an incredible loss.

Lois assured me that, “When I became blind, the only thing that changed for me were the tools and the techniques that I used. I can do everything as a blind person that I used to do as a sighted person. I am a person who loves reading and listening to music. I love spending time with my friends and family. I’m curious about the world and I’m curious about different lived experiences, different cultures.” Persons with disabilities are



diverse. We have different tastes and aspirations. I wanted to know Lois’ take on luxury travel, so asked what luxury travel means to her. After a pause she said, “Such a tough question because every travel experience offers something different. I don’t really know because for me all travel is luxurious but it’s not all high end.”

“For me,” I told Lois, “luxury travel is being able to afford certain comforts that make your journey extra special and having it done by people who make an effort to see you.” I began to think about why I love going to the restaurants and bars of high end hotels. I chuckled and continued, “When people rush to get my wheelchair from the boot. I always feel like my disability makes me a V.I.P.”

Lois interjected, “Especially since V.I.P also stands for visually impaired person.” We both burst out laughing at the irony of it all. When we eventually composed ourselves, I explained that services which cater to V.I.P guests are often very much the same types of services needed for guests with disabilities: valet parking attendants to give you a hand, bigger rooms, better lighting, etc.

[To Table of Contents](#)

This reference sparked something within Lois and she said, "Well, yes! I've had surprising luxury experiences. I was once in New York, booked a taxi but a stretch limo pulled up. The driver had to drop off another passenger and decided to take us." She continued, "I've had a number of experiences when travelling that other people don't have access to and those should also be taken into the thought of luxury travel. Something special, something different that not everyone can do."

She explained how, when arriving at a museum in Athens, she was told that the tour was very visual and would not be suitable for her. The tour guide then took her on a special tour to a part of the museum where she could touch items that were not on public display. "I consider that luxury travel as well," Lois said, "Because it's something special, something that is only offered to a few people."

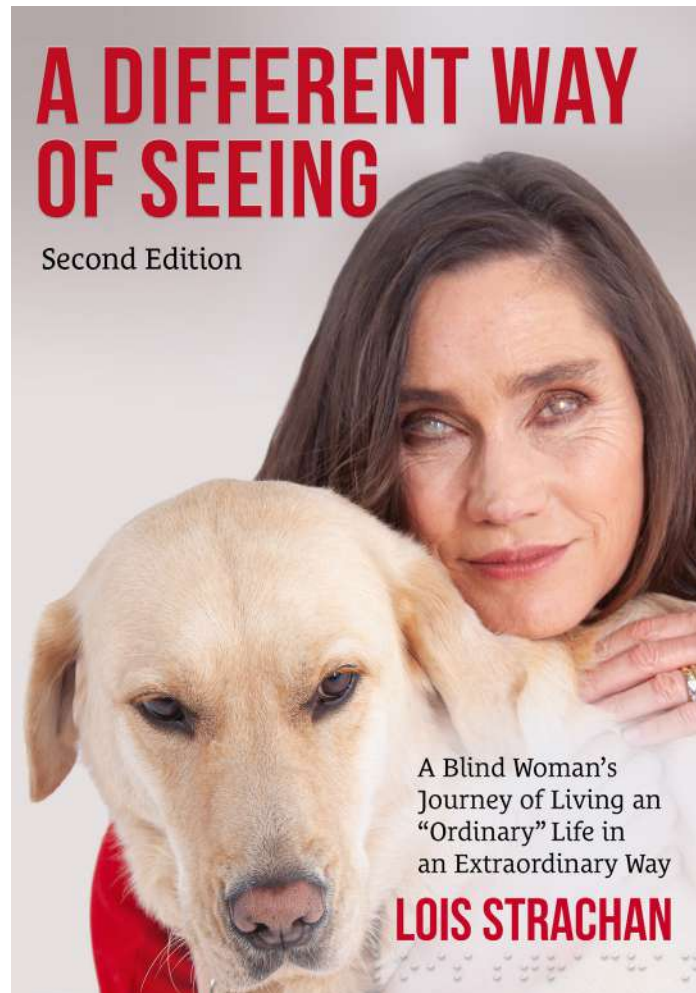
I think back to my own life and all the special experiences I got as a result of having a disability and feel truly blessed. Though life is not always easy, it is the little comforts and considerations that can turn any experience into a luxurious one.

Hear more stories of travels on Lois' podcast, [A Different Way of Seeing](#). ■



“When I became blind, the only thing that changed for me were the tools and the techniques that I used. I can do everything as a blind person that I used to do as a sighted person.

Lois Strachan



Available on Amazon

Colorado Springs

ADVENTURE AWAITS IN OLYMPIC CITY USA

Colorado Springs, Olympic City USA, is for everyone. With award-winning accessible programs and attractions around every corner, there's adventure for all abilities. Here, you can summit a 14-er, explore local parks and trails, relive the history of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements and enjoy local cuisine without worry.



visit COLORADO SPRINGS

[VisitCOS.com/accessible-cos](https://www.visitcos.com/accessible-cos)

Jessica Jordan Ping's

luxury vacations make her feel included

@therollingexplorer



Jessica Jordan Ping

Social media influencer Jessica Jordan Ping was born and raised in Central Illinois, U.S. She entered this world with a rare disease called CHILD syndrome, which affects only about 60 people worldwide. For her, it manifested as a shortened left arm and shortened left leg. Her leg had to be further amputated after birth. To get around, she sometimes uses a wheelchair, prosthetic leg or a walking stick. Vivacious and confident, Jessica effectively uses her social media platforms as an

advocacy tool, showing the world that her disability is just one part of who she is.

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF A LUXURY VACATION?

A luxury vacation has to make me feel included. It should be an all-inclusive vacation and this concept means something different to me. This is a vacation where I can participate in every activity and never feel excluded. Where I

am constantly being catered to in the same way that a non-disabled person is being catered to. This is what luxury feels like—not having to worry about whether or not I'm going to be included in the supposed inclusive activities.

A luxury vacation includes ease of thinking. I don't want to have to overthink or stress because in my day-to-day life I'm constantly stressed—is this accessible? Do I really have to call again? Do I have

to scope out a location before I go on the next weekend getaway with my friends to make sure that I can actually enter it without having to be a bother to anybody?

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER?

I grew up in the age of YouTube and influencers. I've always been fascinated by this and I also loved performing. I was a big theatre kid, performing in community theater shows that my small town would put on. I loved the Disney Channel and had this delusional dream of being on it one day. But growing up, I didn't see anybody who looked like me in media, so I had no inspiration, no hope that anybody like me could actually go out and do these things—no one like me could be an actor, comedian, performer or influencer. I said to myself, I won't be able to do it. I'll just go to college and stay on the academic side of things. So, I studied English Literature in college and wanted to be a writer. I thought this was a way for me to flex my creative muscle without needing to be in the spotlight. Then my mentor advised that if I wanted to be a storyteller, I needed a blog and should set myself apart. I then got a website and started writing one blog post a month—nothing too intense or overwhelming, then COVID hit. I had time on my hands and TikTok was taking off. I told myself I'd make a video to see how it went, then everything fell into place from there. I developed a following and got better at making videos while having a lot of fun with it all. This has now taken over my life, in the best way possible.

HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACTED YOUR LIFE AND

WHAT EFFECT DO YOU HAVE ON YOUR FOLLOWERS?

It has helped improve my confidence astronomically over the last several years and shown that my disability is not the only thing that matters about me. It has given me a new perspective on disability—it being just an identifier rather than a definition of who you are, and all of this is being done in the healthiest way possible. Based on the messages I receive from followers, I believe that I'm helping other disabled people see their value and worth. That's what I struggled with growing up and why I didn't want to pursue the social media route. I didn't think I had as much worth or value as a non-disabled person did, but that's not so. If I can help at least one disabled person to say, "I am important. I matter. I have inherent value," then I've done my job for today.

ANY MEMORABLE INTERACTIONS WITH FOLLOWERS?

I've had several, and I've met a few of them in person which is always a joy. When people approach you and say, "I like your videos, they make me feel better about x, y, z or have helped inspire me to love myself more," this is great! That's always the top tier level of joy for me. Of course, anytime a post goes viral you're bringing in people who are not a part of your community and you'll get some hate comments or negativity, but overall, I receive mainly kindness and love. I adore the fact that I have support online for the work that I do. The people who follow me are there for a reason and they look forward to seeing my stuff every day. I look forward to interacting with them every day. Every interaction is a joy that is based in kindness and positivity.



NAME A FAVOURITE DESTINATION

I really, really, really love Paris. I'm obsessed with Paris. I've visited three times and every time I go, I love it more. It's one of the worst cities for accessibility that I ever visited but it's just so beautiful there! It is quintessentially European with so much history. I love the Louvre Museum. It transports me to another world in the best way and is architecturally intriguing. I've visited twice but it is always a little battle trying to find my way out. They need more elevators. The building is accessible in that you can get around and they do have accessible toilets but just the bare minimum is being met for accessibility. It's not like museums I've been to in the U.S. where there are many different routes to move around and many elevators.

BUCKET LIST DESTINATIONS?

I'm excited to see the Northern Lights someday. I think Norway in particular is stunning. To stay in a glamorous glass igloo at the Lyngen North where I can fall asleep staring at the stars through the glass roof will be an amazing experience.

I would actually love to go all over the world—hit all the continents. I've



really been interested in Australia and New Zealand lately. Thailand, Indonesia, India would be really cool and Brazil, where I have a lot of followers. I've always been obsessed with rain forests and I think that would be a cool thing to witness. I'm really close to visiting all 50 U.S. states so that too is on my bucket list to complete.

WHAT MOBILITY AID DO YOU USE MOST OFTEN DURING TRAVEL?

Historically, a manual wheelchair because in the past, I've travelled either with my family, friends or a significant other as I need

someone to push my wheelchair. However, in the last year and a half, I've grown more comfortable wearing my prosthetic leg again so it will play a much bigger role and I will rely a lot less on having other people wheeling me around. As someone with only one hand in a manual wheelchair, I'm not really independent so I'm looking forward to becoming even more comfortable wearing my prosthetic so I can do more independent travel.

LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED AS A PERSON TRAVELLING WITH A DISABILITY

Flexibility is important. Unfortunately,

there are many times I've been disappointed on trips by things not being as accessible as I expected. This has taught me to roll with the punches and make the most out of it as best I can. I've learned to over prepare for every type of travel. Whether it's for a stay-cation or going across the world, be overly prepared and have a backup plan.

Know the essentials of how you're getting around. Trains, taxis? And make sure you're safe. You might be disappointed if activities or events are not accessible. That's unfortunate, disheartening and can take a toll on your mental health but that is something you can get over. For me, safety is the most important thing. I don't want to be stranded somewhere.

I try to go on at least two trips a year and I will spend more money on a nicer hotel in a nice neighbourhood because I think I'll be well taken care of and feel safe. Typically, if I'm going to a city, I'm probably going to pay a bit more and stay downtown which will be closer to activities, it's more convenient and I don't have to worry about transportation.

MUST-HAVE TRAVEL ITEMS

My mobility aids are a given. If I don't have those, I'm not getting very far. I always bring extra lotion, particularly for my skin condition and especially if I'm travelling in the winter. I'll always have extra medication. I like dressing up when I'm traveling, so I always have an extra pair of shoes or an extra dress for the random, fun spontaneous night out. I always, always, bring several shades of lipstick. I love wearing lipstick, that's one way that I really express myself so I always bring five or six shades anywhere I go. My favourite brand is Maybelline. I swear by their shades. They're the longest wearing lipstick I've ever had, especially the darker shades. I love to read and I always have entertainment locked and

A luxury vacation includes ease of thinking. I don't want to have to overthink or stress

Jessica Jordan Ping



loaded for an airplane, train or car ride—a book, podcast, audio book or something.

GOOD TO KNOW TIDBIT

A lot of venues do not know what constitutes an accessible space and as a result they don't know how to advertise that on their websites. Many hotels have nothing about accessibility on their websites, which is shocking. But on travel websites that list hotels, some will indicate if a resort has elevators or not. I've found if elevators are listed, accessibility is usually okay, but not necessarily great. If you have the means, call in advance. Chain hotels tend to be accessible. That's my go to—I will stay in a Holiday Inn or Comfort Inn 95% of the time. The price is better, but on top of that, you're more likely to get an accessible room.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH CURIOUS PEOPLE WHO STARE OR ASK DIRECT QUESTIONS?

With kids I don't mind if they ask questions and I'll answer because in my eyes, that's how we'll change perspectives on disability in the future. I will answer their questions casually and say, "I was born like this, isn't it cool? It's so different." I get

frustrated, however, when parents interject their own assumptions and stereotypes of disabled people into the mix. Or worse, when a kid asks me something, stares or points and the parent says, "No, we don't do that" and pulls their kid away, embarrassed. To me, the kid is just curious and wants to learn and that's fine. The adult in that situation should not try to deplete the curiosity and more than that, make it seem like the disability is something to be ashamed of.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO FIND CONFIDENCE?

Understand that you are the expert on you. Your story is unique, your experience is unique, your perspective, vision, life, dreams and goals. No one else will have the same life as you. And you matter as a person. Understanding that to your core is something that doesn't come easily and it's not there all the time, it ebbs and it flows. But getting comfortable with yourself, really falling in love with yourself is going to be the best thing you can ever do for you. It will boost your confidence, mental health, career and relationships, whether familial,

romantic or friendly. Get to know yourself. Give yourself the space and the grace to look at who you are and what you want. Don't judge it. Take the inner critic out, step back and just be like, yeah, this is me. And regardless of what that looks like and how that fits into society and all of the rules that we create as a collective, own it and feel confident. Know that you are unique and that is your superpower. Your superpower is not how well you can fit in. It is how well you can stand out. That is your superpower!

You can find Jessica @therollingexplorer



“If I can help at least one disabled person to say, “I am important. I matter. I have inherent value,” then I've done my job for today.

Jessica Jordan Ping

LIBERARE

Finally, front-close bras that are *easy-on*



Best bra I've found for quads. So easy-on!



“Life-saver after my shoulder surgery!”



“The EASIEST and comfiest bra I own as a 38DDD”



“Perfect for my arthritic fingers and so comfy! Best front-closure bra out there”



Musa Motha

proves he's *Got Talent* as he dances to his own beat



Musa Motha, a 28-year-old South African amputee dancer, has a story that blends a moment of tragedy with triumphant achievements. Born south of Johannesburg, Musa's life took an unexpected turn at age 10 when diagnosed with osteosarcoma, leading to the amputation of his leg. However, this loss became the cornerstone of an extraordinary journey.

Before the world recognized his grace on the dance floor, Musa was a passionate football player. His foray into dance began serendipitously, hanging out with friends who were dancers. Enthralled by their movements, he asked them to teach him, setting the stage for a transformation from a football enthusiast to a dancer.

Musa's dedication to dance evolved from a hobby to a serious pursuit, leading him to join a professional contemporary dance company in Johannesburg. There, he honed his skills in ballet and contemporary dance, leading to international tours then a huge explosion onto the global dance scene.

"I started touring internationally in 2019 but I had my big break last year," he shared. He captivated viewers of *Britain's Got Talent*, receiving the coveted Golden Buzzer and repeated that feat at *America's Got Talent* in 2024, placing 5th at both events.

His emergence on the international scene not only highlights his exceptional talent but it is also a narrative of embracing one's identity.

Luxury travel is not about opulence but about comfort, meeting inspiring people, and connecting with nature.

Musa Motha

Musa chooses not to use a prosthetic leg, finding authenticity in his natural state, a decision inspired by his mother's wisdom that everything happens for a reason. Musa shared, "I believe there's a reason why I'm an amputee. I have prosthetics but I don't use them, I haven't for the past two years. When I wear them, I feel like a different person who I don't understand so I like to keep myself the way I am, naturally."

Musa's travels—from South Africa to the U.K., U.S. and Europe—have showcased his dance and also allowed him to experience life as an amputee in different cultural contexts. He notes the varying degrees of accessibility and kindness he has experienced in different countries. It has all been good, he says, but people in the U.K. stand out the most for their helpfulness.

For him, travel is very much a part of his life now and he likes to be comfortable when on the go. His version of luxury travel is going out and being close to nature, and yes, being comfortable. Musa expressed, "luxury travel is not about opulence but about comfort, meeting inspiring people and connecting with nature." Does he have a favorite destination? Yes, he loves the U.K., but adores Los Angeles which he says captivates him with its blend of urban life and natural beauty, embodying his ideal of luxury combined with accessibility and immersion in nature.

Despite his fame and masterful embrace of global stages, Musa remains grounded. On your own

travels, you may spot him on a plane or train, headset on, cherishing the simple pleasures of apple juice and beef jerky, his favourite travel snacks. He's open to talking, after all, he's now used to being recognized and is comfortable with people wanting to have a conversation, so do say hello. You'll be greeted with a modest smile and a willingness to share his story. He's got a busy 2024, enchanting crowds around the U.K., Berlin, Paris and New Jersey. But when it's time to vacation, perhaps you may find him soaking up the sun on a beach in Mexico which is on his bucket list of places to visit.

We can all agree that Musa's story speaks to more than just overcoming physical limitations. It inspires others to find their passion and embrace life's gifts whatever they may look like. Musa is a figure of inspiration that stretches far beyond the dance world! ■



Breaking Barriers

Ximuwu, the epitome of luxury and accessibility in Kruger National Park

by Tarryn Tomlinson



As the golden sun begins to set over the vast plains of Kruger National Park, a sense of tranquility envelops Ximuwu Safari Lodge, the first universally accessible luxury safari lodge in the region. Nestled in the heart of the bush, Ximuwu stands as a testament to overcoming challenges, providing an inclusive haven for all. In an exclusive interview with Elly Suverein, the passionate owner of Ximuwu, we delve into the

journey that led to the creation of this extraordinary retreat.

DEFYING THE ODDS - AN UNEXPECTED INSPIRATION

“Why go through all the expense and difficulty to build the lodge?” I inquire, curious about the driving force behind Ximuwu’s commitment to accessibility. Elly, an able-bodied woman with a mission, begins to recount a personal experience that

changed the course of her life. “Yes, South Africa was inaccessible for a considerable period,” Elly acknowledges, “but recent years have seen significant improvement. The decision to make our lodge not only luxurious but also accessible was driven by a personal experience.” Her husband’s journey, marked by a failed back operation resulting in him using a wheelchair, became the catalyst for this transformation.



Elly’s eyes reflect the depth of her conviction as she shares, “We became acutely aware of the challenges of travel in general. It was an eye-opener, not just in terms of the physical challenges but also in how people often treat you. We also discovered that there was a lack of a truly accessible luxury safari lodge in South Africa at that time.”

SHARING THE DREAM OF BUSH LIVING

Living in the bush for almost seven years, Elly and her husband Patrick found solace and beauty in the peaceful embrace of nature. “What is it about Kruger that makes you want to share your home with others?” I inquire, eager to understand the motivation behind opening their doors to fellow travellers.

“It’s truly a dream to reside in such a peaceful place, and we continue to appreciate it daily,” Elly enthuses. “After enjoying our dream life for this extended period, we felt a desire to share this experience with others. Going on a safari is a dream for both abled and disabled individuals. Fortunately, we can now share our piece of paradise with everyone.”

OVERCOMING SAFARI FEARS - A PERSONAL INVITATION

“To the person reading this who has always dreamed of going on a safari but is afraid to come because they are

afraid of the logistics, what would you say?” I pose this question, envisioning the countless dreamers who hesitate due to concerns about accessibility.

Elly responds with empathy, “I understand if you’re hesitant about going on a safari trip. It’s a long journey, and you’ve likely had many experiences where the promised accommodations fell short. However, I can assure you that if you’re able to fly, we can provide an experience you’ll never forget.”

With a warm smile, Elly paints a vivid picture of inclusivity, saying, “You won’t be left out of any activities. Picture yourself effortlessly transferring from your chair into the open game viewer or joining in on a bush breakfast—we have a mobile ramp to assist you. You can enjoy a massage at our accessible spa or capture incredible moments from our accessible photographic bunker. We can’t wait to welcome you to Ximuwu.”

As the interview concludes, the vision of Ximuwu Safari Lodge emerges as a beacon of hope and possibility, breaking down barriers and inviting everyone to partake in the enchanting allure of Kruger National Park. This luxurious haven is not just a lodge; it’s a testament to the transformative power of personal experiences and the unwavering commitment to making dreams come true for all. ■

“You won’t be left out of any activities. Picture yourself effortlessly transferring from your chair into the open game viewer or joining in on a bush breakfast—we have a mobile ramp to assist you.”

Elly Suverein

ximuwu.com



Luxury vacation? If it's accessible, that's luxury! Then, being outdoors and at one with nature, sharing enjoyable moments in beautiful places with the people I love. And simply being at the ocean."

Cienna Ditri



Cienna Ditri: Embracing life, travel and fashion, with grace and confidence despite her disability

"My happiness isn't dependent on my health. I have known for most of my life that being "sick" or disabled doesn't make me, my life, my happiness, or anything about me any less. I can live a beautiful and fulfilling life anywhere and in any way that me and my body can. I am not suffering from my conditions or trying to overcome them. I am living with them. I can't change what happens to me, but I can change how I react to it."

~Cienna Ditri

Cienna radiates a deep passion for life despite living with multiple chronic illnesses. Her exuberant personality allows her to look beyond her illness and embrace adventure, advocate for disability rights and indulge in her passion for travel and fashion.

Growing up in Michigan, Cienna's childhood was filled with outdoor activities—golfing, skiing and boating on the lake during the summer months. She developed a deep connection with nature and the ocean, which continues to be her favorite place to this day. Cienna's love for fashion also blossomed early, shaping her unique sense of style and creativity.

She loves to travel and although it is often accompanied by damaged suitcases and stressors like inconsiderate flight attendants, this in no way dulls her travel enthusiasm. She confessed, "I love to travel, but that doesn't mean it's easy. I once did a social media post starting with, I love to travel but an airline broke my wheelchair," she chuckled, "and somebody commented, are you sure you know what I love to travel means?"

Undeterred, this remains a very important aspect of her life and as she travels in the U.S. and abroad, what constitutes a luxury vacation for her is accessibility. "This is the most important thing," she said. "Then, the experience of being outdoors and at one with nature, getting to share enjoyable moments

in beautiful places with the people I love and care about is luxury. But simply being at the ocean is absolute luxury!"

She is a frequent traveller—last year she travelled at least once per month. Although most of her travels were for medical reasons, she said,



“That doesn't mean that I can't make it an amazing travel experience.” And she did, often with her mom.

With travel being such an important part of her life, Cienna found ways to make the process less frustrating. She shares insights into what works for her. It may also work for you.

WHEELCHAIR

When you arrive at the airport, if you can, have someone take a video showing that your wheelchair was rolling along perfectly intact. Make sure it is time and date stamped. You might need this as proof if your wheelchair is broken upon arrival at your destination.

If your wheelchair is damaged in any way on arrival, do not leave the airport until you have filed a report. If you do leave without notifying them, the authorities may say it was broken elsewhere.

SUITCASE

Traveling solo can present challenges when trying to navigate a wheelchair and suitcase simultaneously at the airport. Cienna has found a solution by using a four-swivel wheel soft spinner suitcase. She places the suitcase behind her wheelchair and attaches a luggage strap from the wheelchair's bar to the suitcase handle, allowing it to roll smoothly behind her. This setup grants her additional independence.

TSA PRECHECK

TSA PreCheck can be beneficial especially for solo travelers residing in the U.S. as it expedites the screening process significantly. “It makes your life so much easier,” Cienna said. While there

is an application fee for the TSA PreCheck, the convenience it offers is well worth the cost once approved. Swab and go!

SCALE

Take a small scale with you to avoid surprise overweight fees. “I am a chronic over packer so I need to know that my suitcase doesn't weigh too much,” and she revealed, “when I get to my destination, I always go shopping so having the scale is very useful.”

Through social media, Cienna continues to empower and motivate. By candidly discussing her chronic health issues and adventures in travel, adorned in outfits that reflect her distinctive fashion sense, she has cultivated a supportive network that works to dispel misunderstandings surrounding disabilities. Cienna disclosed, “Fashion is fun. It's a way to express on the outside who you are on the inside. It's a joyful thing to me and I know fashion and disability can definitely coexist.” Whether she's having a good day or not, her sense of style still shines through. “It's so important to have that representation. I didn't see anybody like me on TV or in the media unless it was an advertisement raising money for a children's hospital. I didn't see that the sick kids grew up, that they played soccer, that they had fun, even though they're sick.” Cienna continues, “If a disabled child wants to be a teacher, they should see somebody who's disabled being a teacher because if you can see it, you can dream it. How will you think you can be part of society if you don't see others like you being part of society?” Trying to be that person who dresses up regardless

of how sick she feels today and shares about her condition in an attempt to raise awareness exposes her to many negative comments with “well you don't look sick” being the most prevalent criticism. But Cienna continues to advocate. She's worked with the Paralyzed Veterans Association. She partners with airlines for disability awareness and is the president of the Periodic Paralysis Association. Every speech she gives and every social media post is aimed at sensitizing the public with the hope of shifting people's perspective about disabilities and chronic illnesses.

PLACES CIENNA LOVES TO VISIT

Scottsdale, Arizona. It is beautiful, so too is Sedona. “People often talk about this feeling you get when you're there . . . it's a very calming place,” she declared.

Puerto Rico. “I went there for my birthday and loved it.” Cienna and her family enjoyed the amazing weather, she was able to walk quite easily with her arm crutches and she finally learned how to adaptive surf. Puerto Rico will always have a special place in her heart.

Traverse City in Michigan. “It is really cool. They have off road wheelchairs so you can go hiking. It was the first time I got to go hiking in years. It was amazing being able to go out there and just the accessibility of it all, it left a big impact on me.” There are various hiking trails to explore. Most beaches were equipped with beach wheelchairs and Moby mats, allowing easy access to the sand. It was a pleasant experience, and Cienna didn't have to worry about her ability to participate in an activity.

If she wanted to do something there, she could.

From traversing the deserts of Arizona to adaptive surfing in Puerto Rico, Cienna's wanderlust knows no bounds. Her love for travel, advocacy for disability rights and

passion for fashion paint a portrait of a remarkable individual whose spirit shines bright despite life's challenges. With her two service dogs, supportive family, friends and social media network, her story encapsulates the essence of living life to the fullest, embracing challenges with grace, and

finding joy in the journey, no matter the circumstances. In Cienna's world, every day is a new adventure waiting to be embraced and every setback is an opportunity to inspire and make a difference. ■





A luxury vacation is all about the abundance and richness of the travel experience

Growing up in the lively city of Cape Town, South Africa, Tarryn Tomlinson's passion for travel was sparked by her father, an avid reader and explorer. Being in a household filled with National Geographic magazines and a variety of books focusing on culture, nature,

and people, Tarryn developed a deep love for learning about the world. Additionally, her father's own travels further inspired her curiosity and desire to explore new places. However, her path took an unexpected turn when she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis

at the age of 19. She is a wheelchair user but this has not stopped her from chasing her dreams.

Today, Tarryn's is a well-known face on South African television, renowned not only for her charismatic on-screen presence but also for her visionary



leadership in social innovation and social impact. She is also well-known in the community as a vocal advocate. Founder of [Able2Travel](#) and [LiveAble Access Consultants](#), she graces the stage of many events in South Africa, advocating for improvements for people with disabilities and the underprivileged. Last October, she joined the board of Cape Town Tourism and worked with them on their recently concluded Limitless Campaign.

"If I really look at the evolution of everything that has happened in my life," Tarryn remarked, "it comes down to being able to create better experiences for people, whether they be children or persons with disabilities or you know, anybody actually. And to use my time in a way that I think is most effective in terms of social innovation in order to make changes."

A lot of what Tarryn has been able to accomplish thus far is due largely to her personality. "I'm not afraid to be out there on my own and this is eye opening to a lot of able-bodied people. When they see me out and about, not being sad, having people around me and being the life of the



party, it opens and expands their awareness and makes them see that they do not have to be afraid to approach me and ask questions." This approachable personality has allowed her to bridge gaps between persons with disabilities and the able-bodied.

Being an avid reader, Tarryn discovered the Law of Attraction at an early age, consuming page after page, incorporating its teachings into her daily life—teachings which her marketing and management courses certainly did not cover. One of her manifestations was a luxury trip to Italy which friends and family thought

was a preposterous, unrealizable dream. She proved them wrong. At the age of nineteen, she visited Italy and lived for two years at a luxurious estate!

She journeyed to Italy with Professor Luc Montagnier, Nobel prize winner for the discovery of HIV, to receive treatment for her rheumatoid arthritis. A visit that should have lasted one month became a two-year stay in Italy in the lap of luxury. Her host, a famous Italian lyricist who was a friend of Professor Montagnier, was undergoing trials for his arthritis at his estate residence and Tarryn



was able to be part of the trial. In between surgeries and treatments, she enjoyed the splendor of opulent living. On her return to South Africa, Tarryn started a foundation and for the next ten years, helped underprivileged kids with music and art therapy.

Throughout her busy life, Tarryn still carves out time for travel. “I’m fascinated by different cultures and people,” she said in a recent *Accessible Journeys* conversation. “I do like luxury and to me, luxury really is the abundance and richness of a travel experience. I want to be on the beach in Tanzania, at a bonfire with locals and so I think the richness of experience is what I classify as luxury. It’s great to have the opportunity to experience these things, but unfortunately it requires money, influence or people within your network to make it happen.”

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS?

Definitely Italy. Tanzania—the people are so warm and hospitable. I also love going to Zanzibar.

WHAT’S THE MOST MEMORABLE TRIP YOU’VE EVER HAD?

Since my first trip to Italy, I continued to visit and on one of these trips, I went to Sicily. We sat on the rooftop of a building looking at the Basilica Cattedrale Sante’Agataa and Mount Etna in the distance. Later I sat on the pavement with friends and the owners of a nearby restaurant, in a circle. Grannies, aunties, uncles, friends . . . we just sat, chatted and lost track of time. Then we went to the home of the restaurant owners and had pasta at midnight. We

visited the fish market in Catania in the early morning, later ate pasta with a delightful family and enjoyed a party where a blind guitarist performed. It was an amazing trip filled with stunning views, wonderful people and unforgettable moments.

Another memorable trip would be when I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. In 2020, my business, LiveAble Access Consultants, was started with a campaign to prove that ultimately, your attitude determines your altitude. In the company of five athletes with disabilities, we made the trek but COVID happened days after our descent which dulled the effect somewhat. However, the memories of the climb plus the kindness and warmth of the Tanzanian guides will always remain with me.

YOUR MOST LUXURIOUS VACATION?

The one that stands out the most is my manifested trip to Italy. To stay in the center of Italy in the home of one of the most famous Italian lyricists of all time. To hear and learn about Italian music from one of the greatest (I’m a writer and lover of music. I sing as well). Just to be sitting discussing the existence of the universe over breakfast, chatting with the Nobel Prize winner, for me, that was luxury. It does not have to be tangible things. People think about a Louis Vitton bag and a fancy pair of shoes, expensive sunglasses etc., but when you actually look at what true luxury is and look at the truly wealthy, the luxury of their time stems from the opportunities their wealth enables them to experience, which are not accessible to those with lower financial means, such as the opportunity to actually discuss

philosophy with the great minds in science or philosophy. It’s the richness of the experience for me. That is luxury.

During my travels as a person with a disability, very often I feel like a VIP because staff would rush out of the hotel to assist me, then the valet would park my car, there’s someone to get my wheelchair and put it on the side for me to get into and I get the bigger, accessible room so this is a definite plus. This is luxury.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU TAKE A VACATION AND DO YOU TRAVEL SOLO?

I take a vacation at least once per year and I love travelling solo. I would meet and sometimes stay with friends so I’m never alone throughout my holiday but I enjoy solo travel.



I always travel light. I like to go to places with summer seasons so I can take the minimum of things with me. With a wheelchair and lots of luggage, smaller taxis may not be able to take me so I find that the lighter you travel, the easier it is. I plan my wardrobe carefully thinking about what I can wear and re-wear.

I always call the hotel beforehand and ask for pictures so I’ll be able to see the lay of the land to avoid surprises when I get there. I also try to be close to transport but I don’t need an accessible vehicle. I often just take an ordinary vehicle and the driver would lift me up and put me into the car.

TRAVEL TIPS FOR THOSE WHO ARE HESITANT TO TRAVEL

Do not be afraid. Think of all reasons you have for not travelling, like your fears of certain places and people, being vulnerable, etc. Take that fear away and replace it with curiosity about the destination. For example, take away the fear of going on a safari because you’re thinking it’s inaccessible and there are lions and other stuff and instead, do your research. You’ll actually find that there are safari lodges that are more accessible than many hotels in big cities. And the lions and other wild animals are not a threat but an experience to be enjoyed in their controlled setting. So, seek information, plan and check everything out. However, never just take people’s word for it. Ask for pictures. And just maintain a great sense of humour. There will be amazing people along your journey and also some awful ones. But learn, as a person with a disability, to have compassion for the able-bodied people for not getting it right. Then just go out and have fun.



ARE THERE ANY DESTINATIONS YOU’VE VISITED THAT YOU BELIEVE ARE UNDERRATED?

Africa. Everyone thinks about going to Europe or to other places and don’t realize how beautiful Africa is and how impactful and breathtaking it is to travel through the different countries. It deserves more recognition. The images people see of Africa are disempowering—poverty, shame, pity and war. And because of this, I believe we are heavily undervalued and underrated. If people knew about the diversity, richness of the culture, the most amazing people, like the Tanzanians and the joy that one can actually experience observing the simplicity of life, it will give you a different perspective of Africa.

HOW HAS TRAVEL INFLUENCED YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE?

Travel made me see that the human experience is the same. Sitting in the home of an Italian woman and hearing her yell at her son who forgot to take out the trash is a scenario that

happens all around the world. To hear people discuss current affairs and stuff like that, I’m hearing the same discussions in South Africa. Travel drives home the point that humanity is really all the same. Culturally we are different but the little nuances are not even that big. We have the same problems, there are poor and rich people everywhere. Travel opens your eyes to many things you may not have thought of before.

BUCKET LIST DESTINATIONS

I’d like to go to Greece because I love the Mediterranean vibe. I also want to discover Jordan and more of the Middle East. And Alaska. I’ve got a vision of being in a log cabin by a lake, with trees all around me, eating salmon day after day. A fireplace and a book . . .

A luxury vacation is indeed the abundance and richness of a travel experience. ■



Unveiling Cape Town's Limitless Horizons: A Commitment to Universal Access in Tourism

by Tarryn Tomlinson



Cape Town, the jewel of South Africa, has long been celebrated for its stunning landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history. As a local deeply connected to this city, I've witnessed the remarkable transformation unfolding within the realm of tourism. Cape Town Tourism's latest initiative, the Limitless campaign, is not just a pledge but a groundbreaking stride toward Universal Access in tourism.

In a city where Table Mountain looms large, casting its

shadow on beaches, bustling markets, and historic sites, the commitment to inclusivity is taking center stage. The Limitless campaign embodies a simple yet profound mission - to open the doors of Cape Town's vibrant tourism offerings to all, regardless of their abilities. One of the inspiring faces behind this movement is Nqabohlanga (Winston) Fanie, a 37-year-old father of two and South Africa's first-ever qualified blind tour guide. Born in Qheberha South Africa, Winston found himself at

a crossroads when the economic ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic led to his retrenchment. Faced with the need to provide for his family, Winston's life took an unexpected turn when a friend noticed his exceptional knack for giving directions.

Taking this suggestion to heart, Winston and his friend reached out to Cape Town Tourism for support. The organization not only paid for his studies but also empowered him to become Africa's pioneer blind tour guide. Reflecting on his journey, Winston declares, "Anything is possible. I'd like to see more persons with disabilities getting out of their comfort zones, challenging themselves to do whatever they put their minds to. I took a chance, and it just got bigger and bigger until it blew up. Now I am living my



dream to inspire people like me to go after their dreams."

Cape Town Tourism's commitment to Universal Access goes beyond individual success stories. They have outlined an extensive plan to make the city universally accessible over the coming years. Initiatives include city-wide braille touchpoints, social media content with audio options, maps profiling

accessible routes, sensitivity and awareness training workshops and audio maps of accessible Cape Town routes.

In a groundbreaking move, I am proud to share that Cape Town Tourism has appointed me, Tarryn Tomlinson, as the first non-executive board member with a visible disability who has knowledge of universal access and



Cape Town Tourism Board Members

design. It is an honour to contribute to the mission of ensuring that the beauty of this city is to be enjoyed by everyone.

Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism, emphasizes that the Limitless campaign reflects their dedication to providing accessible and welcoming experiences. The goal is to inspire people to explore new horizons, break barriers and create unforgettable memories. The appointment of a non-executive board member with a visible disability demonstrates the organization's commitment to authentic representation and inclusivity at the decision-making level.

I had the privilege of speaking with Nqabohlanga (Winston) about his unique perspective on tourism. When asked about his dream luxury destination, Winston's response was surprising yet heartwarming. "L.A.," he said, "Most of my hip-hop

music icons live there, and if I go, I want to meet them."

Winston's Salt River Street art walking tour offers travellers a distinctive experience – viewing Cape Town through the eyes of a blind person. He challenges the notion that sight comes solely from having eyes, explaining that sight happens through the brain's imagination and how one thinks. "I can teach them to see the art with their hearts," he affirms.

For those intrigued by Winston's unique tours, he can be contacted directly at nqabofani@gmail.com. Use the reference "Able2Travel" to let him know you're in town, so he and the community can extend a warm Cape Town welcome.

In the heart of this evolving city, Cape Town Tourism's Limitless campaign is not just a promise but a celebration of diversity, breaking barriers and creating an atmosphere where everyone can

revel in the beauty and history of this remarkable destination. The commitment to Universal Access is not just a journey; it's an invitation to explore Cape Town's limitless horizons with open hearts and minds.

[Visit Accessible Cape Town](#)

The Limitless campaign embodies a simple yet profound mission - to open the doors of Cape Town's vibrant tourism offerings to all, regardless of their abilities.



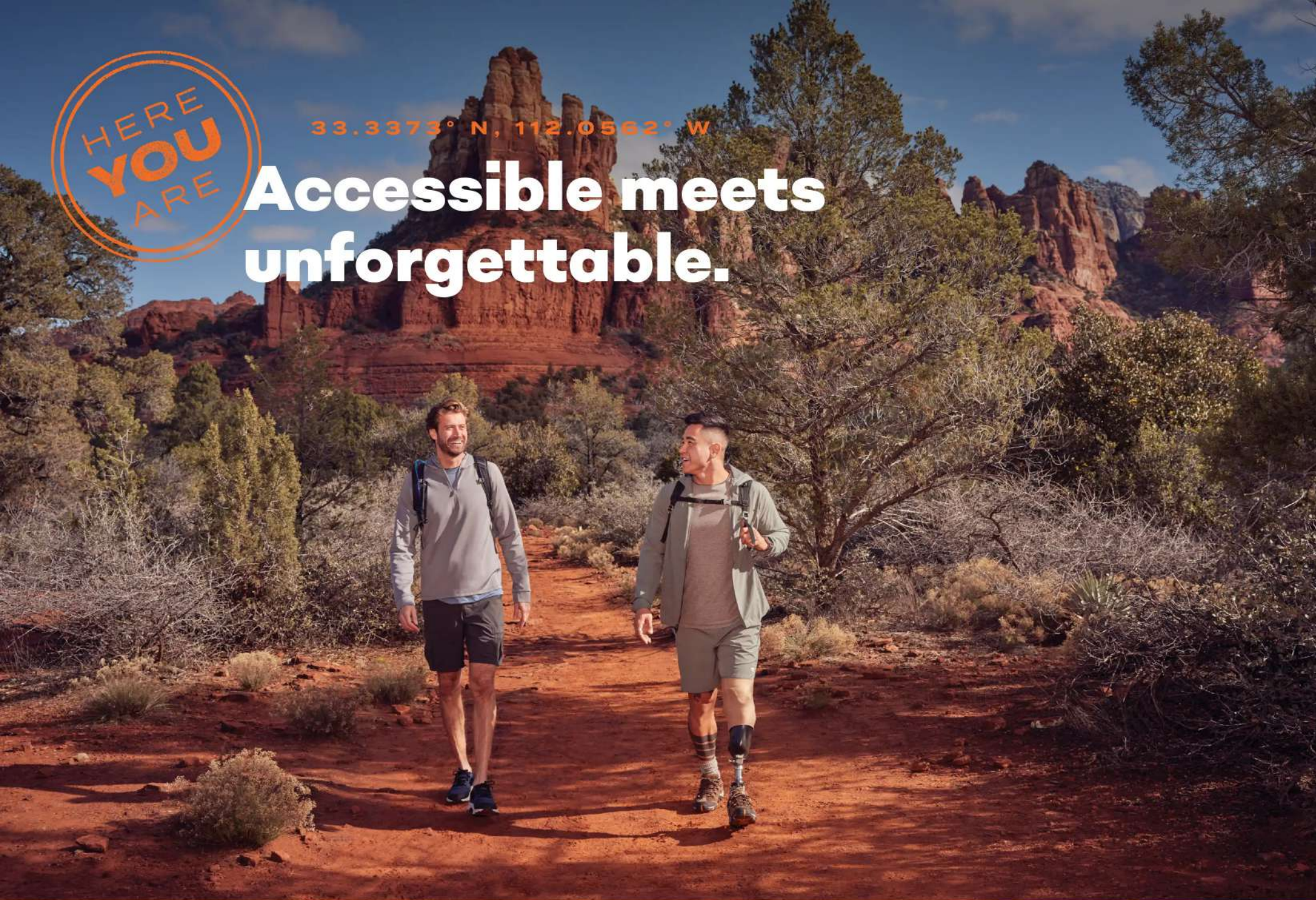
Want to receive new issues of **Accessibility for All** delivered to your inbox?

[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)



33.3373° N, 112.0562° W

Accessible meets unforgettable.



In Arizona, adventure is everywhere and inclusive experiences abound. Make some memories against a spectacular backdrop.

1 Kartchner Caverns

Immerse yourself in a literal hidden gem.

3 Sedona Hiking

Experience the Red Rocks on miles of accessible trails.

2 Verde Canyon Railroad

All aboard for a scenic journey filled with rugged landscapes, wildlife, and historic sites.

4 Grand Canyon National Park

By train or plane, a 7th Wonder is calling.

5 Bartlett Lake

Cool off with Arizona Adaptive Watersports.

6 Desert Botanical Garden

A Sonoran Desert wonderland with endless smooth pathways.

7 Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument

Dark skies and stars await.

8 Bearizona Wildlife Park

Get up close and personal with North American wildlife.

ARIZONA
THE GRAND CANYON STATE

VISITARIZONA.COM



Family Fun No Limits

With Jennifer Allen
Read her blog, [Wonders within Reach](#)

Families with disabilities exploring the world together

Chasing the luxury of travel



Admission to U.S. National Parks is free with a disability Access Pass.

be perfectly mapped out for us so that we could focus on our family, our needs and enjoying the world together.

Every time I ask another family if they would be up for trying it, the response is along the lines of, "Absolutely - if it's free!"

The fact is, even if someone takes on all the work of planning for our exact needs, our resources are stretched thin. While time may be the hardest resource to come by, money is usually a close second. Many disability moms aren't able to work outside the home because of the heaps of appointments and medical routines taking place on a daily basis. Even if you're fortunate enough to maintain two incomes, therapies, specialists and home equipment take priority over vacation.

REDEFINING LUXURY

In situations like ours, travel itself is often seen as a luxury. I'll concur,

but it's also an achievable luxury. A getaway as a family is a priceless reset, a chance to connect and an opportunity to experience new things that will grow you as individuals and as a family. Travel may be the luxury you can't afford to miss.

REALIZING DREAMS ON A BUDGET

We began travelling with our family of five on a single, non-profit worker income. This wasn't irresponsible: we were very resourceful.

The first step is typically budgeting with purpose. People will tell you to explore ways to cut costs in various areas of your life, such as entertainment, dining out and Starbucks. Redirect the saved funds into a dedicated travel fund, creating a financial cushion that can be used to cover additional medical expenses during the trip.

This advice is well-intentioned, but when you're trying to find a way to cover a recurring \$8,000 therapy treatment for your child, you've probably already cut out any excess.



You can't make money out of nothing. Here's what we do instead.

TRAVEL FOR LESS

Instead of paying for hotels, we use HomeExchange. For a nominal annual membership fee, we can exchange homes as many times as we like. They have over 13,000 accessible homes available, and many of those are quite luxurious.

We've dabbled in credit card hacking - utilizing credit card sign on bonuses for travel rewards. This has completely covered our airfare on most trips for the past three years.

The National Park ACCESS Pass grants free admission to any National Park in the U.S. for people with permanent disabilities. It also gives discounts on lodges and camping. We look for free and discounted activities everywhere we go. San Diego, California is a great place to visit in October, when kids go free to hundreds of locations.

RE-PURPOSE MEDICAL TRIPS

Medical tourism is popular for a reason. Not only could it save you on medical care, while finding better treatment, it can also serve as a built-in vacation.

When we travel for treatment, we make a trip of it. We're often staying in free or discounted housing through the hospital, and there are several grants available to help with travel costs for medical needs. These trips are medically necessary for us, but that doesn't mean we can't make the most of it while we're travelling.

TRAVEL FOR FREE

As a family with disabilities, there are opportunities for completely free vacations.

Cherry Blossom Vacations gifts vacation home stays to families of children with a disability.

Make-A-Wish is often limited to children with terminal illnesses, but not always. The requirements vary by state, so it's worth looking into your local chapter to see if your disability qualifies you for a free trip.

Many other wish-granting agencies are open to families with life-altering disabilities, not just life-threatening. Sunshine Foundation is often a good option for families who don't qualify for Make-A-Wish. Each program will only allow you to participate once, but if there's something big your child wants to do - this could be a great opportunity!

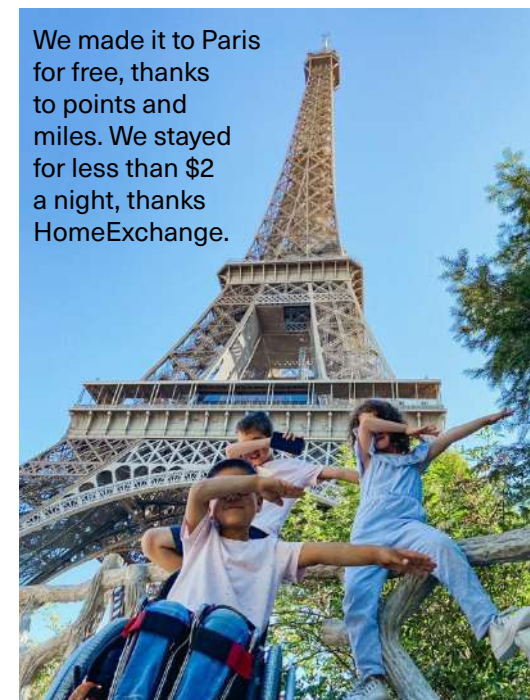
MAKE A PLAN AND GO

According to the Institute for Applied Positive Research, 97% of people say that having a trip planned makes them feel happier. It's time to get started! If true luxury is your style, check out my article for great wheelchair accessible luxury destinations for families. If travel itself is luxury enough, or you're lacking the financial foundation to plan a getaway, review the resources above and find something that works for your family.

Happy travels!

Travel may be the luxury you can't afford to miss.

Jennifer Allen





Enjoying the fireside in La Soa's accessible luxury chalets.



View from the balcony at Disney's Aulani Resort - by Cory Lee.



Stacey's son enjoying the best of Disney.

Luxurious accessible stays for families with disabilities

The best experiences are discovered by word of mouth, so we asked the people who know! Here were the top family luxury travel recommendations from people used to travelling with a wheelchair.

DISNEY'S AULANI RESORT, OAHU

I went on a trip to Hawaii in late 2022. We stayed at Disney's Aulani Resort in a wheelchair accessible ocean view room for one week. It's on Oahu and while on that island, we rented an accessible van from [Wheelers Van Rentals of Hawaii](#). We did a helicopter ride with [Blue Hawaiian Helicopters](#) (we also did another ride with them on Kauai the next week), enjoyed the spa at Aulani, attended the [Paradise Cove Luau](#), visited [Pearl Harbor](#), and more. For our second week in Hawaii, we did a cruise with [Norwegian Cruise Line](#) and went to Maui, the Big Island, and Kauai.

-Curb Free Cory Lee (Learn more about his accessible luxury trip to Oahu [here](#).)

SONESTA RESORT, HILTON HEAD

The walkways to the pools, beach, etc. were all paved and there was a ramp instead of steps to the beach. It was perfect for us to pull our daughter down in her wagon, and the beach wheelchair would've been great. There were also accessible restrooms near the beach access which was so nice because we didn't have to go all the way back up to the hotel room to cath.

I would say most of Hilton Head as a whole is pretty accessible! Coligny Plaza is very popular and is all paved. If you go out to Sea Pines (where Salty Dog Cafe is), it's pretty much all boardwalk and has ramps and

accessible parking. We also did a dolphin cruise that let us bring her wheelchair on board.

My daughter is 5 and a full-time wheelchair user, and we took her in her wheelchair everywhere!

-Lenze Ramage

LA SOA CHALETS, AUSTRIA

10/10 For luxury, with every detail designed for ultimate rest, relaxation, and enjoyment.

10/10 For family-friendly. Luxury, but laid back. There's a playground on site, a game room, pool, and plenty of kid-centered games and activities.

8/10 For accessibility. The chalets

are beautifully designed with full accessibility on the first floor. If your wheelchair user is staying in the master suite, this is perfect. The kids' rooms are upstairs. The pool was also difficult to manage and didn't have a chair lift. Rooms include tickets to the accessible gondola just down the mountain.

-Jenn Allen

WALT DISNEY WORLD DELUXE RESORTS, FLORIDA, U.S

Disney has a reputation for inclusion - and that doesn't change when you move up to luxury level. In addition to the accessibility of the parks, the convenience of DAS, and the wheelchair-friendly transportation, the deluxe resorts create an inclusive luxury experience.

As a family of five, including my eldest daughter, who has cerebral palsy, we have thoroughly loved our vacations at Walt Disney World Deluxe Resorts. All Disney property goes above and beyond with accessibility and inclusion, and that is ever-present at the resorts as well. Our favorite is Beach Club, where not only do they have a zero entry pool, but it is made into a faux beach with sand. It was perfect for allowing my daughter to sit and play at the water's edge and enjoy the sensory input of the sand. The rooms have a variety of accessible options and staff who are willing to accommodate any need. We truly appreciate having a roll-in shower and they deliver a shower chair upon request. Most of the deluxe resorts are in close proximity to the theme parks, which means less loading and unloading on transportation. Having multiple dining options, right in the same building, gives us plenty of choices. They're very careful and

accommodating of dietary needs, including sending a chef directly to the table for consultation. Walt Disney World is absolutely the best destination for the disabled traveler, and the deluxe resorts add luxury without detracting from accessibility.

-Bethany Hildebrandt and Stacey Lynn

HYATT ZIVA RESORT, CANCUN, MEXICO

Very accessible. My daughter's ages were 3-10 on those vacations. Full time chair user. As far as rooms go, we never had an issue. We found them to be great accommodations.

-Casey Meybohm Hall

RITZ CARLTON, ANYWHERE

In addition to their reputation for luxury and customer service, they have excellent accessible accommodations. They were super accommodating with having our son's medical supplies pre-shipped and holding them for us so we didn't have to deal with flying with them.

-Erin Moya

HOTEL BARDO, SAVANNAH, U.S.

My boyfriend and I travel with [Pack Up + Go](#) often. We stayed at [The Mansion on Forsythe](#) (now Hotel Bardo) in Savannah, GA and it was luxurious! Champagne and strawberries in our room at check-in, accessible pool, champagne hour in the lobby each night - such a fun trip! Savannah roads were rough with a powerchair, but the hotel and Forsythe Park were a delight! [Pack Up + Go](#) is great about accessibility details.

-Dawn Burns

Tier II luxury

These destinations are just below premium luxury, while still remaining

high above a standard getaway. With high-end accommodations, upscale dining experiences and personalized services, these destinations bring luxury within reach for middle class families.

BEACHES, TURKS AND CAICOS, NEGRIL, OR OCHO RIOS

We always enjoy the service, and they have great amenities. The best focus here is that they have a guaranteed accessible room category. Also, their general manager is making some serious strides to turn it into the most accessible resort in the Caribbean. They have two accessible beach cabanas, adaptive scuba diving, and accessible transportation.

-Kristy Durso

CRUISE LINES

While many luxury cruise lines don't cater to families (many won't even take children), [Holland America](#) and [Celebrity Cruise Lines](#) are both upscale cruise lines that welcome families and wheelchair users. If you do the higher end suites, these cruise lines are truly fabulous. The [Koningsdam](#) has installed pool lifts for all the pools, including the spa therapy pool. They are seriously working to become the most accessible cruise line.

-Kristy Durso

Better Together

Disability Parent Q & A

Q There is a general concern over the carelessness with which wheelchairs are treated by airlines and others transporting the chairs. How can we protect our wheelchairs and travel by plane?

A While there's no way to guarantee the safe passage of your wheelchair, there are precautions you can take.

First of all, remove anything that you can! This goes beyond accessories and cup holders. Seat cushions, clothing guards - if it can come off, it's better to take it with you on the plane than to risk something happening to it.

Second, if you have a power chair, practice taking it apart and putting it together. The airline may or may not ask you to take it apart on your own, but either way they're not likely to know how to put it back together when you land - that will be up to you. Bring the tools you need, and an extra bag for any chair parts that you want to keep on the plane.

One reader suggested purchasing a back up chair

for on-the-go. I was surprised by that seemingly impractical solution, considering what our pediatric manual chair costs, until I did a little research. As it turns out, there is a wide variety of styles of chairs— both manual and push chairs—available for purchase outside of insurance.

With just the serial number from your current chair, [SpinKids](#) can get you a custom chair that's just the right size. Chairs start in the low hundreds. ■

Use code
ACCESSIBLEJOURNEYS
for **10%** off your next [SpinKids](#)
purchase.

NEXT ISSUE:
What do you do about all of the equipment needed?

Do you have any expertise to share on next issue's question?

Please submit your input, or any questions of your own for future issues, to jennifer@wonderswithinreach.com





Lost and found: protecting your special needs child during travel

by Christine Staple-Ebanks



As a parent of four children, one of whom has cerebral palsy, I quickly realized the immense value of becoming actively involved in support groups and connecting with other parents who share similar experiences. Parenting a child with special needs presents unique challenges, and many of these challenges are not fully understood until we encounter them firsthand. Some of these experiences can be particularly distressing, especially when they involve my nonverbal child with cerebral palsy venturing out into the world.

Engaging with these support groups has pushed me to think proactively about potential scenarios and how to plan for them. While I acknowledge that it's impossible to predict every single situation my child may encounter, there are specific measures I can take to be better prepared.

For instance, during a recent discussion within one of my online communities for special needs families, a fellow parent posed a thought-provoking question: "If your special needs child were to become

separated from you while travelling, what crucial information would you want someone to have, aside from your contact details?" This question struck a chord with me. Because while my son, Nathan, typically has an adult companion when we go out, there have been instances where I found myself alone with him and needing to use a restroom quickly. He is a teenager, so taking him into the ladies' room is no longer viable, as he giggles when he sees the women going in and out of the stalls.

Building upon the importance of readily available crucial information, recent news stories have highlighted cases where nonverbal special needs children ended up on the wrong school bus or disembarked at the incorrect stop. I can feel the pain of these frantic parents as they pray and hope their child will return home safely.

Thankfully, all of these children did. However, I noticed that there was specific information that the children had on their person, which helped the police or kind citizens identify who to call.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PREPARED

Picture yourself on a family vacation, surrounded by the bustling crowds of an amusement park or airport. In a split second, you lose sight of your child with special needs, and panic takes hold. It becomes clear that having your contact information alone isn't sufficient for such a scenario. In moments like these, you realize the necessity of a well-thought-out plan. In response to this critical concern, I conducted thorough research and am now sharing essential information and actionable steps to ensure the safety of your special needs child while travelling.

1. TRAVEL BUDDY

If your child tends to wander, it's a good idea to travel with a trusted friend or family member who can offer additional support and help supervise them. Another option is using medical alert jewelry as a travel buddy, which is especially helpful for nonverbal or medically fragile children with special needs. These bracelets or necklaces provide crucial information if your child becomes lost during travel.

2. CHILD LOCATOR DEVICE

A child tracking device or GPS tracker for kids is specifically designed to help parents monitor their child's whereabouts in real-time. These devices utilize GPS, Bluetooth or Wi-Fi to provide precise location information. They often include geo-fencing capabilities, allowing parents to set boundaries and receive notifications when their child enters or exits designated areas. Furthermore, some devices feature SOS functions, two-way communication, and a range of wearable options, such as smartwatches or clip-ons, providing discreet and versatile choices to meet individual preferences and needs.

3. MEDICAL INFORMATION

In addition to child locator devices, there are several other ways to ensure your child's safety during travel by incorporating vital information on their person. These methods include using medical ID bracelets or necklaces, laminated ID cards or tags securely attached to clothing or backpacks, smartphone apps designed for child safety, discreet clothing labels with essential details, and safety whistles attached to clothing or bags. Moreover, you can also use

communication devices, emergency contact cards in wallets or purses, and regular practice sessions with your child on what to do if they get lost during travel. Emphasize the importance of staying in one place and finding a trusted adult or authority figure.

4. EMERGENCY PLAN

Have a clear emergency plan in place. Make sure your child knows who to approach for help if they get separated from you. Teach them to identify airport or airline staff, security personnel or law enforcement officers.

5. FAMILIARIZE YOUR CHILD

Before the trip, use visual aids or social stories to familiarize your child with airport and flight procedures and amusement park or mall visits, helping them understand what to expect.

6. TRAVEL DURING OFF-PEAK TIMES

Consider travelling during off-peak times when airports and flights are less crowded. This can reduce stress for both you and your child.

7. CREATING A LOST CHILD KIT

Create a lost child kit with a printed document containing your child's vital details, including emergency contacts beyond your own, and make multiple copies to distribute across bags and family members. Utilize smartphone features to set up emergency contacts and make medical information accessible when the device is locked, providing added security.

8. STAY CALM

If your child does become separated from you, it's crucial

to maintain as much composure as possible. Promptly notify the appropriate personnel, such as the police or airport/airline staff, and ensure you provide them with the necessary information to facilitate assistance.

In conclusion, travelling with a special needs child presents unique challenges and responsibilities. Beyond the obvious contact information, parents must prepare by considering vital medical details, communication preferences, and behavioural triggers. Creating a lost child kit with this information can be a lifesaver during unforeseen circumstances. Additionally, teaching your child safety skills and using identification items, such as medical ID bracelets or discreet tags, can further enhance their safety. Remember, staying calm, seeking help from authorities, and utilizing the prepared information are essential steps to ensure your child's well-being during travel adventures.

I would be delighted to provide further information and support on this topic or any other related to ensuring safe and enriching travels for children with special needs. Feel free to reach out to me at christinese@raisingspecialneeds.us or connect with me on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) @Christine Staple Ebanks. I'd love to hear from you.

Adaptive Adventures

Thrilling adventures for all abilities



Tanelle in the Kootenays, BC.

Tanelle Bolt thrives in the Great Outdoors

Growing up, Tanelle was the quintessential “outdoors” kid. Her love for nature and adventure knew no bounds. From fishing by serene lakes to conquering snow-capped mountains, her outdoor adventures were not hindered by constraints. However, life’s unpredictability threw her a curveball in the form of a recreation accident, reshaping the course of her life with a spinal cord injury. It might have been assumed

that becoming a wheelchair user would diminish her enthusiasm for outdoor activities, but that assumption proved to be untrue. “The only interruption was the hospital. Within 3 days after the injury, I was back in the gym,” she said. “I was also a fitness competitor prior to my injury, in between two body building shows so my brain was reminding me that I can’t just sit here and do nothing. I left the hospital at

the end of October and by Christmas time I was on the ski hill.”

Tanelle soon recognized that there was little support available for those who required help to enjoy recreational activities outdoors. She said, “there wasn’t any program or opportunity for me to rent or borrow adaptive equipment so I can go with my friends to the places I had become familiar with when I was

able-bodied.” Determined to avoid a sedentary lifestyle and realizing that other active wheelchair users were faced with the same predicament, she founded RAD Recreation Adapted Society (RAD Society) whose mission is to create opportunities and remove barriers for individuals living with mobility issues to maintain healthy, active, independent lifestyles through access to the outdoors regardless of financial circumstance. From June 2024, RAD’s GearBox initiative and community partnerships will make that happen.



The RAD GearBox will be found in various locations throughout BC with each location having different devices depending on the season. It will contain different adaptive outdoor recreation equipment for rent, from hand cycles, all-terrain wheelchairs, beach wheelchairs, portable access mats, cross country ski, sledges for hockey and more . . . Tanelle declared, “If it’s a tool that allows somebody with



mobility challenges to get outside, it can be in that GearBox.” The first gear box will be in Langford, BC, Canada and it will be open part-time. The Langford prototype will primarily contain adaptive bikes as well as some all-terrain wheelchairs, adaptive kayaks, wave skis and beach wheelchairs. If you’re a wheelchair user, or a person with lower limb mobility and/or balance issues and you’re planning a vacation to Langford, BC, email RAD. They may have the equipment you need for your outdoor adventures.

In addition to Tanelle’s quest to make outdoor recreation accessible to all, as an interior designer, she is also an advocate for universal design. Her interior design career started before her injury. “After I hurt myself, I realized that everything I’ve ever designed in my life contained barriers,” she confessed, “and I was mortified. But I was not taught universal design, no one in my family had

a disability, so I designed stairs in houses and cabinets up to the ceiling.” Now that she has entered the realm of barrier free design, her eyes are opened to the inadvertent barriers created by traditional design practices. This awakening propelled her into a passionate advocacy for creating inclusive spaces that cater to everyone, regardless of their abilities. Through her consulting company she advises municipalities in British Columbia, international clients, makes presentations to architectural firms about accessibility and designs accessible spaces . . . “from retrofits to new builds.”

She has come to appreciate the people who make an effort to create accessible spaces. Be it grandiose, with the best and most modern accessible amenities, or a small, retrofitted space, what matters to Tanelle is accessibility and when she vacations, this is what a luxury means to her. She



fondly recalls a visit to Costa Rica. She stayed in the village of Playa Hermosa at the modest Hotel Mangabay which was purpose-built for accessibility 20 years ago. "It was a lovely experience," she reminisced. "There was no restaurant on site but a continental breakfast, cooked by the family of the hotel owner, was provided every morning. I was able to move around quite easily and even when I needed a cab, it would be wheelchair accessible." Tanelle was quite pleased to see that this small community had curb cuts and ramps to access restaurants. With the beach in close proximity, it was an intimate, luxurious vacation that brings back fond memories.

During her travels, serendipitously, adaptive activities seek her out. "In California, I went to the beach and I met an adaptive surfer who took me out surfing. I didn't have to go looking for the adaptive surf club." California is one of the places she really liked. "It is pretty accessible and people don't stare at you when you roll by nor do they ask inappropriate questions," she shared.

She also appreciates the proactive approach of establishments there, "If I'm booking a hotel and I say I'm in a wheelchair and need the accessible room, they say hang on, we're going to send you to the ADA line." Similarly, a trip to Hawaii which involved adaptive surfing and hand cycling was very impressive. "They do a good job, they're mindful," she mentioned. She used her friend's equipment in Hawaii and made use of Adaptive Maui's as well, but on road trips, she carries her adaptive equipment with her, eliminating the need to constantly search for suitable gear or facilities. This preparedness extends to her trips to places like Yukon and Northwest Territories, where having her adaptive equipment enhances her overall experience in that region.

Biking and paddling are two of her favourite activities. "Biking is easy and is the most independently accessible activity that I do. I can migrate from my garage and also easily get the bike in and out of the back of my vehicle. When it comes out of the vehicle, I can just get on it

and go. With my board for paddling, it's a bit more difficult. I have to get it out of the back of the vehicle and then figure out how to get it on my lap and to the water's edge." However, she defies limitations and successfully gets it done.

Tanelle encourages people with disabilities to get out and explore and if you're visiting Langford, BC, the RAD Society has the adaptive equipment you'll need to enjoy outdoor activities without the burden of ownership costs. You may have your own, but there is no need to bring every individual piece of sporting equipment with you when you travel. Plan to hit the trails, go golfing and even comfortably visit the beach or lake. Individuals with disabilities deserve to experience the benefits of outdoor recreation and it's great to have Tanelle, the outdoor enthusiast and the RAD Society in your network!

Follow their work on Instagram [@radrecreationadaptedsociety](#) and visit their website, [radsociety.ca](#) ■



What Does it Mean to Be a Destination A11y?



Being an A11y means:

- Your destination is welcoming to visitors with disabilities
- Your destination cares about being inclusive
- Your destination is working to improve your accessibility
- Your destination sees the future of travel
- Your destination is actively engaging with stakeholders to raise awareness about the needs of the disability community

Thank you to the following destinations who have committed to accelerating accessibility:



THE DESTINATION A11Y CLUB IS A PROJECT OF
TRAVELABILITY
 FOUNDATION

Rahul Ramugade

Breaking boundaries and advocating for inclusivity through sport



In the bustling streets of Mumbai, India, amidst the cacophony of daily life, there exists a group of individuals who inspire spectators with their skill and passion for the country's national sport. Among them is Rahul, a dynamic force in the world of cricket—wheelchair cricket. Born with polio, Rahul's life took a remarkable turn when he discovered wheelchair cricket, a sport that became for him a platform for advocacy.

Growing up in Mumbai, cricket was more than just a sport. It is a way of life and for many years, Rahul harbored dreams of representing his country on the cricket field. Little did he know that his aspirations would manifest in the form of wheelchair cricket. "I watched cricket on TV and wished I was able to play for my country," Rahul reminisced. "But in 2016 I discovered the existence of wheelchair cricket in India."

Since then, Rahul has not looked back. From once playing as a child with makeshift equipment in his neighborhood, to now representing the Indian national team, his dream has become a reality. However,

Rahul's journey is fraught with challenges. Despite the growing popularity of wheelchair cricket in India, the sport still struggles for recognition and support. "In India, there's a lack of understanding and support for wheelchair cricket," Rahul lamented. "While the general public appreciates our efforts, there's minimal financial support and the sports community still remain largely unaware of our existence."

Despite these challenges, Rahul persists, fueled by the camaraderie among players and the burgeoning support of grassroots organizations and some corporate sponsors. "Our dream is to see wheelchair cricket flourish in India," Rahul declared. "We want to professionalize the sport, secure funding for players, and pave the way for a brighter future."

In a nation where cricket is revered as a religion, it is disheartening that wheelchair cricket struggles to gain the same recognition and support given to the able-bodied version of the sport. The lack of understanding and inclusivity within

the sport community hinders the growth of wheelchair cricket. Rahul claims that the general perception equates disability with helplessness, perpetuating misconceptions about the capability of individuals with disabilities to play the sport effectively.

One of the fundamental challenges faced by the wheelchair cricket team and other wheelchair users in India is accessibility of transportation. While railway stations have made strides in becoming accessible, boarding trains remains a daunting task. When travelling to games which takes place throughout the country, individuals often rely on assistance to navigate the complex process of entering trains and finding suitable seating arrangements. Moreover, the lack of accessible washrooms poses a significant hurdle, forcing travellers to either control their bodily functions or resort to makeshift solutions.

The issue extends beyond trains to other modes of transportation, including air travel. While some airlines offer support and

accommodations for wheelchair users, the process can still be time-consuming and arduous. Despite efforts to ensure a smooth journey, travellers often find themselves waiting for assistance, highlighting the need for improved accessibility across all travel sectors.

Accommodation presents another challenge for wheelchair users, with many hotels lacking adequate accessibility features. While some establishments offer accessible rooms, they often come at a premium, adding to the financial burden of travel. Additionally, even when accessible rooms are available, they may not meet the diverse needs of wheelchair users, requiring them to adapt and make do with limited facilities.

Notwithstanding these challenges, wheelchair cricket travellers exhibit resilience and resourcefulness in navigating the travel landscape. Through meticulous planning and coordination, they attempt to make their journeys as smooth as possible, from arranging portable ramps to advocating for accessibility improvement. The wheelchair cricket team who inevitably must travel frequently to games, are not only focused on their personal journeys within the country but also on promoting inclusivity and accessibility within their sport. With ambitions to expand wheelchair cricket internationally, they seek to engage with communities worldwide. By raising awareness and advocating for support, they hope to create opportunities for wheelchair cricket to thrive on a global scale.

Rahul is on a quest: "I'm involved in advocacy work to raise awareness and improve accessibility in India. I play cricket but I also work part-time," He revealed. "My place of employment makes portable ramps and that allows me to encourage more spaces to become wheelchair-friendly." ■



In a nation where cricket is revered as a religion, it is disheartening that wheelchair cricket struggles to gain the same recognition and support given to the able-bodied version of the sport.

Journeys with Autism

Navigating the world with autism



Ayanna Davis is phenomenally autistic



I'm Autistic and I'm Phenomenal is a story that displays the challenges, but more importantly, the joys of autism through the eyes of a little autistic black girl. Readers will experience her journey as she navigates both the beauty of her unique perspective and her difficulties while shedding light on the power of acceptance and embracing differences.

Meet the author, Ayanna Davis, "I'm hoping readers will gain a better understanding of autism and dispense with the typical stereotypes society feeds them. Like everything in life, it has a good and bad side."

Ayanna wears many hats:

“ ARTIST - As an artist I create characters that represent positive images of black and brown characters. I support inclusion and diversity and create characters with vitiligo, albinism, persons in wheelchairs and characters with limb differences. Every child deserves to see positive images of themselves and others in their community.

FASHION DESIGNER - My fashion is an extension of my art. My handmade and hand painted pieces are full of fun, vibrant colours, mixed with images of my original

characters you will see in my books and original art pieces. I also make one of kind pieces by request to resemble the child it is being made for. The theme is the same as my art, which is the belief that every child has the right to see positive images of themselves.

ILLUSTRATOR - To date, I have illustrated 29 books. Most can found on my [Amazon author page](#). I have also illustrated four colouring books, all meant to inspire and uplift.

AUTHOR - as an author, my goal is to include as many communities as possible. One of my latest books teaches the alphabet in sign language and another through natural hair illustrations.

AUTISM ADVOCATE - All of my work is done with the aim of generating more autism acceptance. I believe enough attention is placed on awareness that is why on my journey I

concentrate on acceptance and I do that through my art and also by using my voice to speak and attempt to educate people about our neurodivergent minds. I participate in panel discussions and summits—anything I can do to get my message out while using my voice in a positive way. I see things that need to be changed and I'm currently working behind the scenes to get some of those changes implemented.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS
A common misconception I encounter from my own personal experience is that black girls can't be autistic. I am a late diagnosed autistic and when I started to share my diagnosis with people they all said they didn't know black girls or women could be autistic. I now address this misconception by sharing my story and experience.

TRAVEL
With my sensitivities and over-

stimulation I really do not like going to new places, but when I do, it's definitely a challenge. I try to visit sensory-friendly places but there aren't many. Even places that say they are usually aren't, so I always have noise cancelling headphones with me. I also wear sunglasses because I'm sensitive to light, even indoors sometimes. One of my care bears also travels with me—it's like a security item. For me, a vacation never feels like a vacation. It feels like a chore.

ROUTINE IS IMPORTANT

I thrive on routine. It is my safe space and comfort zone so being in an unfamiliar place—a hotel or even visiting family, that throws me off my routine which makes it challenging for me to focus and enjoy my day/s.

SELF CARE

I do guided meditation with videos on YouTube so if I can focus for 5-15 minutes I will try a guided meditation to ground myself and stay mindful. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

A TOLERABLE EXPERIENCE

I find being in a book store to be a very relaxing and tolerable experience. I believe even if an experience might be challenging, it's always a good idea to try it especially if it is at least tolerable.

You never know what new experiences may bring you joy.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Listen to us, open your hearts, know that we have feelings and while our brains were not wired to thrive in this world, we are here and trying our best to navigate it. With kindness and understanding, just leave a little space for us.

While we are different, we do still have a lot in common. Take the time and get to know people with autism. Never judge people by their diagnoses. Get to know the person then judge their character!

Read Ayanna's story [here](#).

Visit her [Linktree](#) to learn more about her and her work.

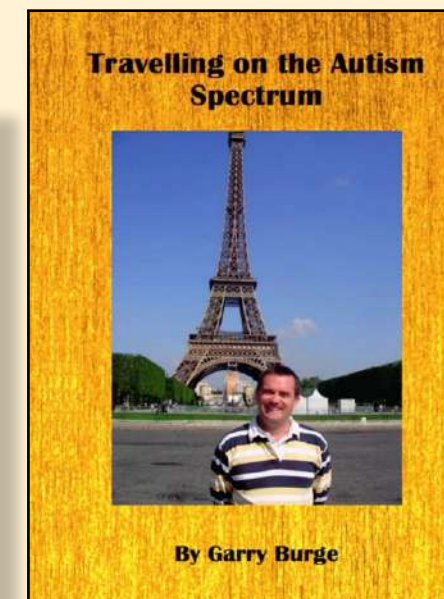
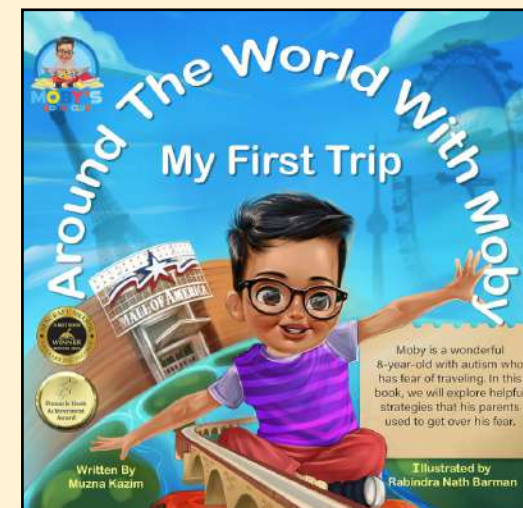
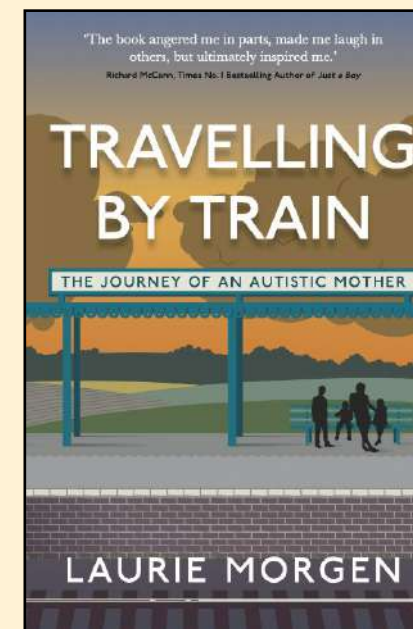
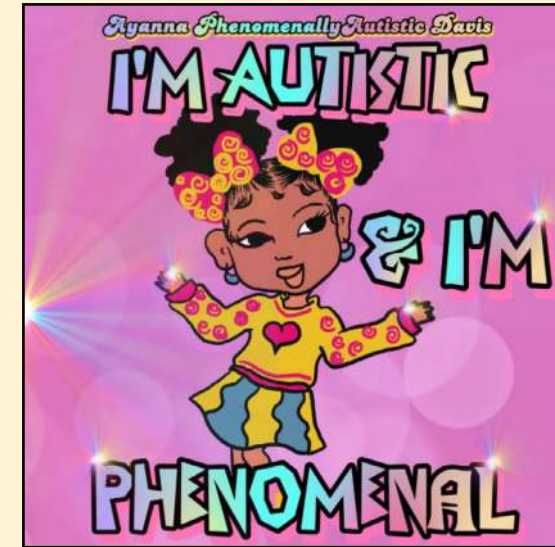


“As a person with autism, to me, a luxury vacation is at any destination where I feel comfortable and I'm in the company of those I love. This, simply, is luxury!”

Ayanna Davis



RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON AUTISM



On the Move with Invisible Disabilities

Stories of travelling with invisible disabilities



Lauren travels fearlessly despite her rare disease

MEET LAUREN PIRES

“When I was born, I didn’t cry and couldn’t move my limbs. I spent my first two months of life in intensive care, at one point went into cardiac arrest and doctors didn’t think I was going to live. When I was 10 days old, I had my first muscle biopsy. I have a three-inch scar on my leg from it which grew with me. For many years, I was very self-conscious about it, because to me it was a telltale sign of my disability, so I didn’t even wear shorts in public until my late 20’s. I had another biopsy at 12 and was misdiagnosed. They told me categories of what my condition could be, which ended up being wrong. With no diagnosis, I had nothing to research to learn more about my body or find community or support groups. My accurate diagnosis of central core disease didn’t come until I was about 20 years old.

Central core disease (CCD) is a rare neuromuscular disorder characterized by missing mitochondria in muscle cells, making it difficult for the affected individual to convert food into energy and strength. Primarily manifesting as muscle weakness, CCD typically remains

undiagnosed until later in life due to its rarity. CCD affects everyone differently, but for me, when I eventually did a strength test in my mid-20s, it was revealed that I have about 33% of the strength of an average person, leading to challenges in physical activities and daily functioning.

In school, I had trouble with physical activities that seemed normal and average to others. I was exempt from gym class in high school because I wasn’t physically able to participate. Sadly, I had no diagnosis for it then, and so could not explain it to people, and neither could my family—no one knew why my muscles were weaker. The lack of a diagnosis was a significant challenge during my childhood which was confusing and frustrating, but I never really liked to acknowledge those feelings. I’ve always looked for the good in things, finding optimism and positivity as a survival mechanism. Focusing on things that made me happy or kept me going has been crucial, despite the many challenges and frustrations.

LAUREN’S MOTIVATION TO OPENLY DISCUSS HER CCD

I entered an inspirational speaking competition called [Speaker](#)

[Slam](#) where I encountered other speakers sharing their life stories, and a few sharing their experiences with disabilities. This inspired me to speak out about my own journey with CCD. Witnessing their courage, I was really touched and realized the value of representation for individuals with disabilities. I felt very liberated in September 2022 after I came out about my disability and how it affected my life publicly for the first time in a speech. Lots of support and encouragement followed. I don’t think I realized how much energy I was putting into hiding it, and I did that because I was worried people would see me differently. It didn’t occur to me at the time that there were other people who would relate and feel the same. Now I really love encouraging people to share their stories.

HOW CCD AFFECTS HER DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

It makes everyday tasks more challenging, requiring careful planning and time management. I often need to prioritize activities and allocate time for rest due to fatigue and muscle weakness. For example, I generally can’t plan to do groceries, vacuum and cook two meals in the same day, because that’s just too much. While I can still engage in various



Horeshoe Bend, Arizona

activities, overexertion can lead to discomfort and increased fatigue.

CCD AND FEARLESS TRAVEL

Plan, plan, plan. This is the secret to fearless travel!

While CCD doesn't necessitate specific accommodations, careful planning is essential to managing fatigue and discomfort during travel. I never really travel solo (unless I'm meeting people in the destination) because it's difficult to lift and carry suitcases, and I typically plan activities with consideration for my pace and energy levels. Communicating with my travel companions helps, in case plans may have to be adjusted to accommodate my needs, like taking a cab or Uber instead of a long walk somewhere.

I love to travel, and cruises are one of my favourite vacations because you can adjust the pace to what you want. But the unexpected sometimes happens, as it did on a recent Caribbean cruise with friends, when I had to speed-walk back to the ship after an offshore trip resulted in us having only five minutes to get back to the ship

before it left port. Lack of planning and unavoidable delay from a restaurant and taxi ride back was the cause, but generally I would meticulously plan to avoid these circumstances as my legs and back were pretty sore after.

I lived briefly in Switzerland with my family and while there, we visited England, Italy and Paris. In the U.S., I've visited Antelope Canyon in Arizona, Zion National Park in Utah, both of which are beautiful. On that same trip, I visited Las Vegas and loved it.

MANAGING FATIGUE OR DISCOMFORT DURING LONG JOURNEYS

I pace myself, communicate my needs to travel companions and prioritize rest when necessary. While I strive to participate in activities, I'm mindful of my limitations and adjust plans accordingly to ensure a balance between enjoyment and self-care. Fatigue during travel varies depending on the activities planned. For leisurely trips with minimal physical exertion, fatigue may be minimal. However, more strenuous activities or

extensive sightseeing can result in increased fatigue, requiring careful management and self-awareness.

Usually, I'll get muscle pain or body pain in my shoulders, lower back and legs. I always make sure to have pain relief medicine with me when I travel.

TRAVEL TIPS FOR THOSE LIVING WITH CCD

Pack comfortable shoes. I'm generally a flats kind of girl, but I know they're not that unsupportive. Recently I've been wearing more stylish running shoes (I have some sparkly ones!) so that I can plan to do more on my feet if we're walking around.

Time management. You don't need to schedule every single thing you'll be doing, but you should have an idea of when the busy periods are and when there would be time for you to rest a little bit more, like sightseeing days vs lounge-y days.

Plan low impact activities. Exploring different coffee shops or dessert places, checking out different shopping areas, or having

a beach day are all activities that still allow you to see different places, but can be more self-paced or relaxed than some others. Catching a theatre, musical or cabaret show is great too - you're entertained but sitting the whole time!

THE BENEFITS OF TRAVEL

I love trying different or interesting food when I'm travelling, looking up reviews of places or finding articles of recommendations or what's known in the area. I also love seeing new things, especially in nature like national parks or landmarks. And it's fun to have new and exciting memories with whoever you're travelling with.

MY DEFINITION OF A LUXURY VACATION

To me, a luxury vacation includes not having to cook or worry about food, having a reason to dress up, and being able to go at my own pace. I like cruises for those reasons, and all-inclusive resorts are good for that too. I'm also happy just staying in a nice hotel and exploring restaurants or cafes in the area. And anywhere with beautiful scenery is always a plus.

MESSAGE FOR THOSE OUT THERE FACING SIMILAR CHALLENGES

The main thing I've learned is that strength comes in many forms. My muscles may be weaker, but living with that has made my determination and resilience stronger. There are lots of people who are ashamed of something in their life that they can't control, but if they're

brave enough to openly share their story, they are certain to find support and acceptance from people who relate. I hope that from sharing my story, people can see that it's possible for them to share their story too, whether it's disability-related or not—something I've only realized and put the pieces together on in the last couple of years as I've done more speaking engagements.

Lauren lives just outside of Toronto, Canada.

Her website: laurenpires.ca

Watch her winning Speaker Slam speech [here](#).

Her story has been featured on prominent news channels such as [CityNews Toronto](#), [OMNI News](#) & [Global News](#)

Notably, Lauren's achievements include finishing second in North America's [Largest Inspirational Speaking Competition Finals](#) to take home the title of [Inspirational Speaker of the Year](#) and being the first Canadian recipient of the ["But You LOOK Good" Inspiration Award](#) from the [Invisible Disabilities Association](#).

“There are lots of people who are ashamed of something in their life that they can't control, but if they're brave enough to openly share their story, they are certain to find support and acceptance from people who relate.

Lauren Pires



Chilkoot Trail British Columbia

Abby's health challenges can't ground her wanderlust spirit!

@colourblindzebra



“ I'm Abby, a self-taught digital artist, graphic designer, bookworm and cat mum to two fluffy babies. I love being creative. I am autistic and have multiple chronic illnesses including postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, mast cell activation syndrome and myalgic encephalomyelitis. My illnesses mean that I mainly use an electric wheelchair when out of the house and for smaller trips (like going into a restaurant or coffee shop), I use my rainbow, zebra striped walking stick.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE NAME @COLOURBLIND ZEBRA?

I have a mild form of colour blindness which means I struggle to see the differences between shades of colour—this is where

the 'colourblind' part of the name comes from. Zebras are the mascot for rare diseases and often misdiagnosed/not widely known illnesses. This comes from the saying doctors are taught in medical school: "When you hear hoof beats, think horses, not zebras." The saying teaches doctors to think about the most likely diagnosis or cause of a patient's symptoms, but it misses the fact that zebras (rare and misunderstood illnesses) exist!

HOW DOES YOUR DISABILITY IMPACT YOUR DAILY ROUTINE AND ACTIVITIES?

My disabilities impact my daily life a lot from needing to take a plethora of medication throughout the day to keep me somewhat upright, to struggling with everyday activities like getting out of bed, and dealing with chronic pain and frequent joint subluxations. If I were to list all of my symptoms, this would quickly become a seriously long and tedious book series (if you're someone who has multiple chronic illnesses, you'll know what I mean).

Living with these symptoms means that I work for myself, which allows me to work around my health and make sure that I'm able to take time to rest when I need to (and also

clear space for the never-ending cycle of hospital appointments).

HOW DOES YOUR INVISIBLE DISABILITY IMPACT YOUR ABILITY TO TRAVEL, IF AT ALL?

My disabilities mean that I haven't been able to travel abroad since I became ill. Not only would going on a plane be exhausting, but travel insurance would be astronomical. Travelling within the country means that we can still see beautiful places and pace travel as much as I need.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE WHILE TRAVELLING?

The biggest challenge I face is the inaccessibility of places I visit when on holiday, like lifts being out of order, shops being too crowded with shelves and restaurants not providing allergen information or having allergy trained staff. We research everywhere we want to visit before we go to make sure they're accessible and for restaurants, that there will be something I can eat.

HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY PREPARE FOR A JOURNEY?

Trying to rest as much as possible beforehand and trying to avoid anyone who might have a virus or bug; although I do this already on an everyday-basis, it is even more

important before a trip away as I can be very unwell if I catch something.

Another way I prepare is by packing my suitcase a couple of days before and taking my time to do so. Brain fog and executive dysfunction mean that I can easily forget things that I will need on my trip, so ensuring I have a bit of "aha! I almost forgot to put that thing in my bag" time is helpful. It also allows me to pace a bit more and conserve my energy.

WHAT MODE OF TRANSPORTATION IS MOST COMFORTABLE FOR YOU DURING YOUR TRAVELS?

I always prefer travelling by car, driven by a family member, as I can bring along all of the items I need to

stay as comfortable as I can. It also means that we can stop off as many times as needed to have snacks, toilet breaks and the ability to move my stiff joints after they've been still for a long time.

Unfortunately all forms of travel cause my fatigue and joint pain to flare up, especially my hips, but I find that the car gives me a lot more freedom to stop when I need to stop and take breaks when I need them too.

DO YOU REQUIRE ANY SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OR ACCOMMODATIONS WHILE TRAVELLING?

I usually have my carer with me when I travel, which means they're

able to advocate for me when I'm feeling unwell. I've travelled by train once alone previously and I found this to be a smooth and accommodating experience. The train station staff made sure I got on the train with a ramp and directed me to the wheelchair space. They also contacted the station on the other end of my trip to ensure they'd be ready to help me off of the train.

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH STIGMA OR MISUNDERSTANDINGS WHILE TRAVELLING?

Because I don't travel outside of the UK, I cope mostly in the same way I would in non-holiday, non-travelling life. If I have the energy, I will try to educate anyone who shows



a genuine misunderstanding. However sometimes I don't want to or can't explain, which can be frustrating and upsetting. In those moments, I take time to decompress and talk about it with my carer who understands how this can impact me.

WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE TO MAKE TRAVELLING MORE MANAGEABLE?

I make sure to have days where I have time to rest in the hotel room or around the hotel. It's not possible for me to go out everyday all day due to my symptoms, so having rest days is important. It helps if the hotel is pretty and has some places to explore (if I'm feeling up to it), but I always make sure to pack some hobbies like a book or my crochet. Wi-Fi is also non-negotiable!

ANY FAVOURITE TRAVEL MEMORIES?

My most recent holiday was to the North East of England where I stayed in a 600 year-old castle. The room was in the magical courtyard area, with trees wrapped in fairy lights. I had the most relaxing and peaceful time there, spending many hours reading my book in front of the fire in the library bar area. When writing this, it sounds like a fairytale and that's exactly how it felt! I was so thankful to be able to experience the castle and to be able to stay in an accessible room. Not many castles have accessible rooms available, as you can imagine, so it was a very welcomed surprise. Read about their accessibility [here](#).

IS THERE ONE PLACE YOU'VE VISITED THAT YOU CAN HIGHLY RECOMMEND?

I visited Manchester for my 21st birthday and it was such a joyful experience. Not only is the city relatively flat, but there are lots of restaurants that accommodate allergies and intolerances. If you're a wheelchair user and/or someone with allergies and intolerances, I'd highly recommend Manchester and particularly Purezza for the most incredible pizza and allergy-aware staff.

SOCIETAL UPGRADES . . .

Travel assistance should be much easier to obtain! In an ideal world, we'd be able to get onto transport as easily as non-disabled people, but unfortunately we have to rely on others to be able to travel. All assistance for travelling has its problems—from troubles with booking, unclear information, stressful scheduling and turning up to find that your accommodations haven't been met. These processes are inaccessible and mean that a lot of disabled people can't travel. For me, I have to rely on my carer for lots of parts of this process as without her, I would struggle with arranging everything on my own. ■



Visit Abby on her social media pages and website:



“The biggest challenge I face is inaccessibility of the places I visit when on holiday.

Abby



Secure your spot on this trip!
**Galapagos
 &
 Amazon of Ecuador**

Use code
AJ2024
 and enjoy a \$250 discount

2024 TOUR DATES
APRIL 14th-25th
JULY 7th - 18th

Book Now

latinamericaforall.com



Ashley Harrell adeptly navigates travel and wellness with rheumatoid arthritis

Diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) at just twelve years old, Ashley Harrell's health condition led her to discover new pathways to stay connected with her love of horses. As a former competitive rider turned equine-assisted healing practitioner, the former Delaware native now calls the British Virgin Islands home, working at the all-inclusive [Aerial BVI Resort](#), a sanctuary for those seeking solace through the therapeutic power of equines, serenity and well-being.

For Ashley, the Aerial BVI Resort is a place where her experiences with RA and love for horses merge to foster healing. Despite its limited accessibility, with only four of its thirteen rooms fully accessible, the resort's commitment to inclusivity shines through. Staff go above and beyond to accommodate guests with mobility challenges, ensuring everyone can experience the tranquility and beauty of the resort. The resort's wellness ethos extends beyond equine healing. With offerings like red light therapy, cold water plunges and massage services, it is a luxurious haven for holistic well-being. This commitment to wellness resonates deeply with Ashley.

Equine-assisted healing is at the heart of her work at the resort, where horses are more than just animals; they are partners in the healing process. This is beneficial for a wide range of individuals including trauma survivors, veterans, first responders and those experiencing mental or emotional challenges. Ashley's approach, rooted in her personal journey with RA and



deep connection with horses, brings a unique empathy and understanding to her sessions, making them profoundly impactful.

Travel also plays a significant role in Ashley's life, offering her a window to the world's wonders and the challenge of navigating them with RA. Accessibility is a key theme in her travel narrative. Destinations are chosen for their accessibility and the feasibility of activities that do not exacerbate her condition. She speaks candidly about the meticulous planning required to ensure she can still indulge her love for exploration and nature without compromising her health—from assessing the accessibility of natural wonders in Iceland to ensuring rest days are woven into her itineraries.

"I've always loved to travel," Ashley said, "and my husband and I have now decided to do at least two trips per year. I love nature, hiking and walking, but I have to keep in mind that I'll have to deal with chronic pain and fatigue so I usually build in a rest day or something-that-is-easier day. It takes my body a little bit longer to recharge than my husband's but he is very understanding."

Ashley admits that living in the Caribbean has resulted in less frequent chronic pain. When it rains, she's a little sore, but "I'm not dealing with big temperature fluctuations or cold days, so being in a warm tropical climate has absolutely helped me." This does

not mean that she stays away from cold temperatures altogether. She visited Iceland recently and shared the trip on her blog, [Rheum2Roam](#). See her [5 Day Accessible Iceland Itinerary](#). She advises that one should be in tune with their body's needs and know that sometimes





you may want to try something and that's okay, as long as you're aware that you'll need to rest fully the next day.

"I had to learn to listen to my body. Surrounding myself with a great support structure helped. Friends who understand that I might cancel the last minute, a very wonderful husband who has learned about me dealing with chronic pain and fatigue. . . Now I'm in a place where I have a really beautiful purpose. I still get to be around horses although I'm not usually on them anymore, but working with them to help other people heal has been incredibly fulfilling."

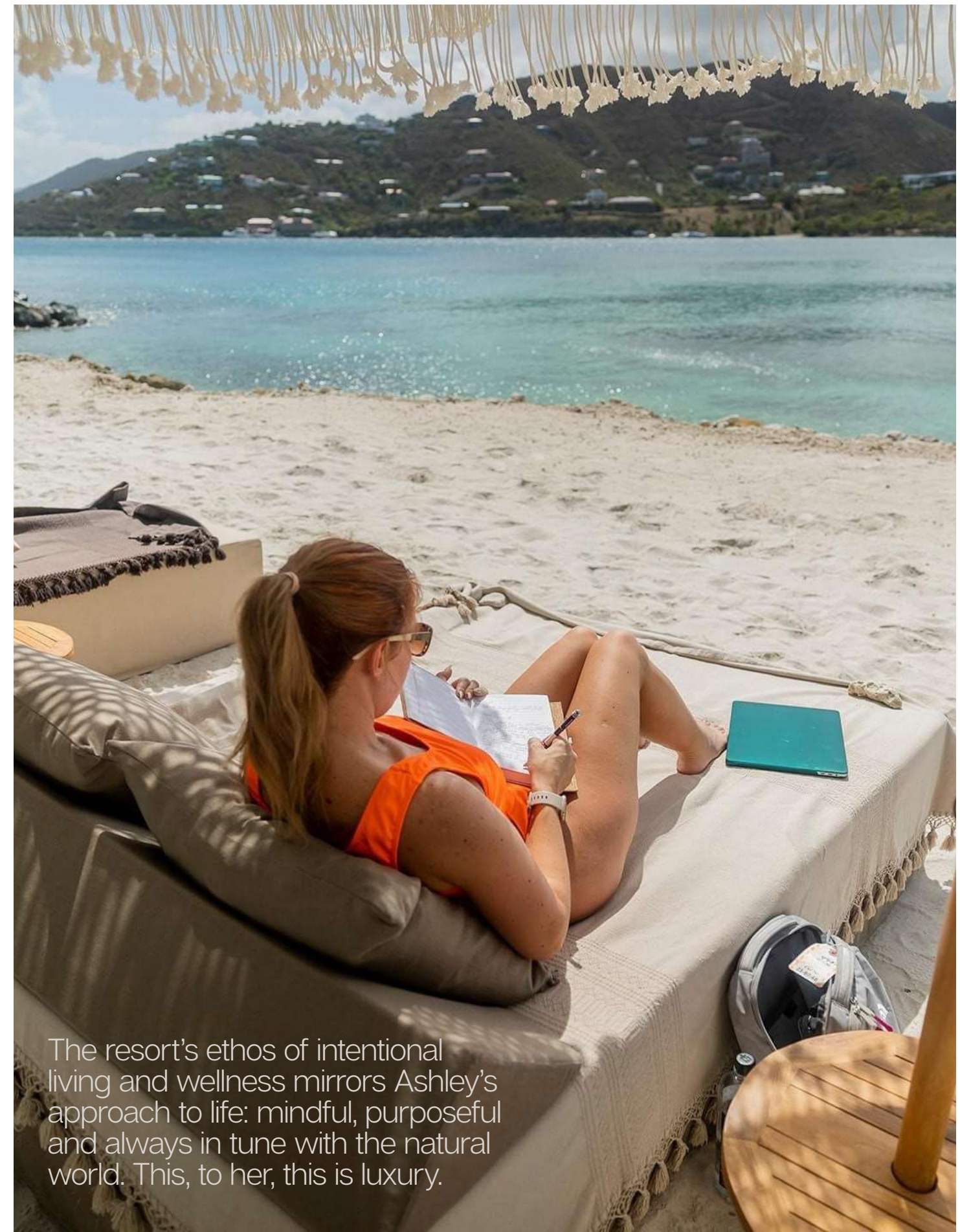
The resort's ethos of intentional living and wellness mirrors Ashley's approach to life: mindful, purposeful and always in tune with the natural world. This, to her, this is luxury. Intentionally created spaces, upscale, coastal cottage-style living, being kissed

daily by the warm Caribbean sunshine and caressed by its soothing cool breeze—this is luxury and this is paradise!

"When I think of luxury, of course, The Aerial comes first to mind. We are a beautiful high-end wellness resort, but it also feels very homey, comfortable and intentional. I love intentionally created spaces that reflect the culture they're in and here it's about wellness."

Ashley believes that with keen self-awareness and strategic planning, the world is still very much open to exploration, regardless of physical limitations.

Learn more at her blog, [Rheum2Roam](#) or at the [Aerial BVI resort](#).



The resort's ethos of intentional living and wellness mirrors Ashley's approach to life: mindful, purposeful and always in tune with the natural world. This, to her, this is luxury.

Photo credits: Ashley Harrell and The Aerial

Features

Captivating stories, intriguing profiles and thought-provoking articles



My accessible travel experiences with Wheel the World

By Bert Burns

I've required accessible travel for 42 years, living as a C6 quadriplegic. Initially, I travelled the world for wheelchair racing. Now, I travel leisurely with my wife, Joy, of 26 years. As my disability changes, my need for specific accessible accommodations and transportation increases. Following a 2022 trip to Chile with [Curb Free with Cory Lee](#), Joy and I discovered [Wheel the](#)

[World](#) (WTW). As a result, our travel life is now drastically different - in the most positive way. No more endless internet research. No more disappointment upon arrival. We simply pick the destination, pack our bags, and show up. The rest is handled by WTW.

In 2022, my family and I went on several trips with WTW. In planning

our adventures, WTW considered several and various aspects of accessibility - hotels, activities, tours and transportation. I completed my travel profile, which takes into account personal accessibility needs, ensuring WTW knows precisely what I require every time. They made sure I always had a room with the right bed height and a roll-in-shower with a bench. Additionally,

I expressed my preference for accessible transportation and accessible tours. This saved us so much time and effort preparing for the trips!

AN ACCESSIBLE TRIP TO ROME, ITALY

Rome was a favorite for Joy and me. I love the food and she loves the culture! WTW was able to coordinate adapted transportation for us to attend a once in a lifetime Andrea Bocelli concert and gave us a [private tour of the Colosseum](#). The guide knew the special entrances and was so knowledgeable of accessible restaurants and restrooms in the area. But, one of the most unique aspects WTW facilitated was a day trip to San Gimignano. This historic and hilly town posed a challenge for me as a manual wheelchair-user. This is why WTW offered a scooter rental, which enabled me to be independent and enjoy the medieval city to its fullest. Well, that is until the rain poured, but I suppose they can't control everything!

HEADING NORTH TO FLORENCE

During our trip, we took a short overnight stay to Florence. A partner of WTW came to our hotel in Rome, walked with us to the train station, ensured we boarded the right train, and then another guide met us at the station in Florence. This type of white glove experience is just what we needed to be confident traveling through Italy.

ACCESSIBLE GROUP TOUR TO ICELAND

Our adventure in Iceland was a 9-day [accessible group trip](#) with 3 other people with disabilities. I was initially hesitant to go but Joy was excited about it, so of course I said yes! We all had different abilities but developed a special connection through the shared experience. Our hotel was based in Reykjavik, the capital, and we did short day trips to surrounding towns. The green hills, waterfalls, and glacier fields were stunning. I had never been to a place with such a diverse landscape. Each day brought new and exciting accessible activities, but one major highlight was the

[Blue Lagoon](#) hot springs - one of the most famous hot springs in the world. WTW ensured we had accessible entrances to the pools and also accessible changing rooms. Later in our vacation, we headed to a town south of the capital and stayed for 2 nights. In this region, we explored volcanic lava fields and glacier lakes. The boat tour, which was accessible, was a breathtaking excursion through crystal blue icebergs. Iceland is certainly a country that we will visit again! WTW did an excellent job accommodating all of the different travelers and their needs on this trip.



ACCESSIBLE VACATION TO GREECE

Our final major trip in 2022 was a Greek vacation with our 22 year old twins. WTW planned two days of a pre-cruise itinerary in Athens. We stayed in a hotel with a rooftop pool and restaurant overlooking the city - the views from this vantage point were spectacular. Our accessible room worked well for our 2 night stay. ADA-compliant rooms in Greece don't adhere to the same standards as they do in the U.S., but the suitable bed height met my most crucial requirement. We tasted the flavors of Athens through

a food tour coordinated through WTW. Joy very much enjoyed the Greek cuisine, especially the kebabs and feta!

The private tour to the Acropolis was my favorite part of the trip. I remembered it from my competition at the Athens Paralympic games. The tour started at the accessible entrance closest to the elevator. It is still hard to believe there is an elevator to the oldest ruins in Greece! After our two day mini trip to Athens, we headed on a Mediterranean cruise. Even though we couldn't get off at every stop due to tendered ports,



WTW planned our excursions in Mykonos and Rhodes. These ports were the twins favorite part of the cruise. WTW knew my [accessible transportation](#) needs and our family's preferences (Pro tip – WTW doesn't have partners in all cruise ports, but we always check when headed on a cruise! It's much easier than planning these excursions on our own).

BOOKING ACCESSIBLE HOTELS FOR EVERY OCCASION

In addition to these trips, we also relied on WTW to book hotel overnights in Washington D.C, Orlando, and Miami! This way, we are guaranteed a room that meets my needs. No more booking with uncertainty.

USING WHEEL THE WORLD FOR ALL YOUR ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL NEEDS

WTW has greatly simplified our travel life. Yes, travel can still have some stressful moments - it's almost inevitable. However, at its core, travel is an adventure, so you have to be flexible. WTW's role of taking our preferences and using their expertise has alleviated the stress of hotel selection, ensured the reliability of transportation, and facilitated the ease of finding accessible tours. Their knowledge of the areas we visited, combined with an understanding of my level of ability, genuinely guarantees a fantastic experience for my family. Joy can now simply be my wife instead of my travel agent.

Helpful article for more information: [The Expert Solution for Accessible Travel: 10 Reasons to Book with Wheel the World](#)

MY ADVICE FOR YOU

My advice to you is to start by filling out your [WTW travel profile](#). Then begin with a small step, such as an overnight hotel stay, to build confidence with the booking process. Explore WTW's website and dream! Pick a destination and let WTW plan your adventure. Whether it's a long weekend in Vegas or an Italian getaway, make 2024 your year to start exploring, despite your disability.

Adventure is for everyone; it pushes you out of your comfort zone and shows what you can do. Yes, there are times the airlines mess up. Yes, there are times things won't go as planned. Yet, the memories you make outweigh the obstacles.

Good luck and enjoy the ride!

HAVE YOU HEARD OF WHEEL THE WORLD? FIND HELPFUL RESOURCES BELOW:

[Build Your Accessibility Profile](#)

[Learn More About Wheel the World](#)

[Join Our Accessible Travel Facebook Group](#)

[WTW Blog](#)



THE SPOKE APP CATCH EVERY WORD

Adoption is straight forward.

- 1** Download The Spoke App
- 2** Spoke only requires a smartphone
- 3** No integration with airports and airlines systems is needed



Gate change:
Flight XYZ now boarding at gate ABC



NEVER MISS A WORD.

Spoke listens to live airport announcements, captures and delivers them as text on your smartphone, in your chosen language.

JOIN THE BETA PROGRAM

Sign up at thespokeapp.com now and make every journey more enjoyable and effortless.

[THESPOKEAPP.COM](https://thespokeapp.com)

SPOKE@METCOVE.COM



Experience conscious, inclusive, luxury vacations with IncluCare

Accessibility and inclusivity should transcend the physical environment, prioritizing the guest experience above all else.

“That’s the reason we created Inclu; an ecosystem of services and solutions to transform the landscape of possibilities for the organizations of luxury hospitality, travel and lifestyle and, crucially, the millions of disabled people across the globe with aspiration, ambition and resources to travel in style and experience the world, but are currently denied the opportunity to do so.”

Step into the world of Richard Thompson, co-founder and CEO of Inclu, a luxury company that



Richard Thompson, CEO

champions inclusivity across the travel industry. He believes all stakeholders, including hospitality, destination management companies and independent travel consultants should be educated to facilitate accessible and inclusive travel experiences, for all.

Richard has amassed a wealth of knowledge through more than forty years of involvement in the travel and hospitality sectors. His initial experience was gained working for a U.K.-based tour operator which pioneered holidays tailored for young individuals. He later ventured into various sectors from operating ski businesses to running his own restaurants and entertainment establishments in Greece. A life-altering accident in France left him with an incomplete spinal cord injury, leading to a year-long hospitalization and years of physical and psychological adjustment. Sufficiently ‘rehabilitated’, Richard set his sights on examining how the travel industry was servicing the ambitions of would-be travellers with physical, sensory and neurodivergent exceptionalities. Shocked by the limited travel choices available—either with specialized disability services or through charity programs—he resolved to address the lack of travel options for individuals with disabilities.

He identified an opportunity to

bring innovative ideas into the industry and in 1997, founded Accessible Travel, a tour operator aimed at shifting the focus from disability to accessibility. The company grew from humble beginnings into the world's largest specialist in accessible travel. They offered a comprehensive range of experiences, spanning long-haul adventures to luxurious city breaks, with accessibility integrated into every itinerary. Richard stated, “Our approach ensured that every travel experience we facilitated incorporated elements of accessibility, yet we never grouped people solely based on their disabilities.” Accessible Travel prioritized destinations and dreams, ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, could enjoy enriching travel experiences.

Although they enjoyed immense success, Richard said, “Over time, it became evident that the specialist model did not work, so, we offloaded this model after seven years. If you look around the world, most of the travel specialists of that era have disappeared. Very few have been able to scale to anything meaningful.” He believes this model has become ineffective because travellers do not want to be marketed to as disabled people—they just want to travel to wherever they want to go and book with any tour operator they choose to travel with.



Inclusive Morocco experience



Alison Pearson, head of Inclu travel operations

Transitioning away from the specialist model, Richard and his team pivoted the focus once again, this time from accessibility to inclusivity and with that, “we also moved unashamedly into the luxury space with Inclu,” he stated. “Why?

Quite simply because this is the sector with the least distance to travel to establish guest-inclusivity excellence and set best-practices for the rest of the industry to aspire to. Lessons learned will inevitably cascade down. They were never going to cascade up!”

So in the Inclu stable of services, two are critical to meaningful change – the full-service luxury tailor-made bespoke travel operator, IncluPrivé, and the worlds only Verification of Guest-Inclusivity excellence – IncluCare.

Richard explains, “At IncluPrivé, our concierge team of luxury inclusive travel experts never know what the next caller will be looking for, but we know we’ll always say yes, because experience has taught us what is possible. And of course we believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to indulge in luxury travel. But what exactly constitutes luxury travel?” According to Richard and his team, this is not defined by the price tag but rather the quality of the experience. This

could mean a journey across the Sahara Desert, arriving at an eco-lodge in Costa Rica by kayak, or even sleeping beneath the stars in the desert. Alternatively, it might involve a stay at a lavish resort favoured by billionaires. Regardless of one's chosen definition, a vastly enhanced guest experience should be the result. “We've had clients fully ventilated on safaris in Africa, quadriplegics at the top of Machu Picchu and the bottom of the Indian Ocean, clients without sight, without speech in India and Australia. The only limit is a client's imagination! And for them, simply having choices and options to experience the world with equity, is a luxury in itself. As is the opportunity to deviate from one's typical day-to-day routine.”

In contrast to IncluPrivé, which exists to turn travel dreams into travel reality for consumers, IncluCare is very much for the trade. According to Richard, in order to remove the barriers that exclude the world's 1.5 billion disabled people from authentically inclusive travel, the entire global infrastructure



Accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability meets luxury at Amilla Maldives



Within the world of luxury travel, many guests seek more than just opulence—they seek an inclusive experience. At Amilla Maldives, luxury isn't just about elegant accommodations and lavish amenities. It's about creating experiences that resonate deeply with guests. At this resort, the pillars of accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability converge seamlessly, creating a setting that respects both the environment and the diverse needs of its visitors.

with special needs and dietary preferences. They offer various dietary lifestyle choices including: gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free, keto, paleo, vegan and vegetarian options. Guests are provided with a QR code that allows them to conveniently access menus tailored to their dietary needs. But inclusivity at Amilla goes beyond accommodating guests' dietary needs. It's about creating an environment where everyone feels valued and appreciated.

Crystal-clear waters, powdery white sands and the gentle rustle of palm trees in the breeze is the backdrop for your dream vacation at Amilla.

GUEST EXPERIENCE, ACCESSIBILITY AND STAFF DEDICATION
The team at Amilla go above and beyond to ensure the needs of guests are met with grace and sensitivity.

LUXURY AND INCLUSIVITY
Amilla Maldives makes guests feel special. Modifications for those who need it are made subtly and seamlessly.

The resort's luxury experience includes catering to guests

Employees participate in Inlucare's specialized education program aimed at boosting their capacity to deliver guests a tailored, all-encompassing experience, while

honing their awareness of what can make that trip truly extraordinary. One notable outcome: a member of the housekeeping team proposed an innovative solution to fulfill a guest's desire to snorkel in the sea instead of the lagoon—a cherished aspiration for this individual who uses a wheelchair. A pool hoist was installed on a boat, facilitating the gentle lowering of the guest into the water. This 60-year-old finally achieved his life-long dream with Amilla's assistance, marking a significant milestone in his life.

ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSIVITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Inclusivity extends beyond physical accessibility to environmental consciousness and community engagement. The resort actively promotes sustainability and waste management initiatives.

Minimizing their impact on the planet is something Amilla takes very seriously. From reducing

Go to www.worldofinclu.com to learn more.

“The only limit is a client's imagination! And for them, simply having choices and options to experience the world with equity, is a luxury in itself. As is the opportunity to deviate from one's typical day-to-day routine.”

Richard Thompson

of travel and tourism needs guidance, education and support in understanding what constitutes accessibility and inclusivity, and most importantly, the strategies and tools to deliver them.

So Inlucare has established best practices for this and is actively educating within the luxury space, aiming to elevate every guest experience irrespective of exceptionality or budget. With a team of consultants and Inlucare Ambassadors across every continent, they are dedicated to inspiring, connecting, empowering and supporting luxury travel, hospitality and lifestyle providers while steadfastly ensuring clients enjoy a quality experience. Resorts that have participated in Inlucare's program are seeing significant return on investment

including global recognition and awards, dramatic shift in attitudes, engagement and morale of their staff as it relates to accessibility and inclusivity. Staff are coming up with ideas themselves of how they can creatively welcome and delight people with different kinds of conditions and personalized requirements. Resort managers have also shared that disabled guests express joy about their stay at a level that they do not see from other guests. Some have said they are finally living their dream which they had given up on, others say they do not feel that they are a burden to the staff during their stay. They feel genuinely cared for, which is evidence that Inlucare's education program results in a hospitality team that cares authentically about ensuring every guest has the best experience.





Ssilicon Rolla Bottles

single-use plastics to supporting local fishing initiatives, every aspect of the resort's operations is geared towards preserving the natural beauty of the Maldives for generations to come. Guests are encouraged to embrace environmentally friendly practices. In an attempt to reduce single-use plastic consumption, they are given reusable silicon water bottles, which are easy to carry around and conveniently fold up when empty. Guests can tuck them into a bag or even take them home as a memento of their stay. No plastic bottles are allowed at Amilla.

They are acutely aware that sustainability isn't just about protecting the environment, it's also about preserving local culture and community. The resort works closely with local communities to promote sustainable practices and preserve the Maldivian culture. General Manager Narelle McDougall said, "On an island

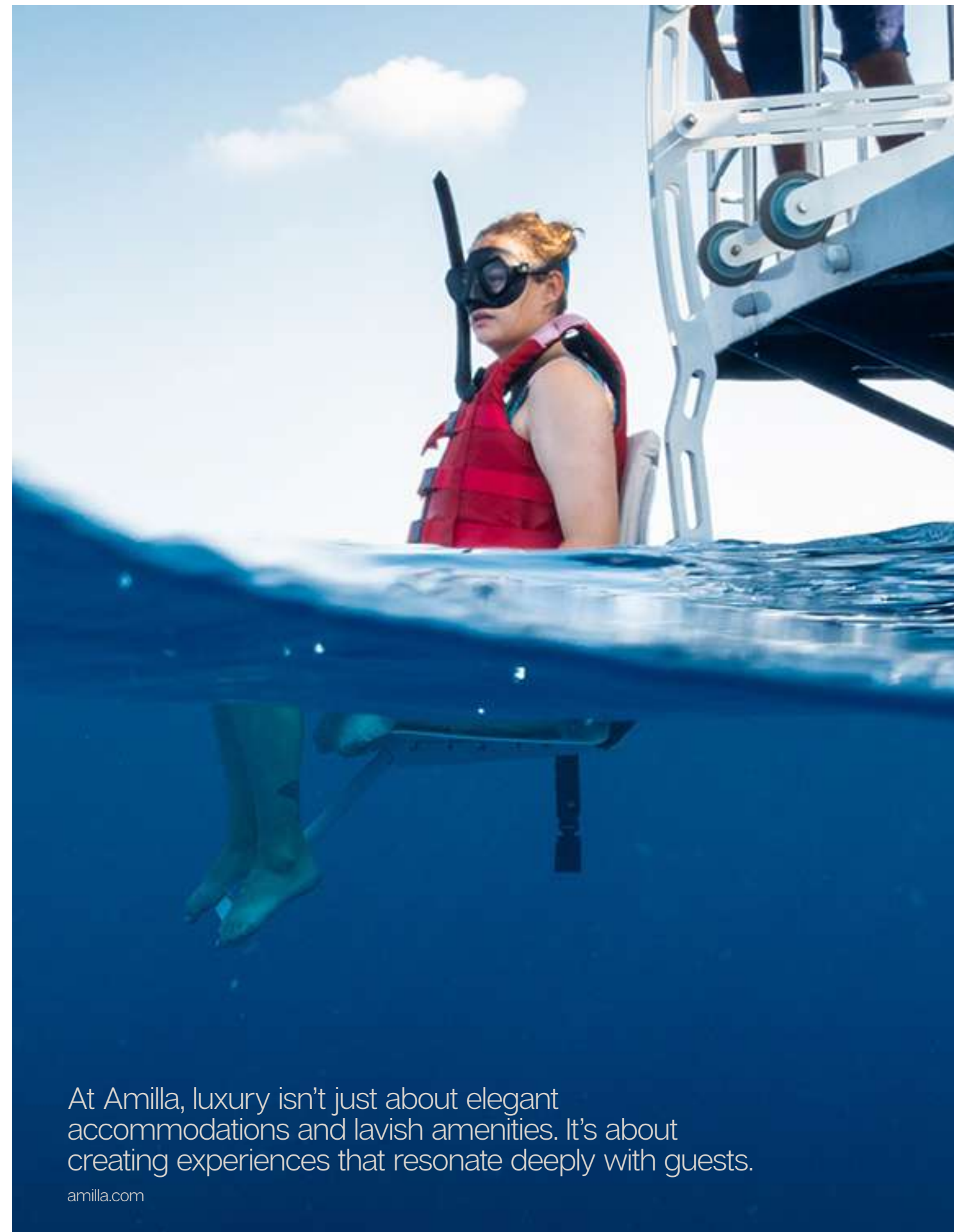
10 minutes away by speedboat, we do reef and island cleaning with locals and our sustainability manager speaks with them about the importance of recycling, waste management and not throwing garbage into the sea." At Amilla, guests have the opportunity to engage with the vibrant Maldivian community, whether through cultural nights at the resort or visits to other islands to interact with the locals. "The Maldives has a very rich culture but the guests who come here go straight from the airport to their resort island and have amazing, wonderful experiences but most of them don't go anywhere near a local island," McDougall said. "They'll hear stories about local island life from a waiter or house staff who is cleaning their room but may never visit. But here at Amilla, we encourage guests to understand the local culture." By fostering a deeper connection between guests and locals, Amilla ensures that every visitor leaves with a greater

appreciation for the vibrant montage of Maldivian life.

Guests are not the only ones who benefit from Amilla's inclusive approach. The resort is committed to providing opportunities for Maldivians of all backgrounds to thrive in the hospitality industry. Whether it's through IncluCare sensitivity training or tailored support for employees with special needs, Amilla is also paving the way for a more inclusive workforce in the Maldives.

Whether you're dreaming of a romantic getaway, family adventure, or solo retreat, come experience the magic of Amilla, where luxury lives with inclusivity, accessibility and sustainability in perfect harmony.

Amilla Maldives is the world's first IncluCare Certified resort. Discover more about their accessibility and provisions for people with disabilities.



At Amilla, luxury isn't just about elegant accommodations and lavish amenities. It's about creating experiences that resonate deeply with guests.

amilla.com



[To Table of Contents](#)

No Limbits' Erica Cole is passionate about travel

By Staff Writer

In 2019, amidst the proud graduates of the University of Iowa, one individual with a degree in chemistry did not yet know that her career would take an unexpected turn, leading her from the laboratories of science to the artistry of fashion. What began as a personal endeavour after her 2018 accident—altering clothes on a humble sewing machine to

ensure a more comfortable fit for her prosthetic leg and those of her amputee friends—evolved into the company we now know as No Limbits. The job offer at a renowned government lab was turned down to pursue a singular dream—making clothing that is comfortable for amputees to wear. That dream, which at the time seemed so far-fetched to achieve, inched

along from humble beginnings to a Kickstarter campaign needed to fund the production run of adaptive pants. “Our appearance on Shark Tank enabled us to secure deals with renowned investors like Mark Cuban, lending credibility and opening doors to new opportunities.” Meet Erica Cole, founder and CEO of adaptive clothing company, No Limbits.



[To Table of Contents](#)



As an amputee and passionate traveller, Erica admits that airline travel with a prosthetic leg can be quite tedious. Airport security will visually and physically examine your prosthetic device during screening and this process can be difficult to maneuver. This is where No Limbits' Unlimbited pants comes in handy. Erica easily unzips them so the entire prosthetic leg can be seen, making the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) process much easier. Erica is a frequent traveller; throughout the year, you'll find her on a flight to various places in the U.S. for work and at times, internationally for leisure.

When Erica wore her traditional prosthetic leg, travel was more challenging because she needed to carry a lot of equipment with her. Now that she has an

osseointegrated leg, it has made a world of difference. "I still carry an extra prosthetic with me wherever I go," she shared. "I have one that's waterproof, so I have two legs and both go with me." The airline allows an extra bag for medical equipment in which she carries her extra leg, gauze wrap and compression socks.

Local and national hiking, camping and other outdoorsy activities are treasured leisure experiences for Erica, but a trip to an international destination, experiencing local culture plus scuba diving is the epitome of luxury. Her trip to Egypt last year was the most memorable. She had the opportunity to scuba dive and explore the rich history and culture of the region. Erica stated, "Travelling as an amputee in Egypt was quite smooth. People were very friendly and accommodating. Even

though I stood out due to my limb difference, the overall experience was positive." The locals were very willing to help. "I was struggling to get up on a camel and everybody was so helpful and made sure that I could get up there and sit comfortably. It was a really great experience."

Egypt will always have a very special place in her heart. "We went on a camel ride and enjoyed the breathtaking view of not just three, but nine pyramids from an overlook. The camels sat down so we could get off . . . then my boyfriend proposed. It was quite the moment!"

Travelling as an amputee presents Erica with the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and showcase abilities. Initially, some people may perceive amputees

as fragile or limited, but "by actively participating in regular activities," Erica said, "I demonstrate that disabilities do not prevent someone from enjoying life to the fullest."

When she travels, Erica typically wears pants. "As someone with a limb difference, I'm not always comfortable with the stares, so I try to stand out as little as possible," she said. But when she scuba dives, it is immediately obvious that she's an amputee. On these trips, Erica found that for the first few days, people treat her like she's fragile or believe she won't be able to keep up. It means a lot to her that, at the end of the trip, people realize that she can definitely keep up and some even say, "she could out swim any of us. She's very competitive."

Erica remarked, "it is rewarding just to show that because you're an amputee, have another disability or a challenge doesn't mean that you can't still do the same things that others do—it might just look a little different. As I travel more as an amputee, I believe people who travel with me start to realize that too. I'm hoping that I'm changing their perspective."

Shop for No Limbits clothing on her website, no-limbbits.com. You'll also find them at Walmart.com

"A trip to an international destination, experiencing local culture plus scuba diving is the epitome of luxury."
Erica Cole

COMING SOON

LOOK OUT FOR OUR NO LIMBITS GIVEAWAY!

Make sure to follow [@accessiblejourneys](https://www.instagram.com/accessiblejourneys) on Instagram to stay updated about the giveaway launch where you will stand a chance to win a \$100 No Limbits gift card.





Empowering the visually impaired through tandem cycling in New York

By Staff Writer

In the heart of New York City amidst the skyscrapers and bustling streets, lies a unique organization that is changing lives through the power of tandem cycling. InTandem Cycling, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to providing tandem cycling programs to individuals who are blind, have low vision, or face other disabilities that prevent them from riding independently.

Founded a decade ago by Artie Elefant who became blind as an adult, InTandem has grown into an organization of empowerment and inclusivity. Artie sought a way to continue experiencing the thrill of biking, an exercise he loved. His son Matthew is proud of what the organization has accomplished thus far. "We're celebrating our tenth year," he said, "and we're thrilled about this. We have pedaled over 200,000

miles as a community!" Cyclists who are blind or vision impaired and their captains will often be seen in Central Park from which InTandem rides originate, but their reach extends far beyond Manhattan. Matthew elaborated, "Our cyclists pedal up over the George Washington Bridge out into all of the boroughs of New York City." There is no fee associated with this. Cyclists are able to use the tandem bikes free of charge.

The annual [TD Five Boro Bike Tour](#) is a highly anticipated fundraiser for InTandem. The event is organized by Bike New York and InTandem brings a sizable team of participants each year. Stokers and captains will pedal 40 miles through the five New York boroughs showcasing the power of collaboration and communication, while highlighting the 'can-do' spirit of individuals with vision

impairment. This incredible annual event brings the sport of tandem cycling to a larger audience and helps to transform the way people think of individuals with disabilities. Executive Director, Michael Anderson explained how their tandem cycling works, "A stoker is a person who has a visual impairment. They are the cyclist who rides in the back doing a lot of the pedaling and the sighted captain is upfront, providing safe and descriptive navigation."

In addition to their signature bike tour, InTandem hosts programs, including one for youths that promotes empathy, teamwork and communication among teenagers with and without visual impairments. High school and pre-college students learn about tandem biking while supported by their peers. "It

breaks down barriers," Michael said. "The individuals who are blind form friendships outside of their comfort zone and the sighted individuals learn to think differently about a person who is blind or has a disability."

Another program is the annual InTandem Day of Service held in November through which the organization actively engages in community service. Michael explained, "It's an opportunity for both our stokers and captains to address food insecurity in New York City. Everyone shows up with a bag of donated goods. We put them into our InTandem backpacks, get onto our bikes and ride to shelters together to make the donation. It's a really wonderful, moving event and a way for our stokers to contribute to the community. We're hoping to expand this initiative."

Although there is no cost to use InTandem's bicycles, there is a process to go through before one can leave their facility. With safety being InTandem's number one priority, an intake form must be filled out then persons will be invited to a training session before being allowed to go out on the bikes. Sound, clear communication between the captain and stoker is one of the most important factors. Matthew explained, "Starting and stopping in unison is crucial. The captain will have to ask if the stoker is ready then will count down 3, 2, 1 and start pedaling. Stopping must also be carefully orchestrated as they have to safely and gradually break to a stop."

Anderson highlighted the safety measures used in their tandem cycling programs. "We service the bikes every week to make sure they are ready to roll out of our trailer" he explained. The organization's commitment to safety

and quality ensures that cyclists have a rewarding and enjoyable experience on every ride. InTandem is justifiably proud that their impact extends beyond cycling. They challenge societal perceptions of disabilities and promote a culture of inclusivity and ability. Elefant reiterated, "Our programs really helps to raise awareness and adjust society's thinking from what individuals with disabilities can't do to what they can do."

As a non-profit organization, InTandem relies on [donations](#) and sponsorships to sustain their impactful work. Michael said, "We're always looking for people to support us through donations. And for those who are local to New York, we want more stokers and captains to sign up."

Elefant encourages people to support their mission, saying, "We take pride in empowering our stokers, not only to ride a bike but we also provide opportunities for them to take on leadership roles such as the planning of our events." He continued, "For people like my father who lose their vision later in life, so often the emphasis is on slowing down. But things like adaptive sports and tandem cycling allows them to not slow down, but to do something where there's motion and speed. They can regain the enjoyment of doing an activity they thought they might not have been able to do again."

If you're inspired by InTandem's mission and want to learn more or contribute, visit their website at intandembike.org.

Join the movement and pedal together towards a more inclusive future.

Vision-impaired and others with disabilities visiting New York are invited to ride.



Artie's ride on the bridge



Executive Director, Michael Anderson



Matthew and daughter



Dahlia Africa wheelchair accessible tours

Dahlia Africa's motivation to offer wheelchair accessible tours stems from the desire to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to travel experiences in Africa. The disability community is a significant segment of the population but many people with disabilities have limited travel options especially due to the accessibility barriers of the African continent. The company is attempting to bridge that gap.

Tanzania is well known for its incredible wildlife and safari experiences, with many national parks, reserves and the white sand

beach at Zanzibar Islands that offers opportunities to see a wide variety of animals in their natural habitat. Traditionally, the able-bodied experience these things on a regular basis, so Dahlia Africa is now helping to break down these barriers and create inclusive travel opportunities for individuals with mobility impairments. This increases accessibility and enables people with disabilities to explore new destinations, enjoy cultural experiences, and create lasting memories, just like anyone else.

Offering wheelchair accessible tours is also in response to the

growing demand for accessible travel services. As awareness and understanding of accessibility issues increase, more individuals and families are seeking travel options that cater to specific accessibility requirements. Dahlia Africa recognizes this need and strives to accommodate it by providing accessible tour packages.

Overall, their motivation to offer wheelchair accessible tours comes from a commitment to inclusivity, recognition of the market demand, and the intention to enhance travel experiences for people with disabilities.



THE BEST TIME OF YEAR TO BOOK A TRIP: June, July, August, September, October, December, January and February



Dahlia Africa 8-day Luxury Tanzania Wildlife Safari Holiday

DAY 1: ARRIVAL AT KILIMANJARO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

You'll be met by their ground handling team at Kilimanjaro International Airport then transferred your delightful accommodation.

Overnight: Gran Melia Arusha.

DAY 2: ARUSHA TO TARANGIRE NATIONAL PARK

After breakfast, your guide will pick you up from hotel lobby and drive you to [Tarangire National Park](#). The elephant sanctuary, giant baobab trees, bush savannah and seasonal marshes adds to the wonder of this nature reserve. This National Park is considered to be one of the best places to view elephants up close. The park is also home to buffaloes, zebras and wildebeests which are always closely followed by a range of predators such as lions. Leopards

are occasionally seen but cheetahs are rarely spotted. From the open roof of the safari vehicle you will be able to absorb the landscape and watch the animals. In the late afternoon you will drive to your accommodation inside the park for dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight: Tarangire Sopa Lodge

DAY 3: TARANGIRE TO NGORONGORO CRATER

Rise and shine! After breakfast you'll travel to the [Ngorongoro Conservation Area](#) before you drive down into the crater floor for a full day game drive. The massive collapsed volcano is home to over 25,000 mammals ranging from the Big Five – lion, elephant, buffalo, rhino and leopard – to spotted hyenas, rare wild dogs and some of the more than 500 bird species of the area. After an extensive game drive and a picnic lunch, you will

leave the caldera in the afternoon and drive to the crater rim for dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight: Melia Arusha

DAY 4: NGORONGORO TO SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK

After finishing up a good breakfast, you will head out towards the [Serengeti National Park](#) and travel in the midst of the never ending plain grasslands. The Serengeti is arguably the most impressive wildlife sanctuary in the world. You will have an afternoon game drive in the endless plains of the Serengeti for a chance to see the great herds of wildebeest, zebras and gazelles or a pride of lions lounging in the shade. A picnic lunch will be done during the day long game drive itself. The eventful day comes to an end with a heavy dinner and a good night's rest in your accommodation.

Overnight: Melia Serengeti.

DAYS 5 & 6: SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK TWO FULL DAYS

These two days are dedicated to game viewing in the Serengeti National Park. Your guide will take you to the best spots to observe the wildlife. Elephants, buffaloes, lions, cheetahs, hyenas, giraffes, zebras, wildebeests, topi, Grant's and Thomson's gazelles and many more can be seen in this large national park. Especially in the [Seronera Valley](#), you will be able to experience fantastic game viewing all year round. The Serengeti is home to the largest animal migration on the planet.

OPTIONAL: SERENGETI BALLOON

Prepare for a 4:00 am wakeup call so that you can fully enjoy your sunrise hot air balloon safari. You'll have an incredible safari from the sky over the Serengeti National Park, with enchanting scenery and uninterrupted views. An extraordinary adventure awaits. Special arrangements are made for you to depart before the break of dawn. This will give you the rare chance to experience the awakening of the surrounding wildlife and a wonderful sunrise. With amazing opportunities for stunning photographic moments, this miraculous glide over the Serengeti ecosystem allows you to absorb the magnitude of the size of the park. **Planned take-off is at dawn – 6am.** The flight depends primarily on the weather and the wind, therefore it varies from day to day, but generally it is an hour's flight. When you land, Dahlia's ground team will escort you to your breakfast area where you will commemorate this special event with a hearty breakfast amidst the wild ambiance of nature.

Overnight: Melia Serengeti.

DAY 7: SERENGETI TO KARATU

After breakfast, you will check out, board your safari vehicle and drive out of Serengeti National Park through Ngorongoro Conservation Area to the [township of Karatu](#) where you will have lunch followed by rest and overnight.

Overnight: Accacia Farm House Lodge.

DAY 8: MTO WA MBU CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (3HOURS) THEN TO THE ARUSHA AIRPORT FOR DEPARTURE

After breakfast, you will drive outside the park to the local village of Mto Wa Mbu to experience local culture on a 3-hour tour. You will visit a Maasai village to see the best Maasai traditions, local institutions (schools, church...) a local bar and enjoy the sights and sounds of this vibrant village. After the tour you will be driven to Arusha then to Kilimanjaro airport for your flight back home.

Email info@dahlia tours.com to book your spot.

2 to 7 persons: USD 6,496 each
8 to 12 persons: USD 6,127 each



INCLUDED

- Safari according to the itinerary
- 4x4 Safari Jeep – 7seater
- Service of Professional English speaking guide
- All-inclusive accommodations
- Meals according to the itinerary in Full Board Basis
- Mineral water on safari
- All mentioned activities
- All national park fees and Entry Fees
- Flying Doctors insurance (AMREF) during the safari
- Accommodation before Safari
- Airport Transfers

NOT INCLUDED

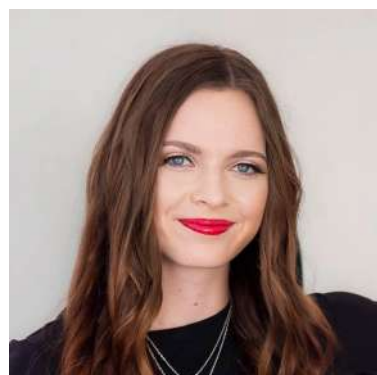
- International flights
- Optional activities
- Alcoholic and soft drinks
- Tips to Driver/Guide (\$15 - 20/group/Day)
- Personal spending money for souvenirs etc.
- Travel Health insurance
- Serengeti Balloon safari (\$599/person)
- Canoeing at Lake Momella (\$150/person)
- Night Game drive at Lake Manyara (\$100/person)

Cruising Corner

Inclusive adventures across the seas

Aspen Sage Baxter shares her favourite accessible cruising stories

By Staff Writer



Due to an adverse reaction to medication in September 2021, twenty-four-year-old Aspen Baxter now lives with chronic illness and disability. She is paralyzed from the waist down but travel has been a consistent and vital part of her life.

“I've been travelling my whole life, so it is the only consistent thing I've had since becoming disabled. I lost just about everything else—friends, jobs and all of the things that are normal in people's lives. Travel is that one thing that remained so I want to encourage other people with disabilities—mental, physical, everything, to continue living life and get out there no matter what you're going through because life can change in an instant.

Travel is more than a passion. It's my lifeline. Despite multiple medical appointments and challenges, having trips to look forward to keeps me motivated and

engaged. It's where I find freedom, joy and a sense of normalcy that transcends my physical limitations.

I typically travel with my parents as it's safer given my medical needs. However, I also have caretakers who step in when necessary. My preference, though, is sharing these experiences with my parents, who are not just my family but also my best friends.

I have two older sisters who serve in the military and live farther away, so our time together is limited. However, when we can, I cherish travelling with them, like the recent very memorable cruise we took on the Carnival Mardi Gras, which marked a significant step in independent travel for me.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO CRUISING?

I've been cruising since I was seven. Every cruise but one has been with Carnival. It's reasonably priced, which is great for those of us who are on disability, we don't have this crazy high income and it is family-friendly. There are a lot of activities for everyone and I appreciate that. They've been very accommodating with my disability and I think that, because I was comfortable with the cruise line prior to being disabled, I was then comfortable enough to do my first cruise as a disabled individual with them. It was a great first experience, everyone was willing to support me and I'll continue to cruise with them. I will try other cruise lines, but I'm comfortable

with Carnival and I'm very thankful for how accommodating they have been.

WHAT PORTS OF CALL DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST?

I was pleasantly surprised at Half Moon Cay, Bahamas, Carnival's private island, mainly because it's a tender port and I wasn't sure whether I would be able to get off or not. But the staff and crew were beyond helpful getting me on the tender, putting me in a safe position, and then when we got to the island, they had beach wheelchairs available for use at no charge. My dad transferred me into the beach wheelchair, we were able to leave my wheelchair so we did not have to push both of them around. That's definitely one of my favourite ports since being in a wheelchair. The other is Aruba, which is my favourite all around. I always enjoy just looking at the shops. Cozumel was amazing too, with plenty of areas to get around, a lot to see, lots of shopping, restaurants and everything. I really haven't had a bad experience at any of the ports.

HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY PLAN FOR A CRUISE?

I have to do a lot! I have to prepare myself physically, mentally and medically. I also prepare my service dog and that comes with a lot of additional stressors. Luckily, I go to counselling twice a week, so I talk through those things with my counsellor. But the biggest stressors are definitely with my service dog. It's my responsibility to research and get all of the paperwork ready for her, whether it's fecal exams or proof of rabies or other vaccinations. I have to travel with my mobility device, so I have to make sure my wheelchair is kept up. I travel with a portable air compressor to make sure my tires are always inflated. I have heating pads, gel packs and all of these things that a lot of people

wouldn't normally think of, but you do have to when you're disabled.

HOW DOES YOUR SERVICE DOG BEHAVE ON THE CRUISE?

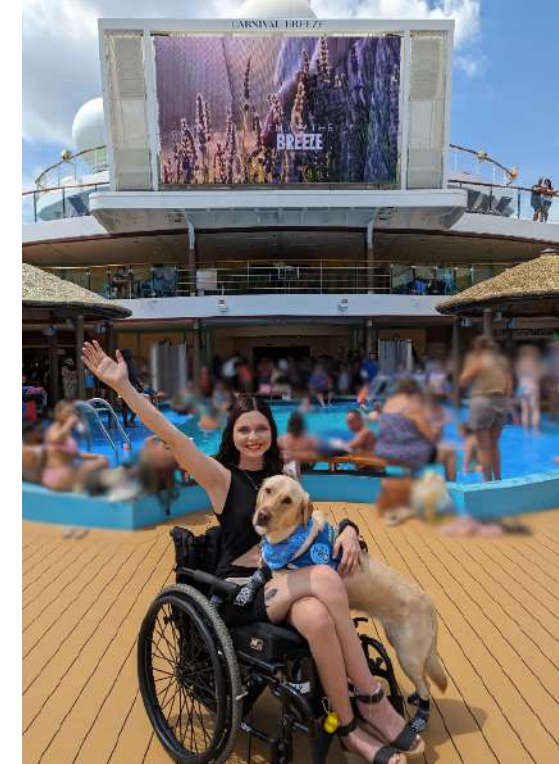
I did only one cruise with her so far and she did really well. I made sure to maintain flexibility in case she got seasick or overwhelmed or had sea legs, but I had no problems with her. She was hesitant to use the tray they provided for her for the restroom because it was something she'd never used before. She's trained to use the bathroom on multiple surfaces but the tray was strange because it wasn't grass or dirt so getting her used to that was the hardest part, but other than that she just did her normal thing—helped me when needed and just stayed by my side. I think she was more exhausted than usual because we were on vacation, out more and she wasn't resting as much. She's not used to this because I'm stuck in bed so often due to my illnesses. When we're on vacation, it's go, go, go, but I'm really thankful she's there to support me through it all.

WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT DOES YOUR DOG PROVIDE?

She's specifically mobility task trained, so she picks things up for me if I drop them so I'm not at risk of falling. She can open doors, close doors, shut drawers, bring my medication and water bottles to me. She's not seizure trained but she provides sensory support when I do have seizures. She'll either lay on top of me or get on my lap and provide deep pressure therapy, it lowers my heart rate, which typically snaps me out of a seizure faster. She is now learning to sense my seizures, but she wasn't professionally trained for that.

YOUR FAVOURITE THINGS TO DO ON THE SHIP?

I really like the comedy shows.



They're one of my favourite and I try to go to at least two or three on each cruise. I like the Love and Marriage Show—it's funny. The piano bar in the evening and night shows, trivia, karaoke . . . but I stay away from the big party gatherings on the Lido deck because they're overwhelming for me. Carnival is really good about having sections specifically for people in wheelchairs throughout the theatres and so I typically stay in the back in case I were to have some kind of issue and needed to leave quickly. The serenity deck is calm and quiet and one of my favourite places to be. I have a lot of sensory issues so just being able to stare at the water is calming and peaceful. Staring at the water moving behind us temporarily takes all of the stress and the pain away. It seems like the ocean steals them from you and you're leaving them all behind. It's magical and relaxing during the day and at night—almost therapeutic.

HOW ACCOMMODATING IS THE CREW ON THE CARNIVAL CRUISES?

Absolutely amazing! When embarking, disembarking and then every night when I go to dinner, they'd already have the dining chair out of the way so my wheelchair can have a spot at the table which is really appreciated because staff have so many other things to worry about. When doing formal pictures, they'd always ask if I wanted to stay in my chair or if they should help me transfer elsewhere. They've always been beyond helpful.

I've only been on one cruise with my service dog so far, but the staff were amazing with her too. She's a Labrador Retriever and goes everywhere with me. They explained things that I needed to know about

having her onboard and made sure she had an area to go to the bathroom.

On my last cruise, what stood out to me was that on port days, people were cramming into the elevators to get to the deck to disembark and it was hard to get into one, especially in a wheelchair! But staff were stationed by the elevators on each deck to ensure that one was reserved specifically for the disabled. That was amazing because I never had that experience before. I was very thankful for that because I do get very overwhelmed when I can't get on an elevator, especially in those situations because I cannot take the stairs.

For those who are interested in swimming, the larger and newer ships have pool lifts. My very first experience cruising as a disabled person was positive and a good motivation to keep on doing this because I knew that it was possible for me to cruise enjoyably. If I had a bad first experience, I wouldn't still be cruising. But Carnival has been amazing every time.

HOW INDEPENDENT ARE YOU ON BOARD?

I am pretty independent. I like the option to use the buddy system, for many reasons, not just because I'm a wheelchair user. But because I have my dog, I am able to get out and go places on my own. If I'm not feeling right, I wouldn't venture out on my own, but I do explore independently. I feel safe on Carnival. Even the guests are kind and helpful.

WHAT DO YOU THINK CARNIVAL CAN IMPROVE?

Sadly, Carnival does not offer many excursions for disabled

passengers. That is one of the disappointing things to me. I hope they start including disabled guests in excursion planning because in each port there should be options for them. They are amazing in a lot of ways, but this is one area that needs to change. I like to remind everyone that it's not that disabled passengers are trying to make things harder. Accessibility is literally for everyone.

I am going with them to Alaska in May and they seem to have way more accessible options for that specific cruise. It will be interesting because our onshore accessible activities were never done with the cruise line.

DO YOU MAKE USE OF SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES ON BOARD?

It's different on every cruise, but I have business cards. If I speak with someone, I'll give them my card which has a QR code so people can scan them either on the ship or when they get off. I don't pay for internet on a cruise because I consider this as my time to be away from internet and social media. Although I'm an introvert, I've made quite a few friends who I stay in contact with through Facebook, Instagram and email. I don't go to meetups because I am autistic and really bad at reading people and understanding social cues, but if it's a natural conversation or someone asks a question in the elevator, that's easier. I put myself out there on social media but it's a lot harder for me to do in person. On cruises I've met many amazing people.

HOW IS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOU—ARE PEOPLE KIND?

No, not always. There were a lot of times earlier in my social media journey when I wasn't sure if I was

going to continue. People will bully you and say things over social media that they will never say to your face. But there have been so many amazing people who have told me that I'm making a difference and encouraging them to want to get out. The positive feedback kept me going through all of the bullying, mean comments and messages. I'm receiving far less now. People are a lot kinder, but I have had to block people for saying inappropriate things and just being rude.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU TRAVEL?

Four international trips per year. Last year I probably travelled more than I've ever done before. I do many weekend trips too and go on a cruise once or twice per year. I try to do

something enjoyable once a month. I think it's important for everyone to do this, even if it's just a day trip to somewhere that's three or so hours away.

ADVOCACY EFFORTS

I go to [Santa Fe Family Life Center](#) here in Oklahoma, which has a program for children with disabilities. They teach accessible sports and offer basketball, dance, tennis and different activities for kids, all in an inclusive way.

They also provide adaptive wheelchairs. I go there to interact with kids and help out at the gym and at their disability events because they are doing their best to try to become more inclusive. I do speaking engagements at different

organizations and workplaces. My talks are about accessibility and how to make places more accommodating. I also speak on mental health because that runs big in my story. I've worked with Explore Branson and was recently published in one of their articles. They brought me to Branson and I prepared content for them about hotels in their city. I also did a few blogs for Visit Corpus Christi about a simple two-day trip I did there.

I advocate to encourage other people with disabilities to not be afraid to venture out and explore.

Learn more about Aspen by visiting her online accounts.





Cruising expert, Kristin Secor shares helpful tips

By Staff Writer

Kristin Secor, who lives in upstate New York, was born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy which affects her strength, balance, endurance and breathing. She is a full-time ventilator user.

Travelling is a huge part of Kristin's life. "It's a way for me to keep life in perspective because I think it's so easy to get wrapped up in your own circumstances. Travelling abroad allows me to see that there is a much bigger picture out there so it helps me keep my circumstances in perspective to the bigger picture. It's like my reset button. When I feel stressed, I travel. I love it. It's a great educational tool. I've gained so much self-confidence from travel

and I just love being exposed to new cultures, new places and all of that."

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF A LUXURY VACATION?

My definition is going to be a little more skewed, not necessarily monetarily. It's the luxury of having accessibility. I think the world can be accessible, but there's a long way to go. So finding your dream destination that is accessible and can meet your needs, that is luxury because it doesn't exist everywhere. When I got back from my trip to Antarctica, I went to Iguazu Falls on the Argentina/Brazil border and stayed at the [Gran Meliá Iguazú](#) which was more expensive than what I usually spend on a hotel. But

it was perfect because it overlooked the falls. Every room had a balcony and the view was beautiful, the falls, wildlife all around, monkeys climbing on your balcony, and most importantly, it was accessible. The room I stayed in had two bathrooms. One was a traditional bathroom and one was a fully accessible bathroom. Most of my hotel stays are really nice but at this resort, there were many little touches that I'm not used to. The environment, the views and staff were wonderful. I would say that's probably my most luxurious experience thus far. Plus, the food was delicious.

LOVE FOR CRUISING

I've done at least one cruise a year

for the past couple years and I have future trips planned for the next few years. For someone like me who doesn't always have a lot of energy, it's a great way of balancing relaxation with activity and just doing as much as I want.

DO YOU TRAVEL SOLO?

No. I always have a companion with me because my disability affects my strength so I can't lift most things. I travel with my respiratory equipment, luggage etc., so I absolutely must travel with someone.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOU ON A CRUISE?

An accessible cabin. You have to book early to get those. They are very limited, so they sell out very quickly. I usually book as soon as the itineraries are released and I always plan way ahead. For example, I know that in 2026 I want to go to Asia. Some cruise lines have already released their Asian itineraries so I'm already looking at booking that cruise to make sure I get an accessible cabin. Of course, everyone doesn't have to book two years in advance, but I would say at least a year in advance especially on popular itineraries like Alaska. Those cabins will sell very quickly. Some of the newer ships are adding more accessible cabins but I would say on a ship that can hold 3,000 to 4,000 people, you may have 20 accessible cabins. In the grand scheme of things, that's a limited amount.

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING THE SHIP

There are deck plans online, so even before you travel you can get a sense of where things are on the ship. I find the routes are very accessible. If you have visual impairments, the day you get on

the ship, ask the crew to give you a guided tour so you can get an idea of the layout, based on first-hand experience rather than trying to navigate it yourself. There is Braille on the ship, but it can be hard to find, so a crew member can guide you to where the Braille messages are. Definitely, I would advise you to talk to the crew the first day you get onboard.

Some ships have pool lifts and some don't. Ask how far in advance you have to request one, whether you have access to the hot tubs and again these amenities can vary by cruise line and by ship.

By asking these questions in advance, you will have a good idea of what's in store and set yourself up to have a good vacation.

HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS TO THE CREW?

Every cruise line has an accessibility department. When you book an accessible cabin, you will need to complete a mobility or disability form that will allow them to prepare for your needs. Some of the information I provide includes the dimensions of my wheelchair, that I walk with a cane and have visual impairments, some dietary needs and that I need an ASL interpreter. If you're flying in, they can have accessible transportation available for you and help recommend excursions and things like that. This is available for all cruise liners. Each form may look a little different but yes, you will need to do that across the board. If you book an accessible cabin and do not fill out that form, they may remove you from the accessible room assuming that you don't need the special features of that cabin. So, make sure to fill out the form.

ACCESSIBLE CABIN FEATURES

If you haven't cruised before, know that accessible cabins have standard features. They have a roll in shower, fold down shower bench, grab rails by the commode, an emergency pull cord, a roll under sink and more space within the room to navigate in your wheelchair. If you need more specialized equipment, such as a commode chair, a hospital bed or patient lift, you will need to rent them and they will be delivered to your cabin. This has to be arranged outside of the cruise line with companies like [Mobility at Sea](#). If you book an accessible cabin, you're guaranteed an accessible cabin when you fill out that form, which is nice because with hotels you don't always get that guaranteed. With cruise ships you do. So that's one of the reasons I enjoy cruising.

WHAT CHALLENGES, IF ANY, HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED WHILE CRUISING?

Sometimes the gangway to get on and off the ship can be steep. Depending on what your level of comfort is with inclines, sometimes crew will assist, especially if you're in a manual wheelchair, they'll have someone behind you and in front of you to assist you on and off the ship. But that doesn't always happen—it varies by cruise line. I had an issue when I cruised to Antarctica. There were quite a few tender ports and generally, they are not accessible. But I chose this specific cruise line because they said they have an accessible tender system. I asked them—is it accessible, can I roll right on the tender in my wheelchair? I was told yes but when I got there, there was an elevator that went down to the tender and this is what they deemed accessible. And there was a gap so I couldn't just roll right on. They



then told me I probably couldn't go ashore as they're not allowed to lift me. How disappointing! I pushed back and advocated for myself because I was obviously given misinformation when I booked. Thankfully I was travelling with someone and her plan was to lift part of the wheelchair onto that tender to get me on regardless. A crew member saw what she was doing and came over to help although they initially said they couldn't lift me.

Information can be very inconsistent so as a general rule, I recommend people assume that tenders are not accessible. I think having the correct expectations can really make or break a trip. If you were promised one thing, and it turns out that's not entirely true, you can be really disappointed.

Unless a cruise ship is sailing in U.S. waters, they don't have to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you take a European cruise, for example, your accessibility experience may be very different. Be aware that your experience can vastly vary depending on where you're sailing.

This June, I'm going to be cruising to Norway. The cruise line did not offer any accessible excursions in Norway. However, I was able to contact private companies that did have accessible transportation so I'll still be able to do excursions and have a wonderful trip, I'm hoping. One of the reasons I wanted to cruise to Norway is that there is very little information online about how accessible it is as a country and especially cruising there. But I'm going to change that. I'll be the guinea pig. I'll go. I really want to put that information on the internet so it's easier for people to find when they're planning their trip.

ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR CRUISE LINES OR SHIPS THAT YOU FOUND TO BE EXCEPTIONALLY ACCOMMODATING FOR A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY?

I personally like Princess Cruises. They have always done very well by me. When I cruised with them in September, 2022 on a round trip from Southampton, U.K., they had wheelchair accessible transportation for me to get to and from the ship. The lift broke on the

bus and they didn't know that until the morning as we were getting off the ship. They quickly hired a private company with an accessible van to transport me to the airport. The staff has always been really wonderful in helping me get on and off the ship. Gateways sometimes can be steep and staff is always there just making sure my needs are being met.

I sailed to Antarctica with Holland America but I was disappointed. They are generally good with accessibility because they tend to have an older demographic on board. Although my experience that one time was poor, they did make it up to me. They offered reimbursements and tried to make things right and helped me get refunds for my private excursions.

I've not sailed with Celebrity yet but I've heard they are really good. Royal Caribbean is known for very large ships, very Broadway-style production shows, lots of eateries and a lot of family crowds.

Most of the major cruise lines offer accessible services but everyone's going to have a different experience.

I would advise, when you're choosing a cruise line, to look at the experience you want to have onboard and the activities they offer. And be mindful that demographics can change based on where you're sailing to, for example, the Caribbean destinations may have a younger or a family crowd.

HOW DO YOU PLAN EXCURSIONS TO ENSURE THEY'RE ACCESSIBLE?

I ask specific questions instead of just asking broadly, is this accessible? Because they may just say yes. I literally had this happen to me before. I said, is this bus accessible? The answer was yes, but you can climb stairs, right? While some people can store their mobility device in the storage area and then climb on the bus, not everyone can, therefore, definitions of accessibility, especially when you ask an able-bodied person are going to vary greatly. When I'm asking about excursions, I'm very specific. I'll ask, does this bus have a lift or a ramp that folds out that allows me to stay in my wheelchair? I then get better answers which leads to better results and a better experience. If you're too general, you may get false information.

ARE THERE MEMORABLE HIGHLIGHTS FROM ANY OF YOUR CRUISES THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

Sailing through Antarctica. Even though that trip had some letdowns, the experience of sailing there, seeing the wildlife every day: the penguins, whales, killer whales, seals, birds in this really pristine and quiet environment, it was otherworldly and really, really beautiful. I would say the other experience that stands out is that cruising allowed me to visit the country of my ancestors. I was on

a Princess cruise and they had a special cultural activity program. One of the stops was Germany and it was September so Oktoberfest was coming up. The music director onboard taught us how to play the glockenspiel. It was a nice way to experience that culture onboard the ship and get that extra bonus experience of playing an instrument that I may not have otherwise had.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WITH A SIMILAR DISABILITY WHO IS CONSIDERING THEIR VERY FIRST CRUISE?

Research! That's going to be what helps to make your experience the best. Cruise lines sometimes have excursions where you just stay on a bus and drive around the town. I like to get off the bus to take pictures so sometimes I'll choose a private excursion to have more flexibility to do what I want. I look at the type of cabin I want. I know it's going to be accessible but do I want an inside cabin to save money? Do I want a balcony cabin? And that may change based on where I sail to. When I sailed to Alaska, I chose a balcony because I wanted to see all the scenery, but usually I do an inside because I'd rather spend money on excursions. I always have a budget, so I look at what's going to fit my interest, budget and needs. Also reading about other people's experience helps.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE UNEXPECTED MEDICAL NEEDS OR EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS WHILE YOU'RE ONBOARD?

Because I'm on a ventilator, I bring a lot of medical equipment and medical supplies with me. That's not something I can necessarily order and have delivered to my room, so in case something unexpected

happens I'd rather have more than less.

I take up a backup ventilator with me. If something happens to the main one I use, I'm not in a crisis situation where I can't breathe. Once I ordered a commode chair because I wasn't sure what the toilet height would be and that worked seamlessly. Mobility at Sea is really good at delivering your rented equipment to your room. I always carry on my equipment. I never allow the crew to handle it because I don't want to worry.

IF YOU'RE ON THE FENCE ABOUT CRUISING . . .

Give it a try. Do the seven-day cruise to start with. I tend not to do the three-and four-day cruises because you're on and off the ship before you get to experience anything. There's a little bit of everything onboard for everyone. There's entertainment, shows, comedians, a lot of different things. The food is usually excellent. You can gain weight on a cruise very easily, that's the downside of cruising. But there's a lot to enjoy. I think a lot of people with disabilities do enjoy it because you only have to unpack once, you get to see different places and the ship can be a destination in and of itself. So, give it a try and see if it fits your needs.

MY TRIPS THIS YEAR

I've got a lot of really cool trips coming up this year. I'll be in Peru in March and Machu Picchu and Norway and Ireland and then a safari in South Africa.

Kristin is a wealth of travel information. Read her blog at: worldonwheelsblog.com. Follow her on Instagram [@worldonwheelsblog](https://www.instagram.com/worldonwheelsblog) ■

Beyond Sight

Sharing the unleashed power of the other senses during travel

Jessie, the blind, fearless solo traveller

By Staff Writer



Jessie Wang in Costa Rica

Travelling as a blind individual may seem like a daunting task to many, but for Jessie Wang, it is an adventurous journey filled with unique experiences and valuable lessons. She was born with retinitis pigmentosa and by her mid-twenties, was only able to faintly see shapes and light, but no details. She lost the ability to read print characters, so braille and a screen reader are her reading tools. This, however, has not deterred her from exploring the world solo. Jessie's travel adventures have taken her to various destinations, from bustling cities like Hong Kong to serene landscapes in Costa Rica. Reflecting on her experiences, she recalls the warmth and helpfulness she encountered in Hong Kong, making it her top pick for the most enjoyable and accessible trip so far. However, not all destinations are equally accessible. Jessie recalls incidents in European cities where tram tracks posed dangers to pedestrians, highlighting the importance of understanding local infrastructure and not being afraid to seek assistance from passersby when needed.

Jessie readily acknowledges that travelling for her comes with many challenges, but her enthusiasm for exploring the world supersedes whatever hesitation she may have about the barriers she will inevitably encounter. She speaks English, Mandarin, Cantonese and Spanish but during travel, language is a significant barrier especially in countries where English is not widely spoken. Despite this, Jessie's positive attitude and willingness to engage with locals have often resulted in memorable interactions. Navigating inaccessible train stations, for instance, is usually quite daunting, but it's always accomplished thanks to the kindness of fellow passengers.

For Jessie, preparation is key when travelling. "And if you're a beginner, I would advise you to be cautious," she said. To ease into solo travel, she recommends starting with group trips or travel organizations tailored for blind individuals. Hostels and couch-surfing communities have become her haven, offering not only accommodation but also opportunities to connect with fellow travellers and join walking tours. Building connections with locals also enhances the experience, providing valuable insights and support along the way. When it comes to accommodations, Jessie prefers rentals found through social media groups or recommendations from friends instead of Airbnbs.

Safety is paramount for any traveller and Jessie employs various strategies to ensure her well-being. While she often explores solo, she prefers to have company or stay in bustling areas where assistance is readily available. Utilizing tools like



the aira app and GPS, coupled with her keen sense of direction and adventurous spirit, Jessie is able to navigate the world with confidence.

Despite the misconceptions about blind travellers' inability to live independent lives, Jessie remains motivated to inspire others to step out of their comfort zones and explore the world. Through her YouTube channel and interactions with fellow travellers, she encourages individuals to embrace adventure. "Although I'm always a bit hesitant to try adaptive adventures, I have done ziplining in Hawaii during the year that I lived there. I've also done hiking, canoeing and kayaking with Wilderness Inquiry in the U.S. I love to challenge stereotypes," she shared. Jessie calls the U.S.A. home but her sojourns around the world often have her living in various countries for extended periods of time—Portugal, Hawaii, Costa Rica, China (her second home country) and more . . . Jessie emphasizes the importance of embracing the unknown and approaching each destination with an open mind. She believes while challenges may arise, they are outweighed by the richness of experiences and the kindness of strangers encountered along the way.

As she continues her journey, Jessie remains focused on personal



Jessie and friend in Costa Rica

growth and learning. Balancing her passion for travel with her work as an interpreter and her pursuit of a career in software engineering, she embraces each new challenge with determination and optimism. Through her adventures, she not only discovers the beauty of the world but also inspires others to embark on their own journeys, one step at a time, regardless of their disability.

Read more about Jessie's adventures from her friend [Faith Coyne's blog](#).

JESSIE'S TIPS:

If you're visiting:

China: The group [志苏融合旅游 \(zhishuronghelvyou\)](#) organizes trips for the blind. They can only be found on WeChat.

England: [Travel Eyes](#)

Most accessible country: Hong Kong

Recommended guided group trips: [Wilderness Inquiry](#), St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

Visual Interpreting app: [Aira](#)

Silent Adventures

The world through the eyes of Deaf travellers



Elisa Richards is an actor, director and hard-of-hearing advocate, who spoke with us about the luxury she finds in nature's silence.

Authenticity, nature and silence: a redefinition of luxury travel

By Staff Writer

The concept of luxury in travel is a deeply personal and subjective one, shaped by individual preferences and values. While some may find luxury in the trappings of wealth and extravagance, others derive fulfillment from the freedom to explore, connect and experience the world on their own terms. It's this latter interpretation that resonates as the true essence of luxury travel for Elisa Richards. It's about the freedom to authentically immerse yourself in a destination, to wander aimlessly, connecting with local culture and nature on a deeper level.

"I really love when I can stay in an Airbnb and the owner also lives in the Airbnb or next door because I can get all the information about what to see,

what to do and so on. All the books and online searches will give you the top 10 spots, etc., and they are all the same, but hearing about it all from a local—insider knowledge—that's authentic!" Elisa, a hard-of-hearing advocate, actor and director, is an avid traveller who loves the outdoors and for her, this is luxury.

Travel is about embracing spontaneity and serendipitous encounters, allowing the day to unfold organically rather than by a checklist of must-see attractions. Her most memorable experiences are often found off the beaten path, in unscripted moments. "It's the simple things," Elisa said. "I have the best time when I say, you know what . . . I'm just going to walk around town today and see where that leads me. That



Hiking

allows me to make friends, talk to store owners and get to know them. They'll often say, you've got to check out this or that . . . this is the experience I'm looking for, plus time and freedom to explore." For many travellers like Elisa, luxury travel can be redefined as the gift of time itself, unhurried days, unfettered by the constraints of a packed itinerary. This allows for leisurely strolls through cobblestone streets, impromptu conversations with locals, and indulgence in local cuisine. It's about savoring the small moments that often go unnoticed in the frenzy of sightseeing, whether it's sipping espresso at a sidewalk café or pausing to admire street art tucked away in a quiet alley.

But travelling for Elisa, regardless of the destination and experience is sometimes accompanied by silence. She has severe to profound bilateral hearing loss and at times, deliberately, does not wear her hearing aids. She embraces the silence, "especially if I go camping," she shared. "Most people do go to those places to find silence and to get away from the street

noise. I use this opportunity to lean into the silence because it allows me to reset. Sometimes I think I have an advantage because other people are still hearing the birds, the creek and other hikers on the path. But without my hearing aids, I visually take in the aesthetic of the surroundings. I breathe the fresh air. It's meditative and I think it's really cool that I have the choice to completely turn off the noise and allow my other senses to step in."

Elisa was overwhelmed as a child going to busy places such as school and restaurants. The barrage of noises that would assail her when she wore her hearing aids included the sharpening of pencils, the flipping of book pages, people talking all around her, people unfolding napkins and blowing their noses, the clatter of trays and plates. This led to listening fatigue which was very tiring. Now older, she has grown used to the multitude of auditory stimuli in her surroundings but has learned to deal with it.

Camping, hiking or just being

outdoors with nature such as at [Yosemite National Park, California](#), in silence, is luxury. Despite the stress that sometimes accompanies her outdoor excursions, these are still treasured moments for Elisa. She recounted instances where she was stranded in remote areas and had to be rescued by strangers. She's faced the challenge of finding a place to camp before dark, worries about having the right supplies, and her fear of spiders. However, these all fade in comparison to the sense of freedom and expansiveness she feels when in the wilderness. Elisa believes these experiences positively influence her art and ability to handle stress. They also enrich her problem-solving skills, understanding of storytelling and her performance in front of the camera.

Being a hard-of-hearing actress comes with its own share of challenges. Elisa recalls at the start of her career she always wore her hair down so her hearing aids weren't visible. Although potential employers are not legally allowed to dismiss someone because of their



disability, Elisa felt her chances of being given a role would be hindered if they knew—they'd probably wonder if she was able to do the job. "Only after maybe my first shoot, I would say, okay, I should tell them that I'm hard-of-hearing," she admitted. "I feel good about what I'm doing and I can help change perspectives in the workplace." She believes disability in the industry should be normalized. There is no more hiding for her. Although she may not mention it at an audition—simply because it might not be necessary to do so—she is nonetheless a vocal advocate and her social media accounts are a testament to that.

Throughout her posts online, humour is infused to lighten whatever is being shared about deafness. Elisa states, "humour is the best way to help make everyone around you comfortable and sometimes disability is an uncomfortable topic only because people are so scared to offend you that they don't even know how to have that conversation." Although she was always funny as a child, her humour never included talks

about her disability because she was embarrassed by it. It was only within the past five years that she has become comfortable with herself. She stated, "As I got older, I concluded that no one was going to see me the way I want them to see me unless I saw myself that way. So, I started having fun with myself, finding different ways to show off my hearing aids, fun ways to get comfortable in my own skin. And once I did that, I was able to joke about it because it was not a heavy weight on me anymore." Elisa has brought that humour about her deafness into the workplace. Whenever she starts a new job, if she realizes that people are uncomfortable, to lighten the mood she'll say, "Sometimes I'll ask what seven times before we get anywhere, but that's just part of the journey. I'm not rude, I'm just deaf, hahaha."

Travel, humour and advocacy are important to Elisa. "My favourite place I've ever travelled to is [Bar Harbor, Maine](#). I love that place! I think I really am naturally drawn to the ocean, I'm happy just to be near water. I'm also passionate about visiting national parks

in the U.S. and being close to nature." However, advocacy is not only important, but necessary to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace; in Elisa's world, this is Hollywood. "I think people with disabilities should be hired for normal roles. Right now, it seems you can only audition for roles that align with your disability . . . for me that's hard-of-hearing or deaf characters. But we, deaf/disabled people, live in a normal world. So let us play normal characters in a normal world. Sure, our disability may be visible and it may change some of our mannerisms or dialogue, but our storylines don't need to be focused on just disability. We live colourful and full lives alongside our disability. Having disabled characters with normal jobs, lifestyles and friendships on TV changes the perception of our community. After all, 1 in 4 Americans have a disability."



Elisa can be found on [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#): @Elisa.Richards

Check out her [Etsy shop](#): [BionicOutlaw](#) where she de-stigmatizes disability in a funky, colorful way!

Elisa Richards is known for [Setting Boundaries](#) (2019), [The Illusions of Control](#) (2019) and [Law & Order: Special Victims Unit](#) (1999).

Blogger Spotlight

The impactful voices of bloggers with disabilities



Fifteen years ago, I received a Parkinson's diagnosis. My journey began with a neurologist who offered minimal guidance. Feeling lost, I switched to University of California, Los Angeles' (UCLA) movement disorders clinic, where I found a supportive doctor who gave me my diagnosis. At that time, I didn't know anybody who had Parkinson's neither did I know anything about it. But I've been with the same doctor since then and it has made a huge difference. Even though there wasn't much information out there, she was a big help but I basically was in denial for about 5 years. I was hiding it. I was tremor-dominant which she said was a slower developing form of Parkinson's. Despite initial denial, I eventually embraced my condition, prompted by others noticing my symptoms. Ten years ago, I started a blog and Facebook page aimed at sharing information about Parkinson's. Attending a Fox Foundation symposium in Los Angeles really got me going on my journey to become a Parkinson's advocate. I also attended an event in New Jersey organized by what was then called the Parkinson's Disease Foundation, one of only 25 women from all around the country. We were asked to do something in our community when we got home. So, I pulled together the women that I knew in Los Angeles with Parkinson's and we got together, organizing fun events—boxing, yoga, speakers, which has now blossomed into a thriving community which adapted seamlessly to Zoom during the pandemic and continued twice per month since then.

Sharon Krischer [TwitchyWoman.com](https://www.twitchywoman.com)

By Staff Writer

BEST TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

My husband and I went on a cruise to Antarctica two years ago. That was the most amazing experience. On every trip I usually have at least one day where I don't feel well but I didn't miss anything on that trip. It was so wonderful, everything worked. It was different than most trips because there were two excursions a day. You go out,

come back, rest and then go back at your assigned time. Because it was broken up like that, it helped—rather than going out for full days which are overwhelming. So, it was amazing. I don't remember having any issues on that trip. I take my walking poles with me when I travel because it makes such a difference and when we were out on the ice and snow if I didn't have them, I

would have been falling all over the place so having walking posts are great. Walking, hiking or even going through the airport—they're helpful.

WORST TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Last October, we went to Morocco and it was a nightmare getting there. Our flight went through Montreal. When we got there, our

plane was late so we missed our connecting flight and had to stay overnight. We got back to the airport the next day and eventually left Montreal through Washington D.C. and then to Morocco. When we get to Morocco, my bag isn't there. I had an air tag on my bag and when I checked it, my bags were still in Montreal. We were meeting friends in Morocco and they got there on time, but we got to there a day late, and had no luggage. We had to buy clothes. Then, I woke up in the middle of the night and I was so dizzy I could barely move or stand up. A doctor came to the hotel to make sure I was okay. So many things went wrong and it took another two days for my suitcase to arrive. Fortunately I always carry my meds with me—that's the one thing that you should not put in the suitcase you're checking in. You have to carry them on board. At least I had my meds with me but with the huge time change, not getting my luggage and everything else, I was totally wiped out but the rest of the trip made up for it. We did a sunset camel ride and it was pretty cool.

MUST-RETURN-TO PLACE

Hawaii. We love it there. We do nothing or everything, whatever we want to do, and it's wonderful. We go there almost every year. My husband is an avid whale watcher. Last year we went to Big Island, but usually, we go to Maui. It's wonderful, so just relaxing. Just reading, swimming, snorkeling.

TRAVEL AND EQUIPMENT ADVICE

Take your meds with you in your carry on and always bring your prescription, because if you're in a foreign country and you have an issue and you have to refill, you'll

need it. Also put your doctor and other important information such as a list of all your medications and how often you have to take them in a kit. It's really important to have that when you're travelling.

If I'm changing time zones and because medication needs to be taken on time, I just adjust to the time zone I'm in. I may end up taking one less pill or take it at an earlier time than I normally would but that works for me. I take sleeping pills because on a long flight it really, really helps and usually I also take them the first night or two when I get there. It helps me get adjusted to the new time zone. That's one of the biggest questions, how do you adjust your medications when you're going through a big time zone change—because it really can mess you up but talk to the doctor about this.

I have a massage roller stick that fits in my suitcase, which is nice, because if you're dragging suitcases around and your muscles start to ache afterwards, it comes in handy.

Also pack collapsible walking poles. I usually put one in my suitcase and take one with me as it helps with walking around the airport. Alert the airline people that you have an issue.

TRAVEL ADVICE FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE

Enjoy everything that you can. Before he retired, my husband travelled for work and he would often go to Europe or Asia and I went with him a lot of time and I learned to explore on my own. It's really fun because you can immerse yourself into the culture of a place. I like to go to a lot of historical sites and archaeological

sites are fun, learning about the culture and the history of a place. I have souvenirs all over my house from all over the world and it's fun.

Since my husband retired 12 years ago, we travel a lot because we can. We don't know when we're not going to be able to travel, so we say, "Let's do it while we can." That's why we did Morocco. In the summer we went to Scotland then London and Barcelona for conference. And we were in each city long enough, three or four days, which was great because we were able to explore.

LUXURY VACATIONS

For me, this is one where I don't have to carry my suitcases, somebody else is taking care of it for me.

A luxury vacation is going to really neat places and also being pampered. That's what I like about a cruise. You can get a massage, a facial, you know, you can do that stuff on a cruise and you also have days when you get to see different places.

We had fabulous luxury vacations in Scotland, London and Barcelona. We also had a safari in Africa where we slept in lush tents where we could hear the lions and other animals at night. ■

Visit Sharon at [TwitchyWoman.com](https://www.twitchywoman.com)

Blogs & Vlogs

These bloggers and vloggers put the accessible into Accessible Journeys. They have blazed trails for people of all abilities and fill in critical gaps of the accessibility puzzle.



“My disability doesn’t define me,” says A Journey In My Wheels blog creator, Claire. Born with congenital muscular dystrophy, she learned to drive—her electric wheelchair that is—at age 3. Claire wrote about an accessible pod glamping getaway in Callander, Scotland, which fit all her needs and then some. Top features included a profiling hospital bed, tracking hoist (bedroom and bathroom), plentiful plug sockets, Changing Places shower bed, shower seat, toilet / bidet with remote control, height adjustable bathroom sink and more. The pod’s spaciousness and amazing views rounded out the experience. Check out this rare find in [Accessible Glamping Pod in Callander](#).

Blogger: Claire
Home country: U.K.
Blog: [A Journey in my Wheels](#)

What and where: Accessible glamping in Scotland



“Let’s bring dementia out of the cupboard under the stairs.” Healthcare activist George’s blog encourages discussions on dementia, namely in his life and travels. He confronts his feelings, his evolving new normal and its challenges in a blog that is part confessional and part wonder. George gets lost when reading maps, forcing his wife to take over the driving. Then there’s the fiasco of getting the right SIM card. It’s tough to make decisions, to remember where he’s been. But then there’s the simple splendour of St. Quentin’s cathedral, the power of soldiers’ memorials, rolling fields of flax and corn, local wine and pate. The joys of travel anchor George’s chance to improve life for people with dementia. Join him as he wends through [France](#).

Blogger: George Rook
Home country: U.K.
Blog: [George Rook](#)
What and where: Travel in France, with dementia



Alison dares her readers not to laugh while reading her blog, The Perky Parkie. That’s a tall order, especially from someone who fought through juvenile rheumatoid arthritis in her teens, colon cancer in her 20’s and now Parkinson’s disease in her 30’s. One post unpacks Alison’s airport and airplane escapades: passing through security with deep brain stimulation, dodging the metal detectors, moving as if her body is stuck in molasses, and in-flight muscle spasms due to taking a little extra Sinemet. Her posts do more than light a smile. They spark conversation along with a deeper understanding of life and travel with Parkinson’s. Check out [Have Parkinson’s Will Travel](#).

Blogger: Allison Smith
Home country: U.S.
Blog: [Perky Parkie](#)
What and where: Fidgety flying with Parkinson’s



British Carrie Aimes lives with a rare progressive condition, Ullrich congenital muscular dystrophy. Her blog, Life in the Slow Lane, offers advice and information, along with accessibility and product reviews. A trip to the seaside in Cornwall was the perfect getaway for the landlocked Midlands resident. Carrie scored a huge accessible room in Camborne, with great disabled facilities, which she highly recommends. Days were spent happily exploring Godrevy, Polly Joke poppy fields, Lands End and Penzance. Despite her health taking a turn and her wheelchair malfunctioning, Carrie still reveled in the calm and friendly Cornish lifestyle. Read the post [here](#).

Blogger: Carrie Aimes
Home country: U.K.
Blog: [Life on the Slow Lane](#)
What and where: Summer holiday in Cornwall



American Cat Stappas created the blog, It’s Only a Bruise, to facilitate conversation about multiple sclerosis. Diagnosed in 2013, Cat admits that disease makes people uncomfortable, that there is much unknown and yet too much information, especially online, which makes the web a scary place. Although the blog isn’t about travel per say, we had to share her trip to California to attend an American Tribal Style belly dance convention. Cat had to deal with the inconveniences of travelling with MS, the need to pack snacks, map out activities, build in recovery time and ensuring proper refrigeration for meds, but then there was the plant-based Impossible Burger, the stunning Russian Orthodox Holy Virgin Cathedral, and a stint in eerie but fascinating Alcatraz. Join the [California dreaming here](#).

Blogger: Cat Stappas
Home country: U.S.
Blog: [It’s Only a Bruise](#)
What and where: Belly dancing in California



Sailing solo around Britain and Ireland is already a challenge, let alone for someone living with a spinal injury and mental health challenges. But that’s just what Ian Wyllie does, chronicling it all in his blog, Sailing Trilleen. His posts are richly poetic, in language and accompanying photos. His sail also raises funds for the Andrew Cassell Foundation, who empower disabled sailors to compete alongside and against able-bodied crews. Ian’s journey allows him to offer access advice to waterside locations, which makes life better for people with disabilities, mobility issues and even toddlers. “Good access benefits everyone. . . .” Follow him for his idyllic sail from Campbeltown to Lamlash: [sailing at its best](#).

Blogger: Ian Wyllie
Home country: U.K.
Blog: [Sailing Trilleen](#)
What and where: Solo sailing around Britain and Ireland



Vlogger: Natalie Fierce
Home country: U.S.
Vlog: [Natalie Fierce](#)
Experience: Animal Kingdom Safari, Orlando, Florida



“Hunting for happiness every day and killing it,” is the subtitle of Natalie Fierce’s vlog. In it, she discusses her cerebral palsy while showing her curious vivacious nature. It’s her chance to share the challenges of having disabilities plus her “talents at being a human.” In this video, Natalie ventures to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Her first stop is Animal Kingdom, and its safari theme park. Follow her as she tours through African-inspired landscapes and their unique animal inhabitant, in Exploring Walt Disney World’s [Animal Kingdom in a wheelchair](#).

Tennessee gal Gayle loves to travel along with her service dog, Pipsie. Her travel and lifestyle channel is geared towards, “bodacious broads who don’t let life, budget or disability get in the way of living.” This vlog addresses how to make a road trip successful when you have asthma. Gayle has asthma, and a host of other health conditions, and uses her travel experiences to guide her listeners. Her tips include formulating a medical plan with your doctor and other action items to ensure safe stress-free trips. [Watch here](#).

Learn more about her disabilities on Instagram, including her [mild stroke](#), [foot-drop](#) and balance issues, and a game-changer for her [thyroid and autoimmune](#) problems.



Vlogger: Gayle
Home country: U.S.
Vlog: [Be Bodacious](#)
Experience: [Road trips for asthmatics](#)



Vlogger: Jenni
Home country: U.K.
Vlog: [Chronically Jenni](#)
Experience: [Cruising Norway's fjords](#)



Jenni from Essex lives with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS) and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), which cause chronic pain, fatigue and food sensitivities. Her vlog, Chronically Jenni, features a 2023 cruise to the stunning Norwegian fjords on a new P&O ship. The video is chock-full of highlights onboard and while exploring some of Norway’s sights. Along the way, Jenni must be careful with her diet, due to food sensitivities. The vlog shares her review of accessibility features of the ship, key to Jenni as she alternates between using a wheelchair, stick or rollator. Follow her to the fjords [here](#).

Ellie describes her vlog as following her journey through chronic illness and disability, “in a world that wasn’t designed for us.” In the summer of 2023, she took her first wheelchair accessible holiday to Spain. It was a huge accomplishment to Ellie, who had been nervous to travel with her wheelchair. A self-professed over-thinker, this time Ellie tried to go with the flow. Watch what [happened](#) . . .



Vlogger: Ellie Henry
Home country: U.K.
Vlog: [Small and Strong](#)
Experience: Rolling with it, [on holiday in Spain](#)



Vlogger: Lindsay Nott
Home country: Australia
Vlog: [My C5 Life](#)
Experience: Day trip on [Mount Tamborine](#), Queensland, Australia



Lindsay Nott’s life was forever changed at age 17, when he broke his neck at vertebrae C5 in a swimming accident. Ever an explorer, he continues his love of travelling and adventure, now on 4 wheels. The advocate for disability awareness and peer support mentor for the newly injured took a day off to go up Mount Tamborine to some stunning vistas, to watch the paragliders and have a relaxed lunch. The Sky Walk presented a few accessibility challenges, but nothing was going to spoil this great day out in the [Gold Coast hinterland](#).

Michel admits that she finds a deep meditative gratefulness in exploring new places, and she loves to take her audience along, via her videos. Travelling with lupus might have its challenges, and one of those is Michel’s need to stay gluten-free. A recent solo trip to the tip of Cape Cod required planning for the all-important GF donuts and lobster rolls. Join her from Texas to Boston to Cape Cod where she hunts for lighthouses and [delicious food](#).



Vlogger: Michel Janse
Home country: U.S.
Vlog: [Michel Janse](#)
Experience: Hunting for lighthouses and gluten-free feasts in [Cape Cod](#)



Vlogger: Catherine Ray-Steven
Home country: U.K.
Vlog: [Rising from The illness](#)
Experience: Oklahoma! At Wyndham’s Theatre, [London’s West End](#)



It’s hard to enjoy a night out in London’s West End when you pass out in the middle of the show, but that’s one of many things that can happen for people with chronic illnesses. Catherine Ray-Steven deals with neuro Behcet’s disease and gastroparesis. She ventured to Wyndham’s Theatre to do an accessibility review and catch the show Oklahoma! The good news was that the amazing theatre staff took great care of Catherine, ensuring her safety and comfort while still being able to [enjoy the show](#).


Instagrammers

These Instagrammers capture a moment in time of an accessible journey. Like our bloggers and vloggers, they are pushing the boundaries of travel without limits.

Disability on the 'gram: captivating Instagrammers you need to follow

Instagrammer: Rachelle Chapman
Home country: U.S.
Instagram account: [@rachelles_wheels](#)

Enjoying the accessible Hilton Cancun, Mexico >>>



Rachelle shares accessibility features of the Hilton in Cancun, which she calls “an amazing all-inclusive resort.” This [reel](#) is sure to make you want to dance, and go on vacation . . .




Bronwyn Leeks and her son, a wheelchair user, tour some of Melbourne’s sights, enjoying endless sweets, friendly folk and noting the wheelchair-friendly [cobblestones](#).

Instagrammer: Bronwyn Leeks
Home country: Australia
Instagram account: [@smithsholidayroad](#)
<<< Exploring Melbourne, Australia


Instagrammer: Heather Murphy Bendix
Home country: U.S.
Instagram account: [@jacks_autism_journey](#)

Waterfalls and cave swimming in Fossil Springs, Arizona >>>




Heather is devoted to son Jack, who has autism, but she understands the importance of self-care. Here she hikes Bob’s Bear Trail then dives into self-care in the glorious waters of [Fossil Springs, Arizona](#).

Instagrammer: Imogen
Home country: U.K.
Instagram account: [@threewheelingadventures](#)
Visiting Galle Lighthouse, Sri Lanka >>>




Self-professed planner Imogen recognized that Sri Lanka was one of those trips which required a travel agent, especially for a traveller with mobility issues. The payoff was a relaxed visit, and gorgeous photo of a visit to [Galle Lighthouse](#).




Aspen Baxter reviewed the Oklahoma City Hilton. Accessibility features in her room included grab bars, fold down shower seat, roll in shower, roll under sink, mirrors and peep hole at eye level, lowered closet spaces and light switches, and more. She gave it a thumbs up. Tour it in this [reel](#).

Instagrammer: Aspen Baxter
Home country: U.S.
Instagram account: [@accessibility_with_aspen_sage](#)
<<< Accessible Hilton, Oklahoma City

Instagrammer: Kelsey and Jenny
Home country: U.S.
Instagram account: [@theinclusivetraveler](#)
Collecting treasures from around the world >>>



Wheelchair user Kelsey, and Jenny, who has ulcerative colitis, IG as The Inclusive Traveler. They aim to spread awareness, encourage others to travel and promote an accessible future. But when you really want to secure a memory, why not bring a [treasure home like Kelsey does?](#)



Catarina Rivera reminds us that sometimes people with disabilities need extra time to do things—and that’s okay. This [post](#) shows her getting onto a cable car in Medellín, where she politely refuses to rush, giving herself time to watch the car’s approach, plan her entry, and orient herself.

Instagrammer: Catarina Rivera
Home country: U.S.
Instagram account: [@blindishlatina](#)
<<< Riding a cable car in Medellín, Colombia

Tech-Enabled

Innovative technologies to support and enhance the lives of people with disabilities

Purple Lens



A web accessibility toolkit that combines automated and human remediation

Spoke



An app that ensures that deaf travellers never miss out on important public announcements at airports or public locations

Dateability



The only dating app designed to help the disabled and chronically ill community find love

Vacayit



Helps the blind vicariously experience in-destination tours through professional audio description

Lisnen



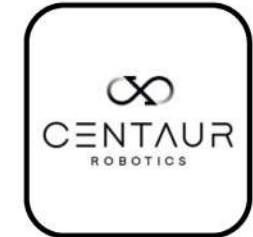
An app that allows the deaf and hard of hearing to hear sounds like alarms, telephones and door knocks

EnChroma



Glasses that enable people with colour blindness to see vibrant colors

Centaur Robotics



Power wheelchair that fits into the space of a dining room chair and elevates the user up to eye level.

Be My Eyes



An app that provides blind users with audio descriptions of what they are seeing using AI via ChatGTP4 or live volunteers

Three Play Media



Audio description, live captioning, automated transcription

TranslateLive



Provides closed captioning, live captioning, translation, audio description, accessibility compliance

Picture Live



A photobook that uses QR codes to activate audio descriptions or ASL interpreters for each page

Take our Survey



We invite you to take part in our survey and share your valuable insights to help us improve.

[CLICK HERE](#) 

[To Table of Contents](#)

mélange FashionAbility MAGAZINE

LAUNCHING SOON!

WARDROBE ESSENTIALS

Adaptive Fashion Editorials

Adaptive Clothing Hacks

Inclusive Beauty
makeup tips

Fashion Industry **Voices**

Shopping **GUIDE**

Adaptive Fashion Trends

Meet the Models

Designer Spotlight

AND MORE...

TRAVELABILITY

THE INTERSECTION OF TRAVEL AND ACCESSIBILITY

We want to make your travel planning easy.

Check out the TravelAbility Accessible Destinations Portal.

Search over 125 accessible destinations, arranged by state and province, or alphabetically.

One click can help you find all you need to know about:

- accessible accommodations
- accessible transportation
- medical equipment rental
- and more ...

where available

Most people spend over 4 minutes searching for information about accessibility on a destination's website.

Don't waste valuable time. Go to:

WWW.TRAVELABILITY.NET/ACCESSIBLE-DESTINATIONS/

