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HOTELS & RESORTS

6 LUXURY TRAVEL EXPERIENCES DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR TRAVELERS WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

Wheelchair-accessible luxury hotels and other upscale spaces designed for guests with mobility impairments are not as common as they should be in Asia-Pacific, but travel is getting more inclusive. Here are 6 worth booking.



Edited by Evan Clulee

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WITH THE RETURN OF FULL FLIGHTS and busy resorts comes a much-needed emphasis on inclusivity and access in the travel sphere, especially for those with mobility impairments. We've been taking note of new luxury hotels, restaurants and experiences designed to be wheelchair accessible and it's not just the right thing to do; it's also smart business. According to the World Bank, approximately 15 percent of the global population is disabled (and as life expectancy increases so does potential for an acquired disability).

“Disabled people often need assurance of accessibility before booking, and it also should be pointed out that we are return customers,” says Evan Clulee, a frequent-traveling former Paralympian, who represented New Zealand in wheelchair racing in 1992. “If a place meets our needs, and is welcoming, we are very likely to return.”



Mobility Villa ramp access. Photo by Aksham/Courtesy of Soneva Jani

At [Contento](#), a new restaurant in New York City, the owners created a low-level bar designed for people using wheelchairs to order from. While we'll admit the majority of Asia doesn't have the most stellar infrastructure when it comes to people with mobility issues, Singapore is following suit with a similarly designed space at the new vegan bar, [Analogue Initiative](#).

takes some forethought, as you'll see in this list.

From Doha to Victoria Harbour, here are six fantastic luxury hotels and travel experiences that are wheelchair-accessible and designed for people with mobility impairments.

1. The Woodbridge Tasmania, Australia



Capt Roadknight room. Photo by Loic le Guilly

This historic heritage mansion on the Derwent River first caught the eye of now owners Laurelle and John Grimley while they were vacationing in Tasmania. They've restored the luxury hotel with a suite called Capt Roadknight, designed specifically with Laurelle and others with mobility impairments.

Back in 1981, Laurelle was immobilized, and John became her carer. So, they built the suite with that experience in mind, including direct access from the main entrance, windows with views at wheelchair seated level, a wardrobe with two-level hanging, a bathroom with a shower big enough for a wheelchair, easy grab taps and a disability-approved toilet and grab rail. In January of 2021, Laurelle was back using a wheelchair for a month, and unsurprisingly, she chose to move into the Capt Roadknight suite.

2. Soneva Jani

Maldives



Villas 81. Photo by Aksham/Courtesy of Soneva Jani

The disability-friendly overwater villa at Soneva Jani Chapter Two may be the most luxurious accommodation in the world created specifically for people with mobility impairments. Villa 81 is the first villa on the hotel jetty and was designed to be wheelchair-accessible to the uber-discerning traveler. A ramp leads to the palatial, rustic overwater retreat, which spans 772 square meters and is able to accommodate four adults and two children.

The ground-floor TV room can be converted into a bedroom for anyone using a wheelchair, with a bathroom that includes grab bars, rails and facilities — with plenty of space to accommodate a wheelchair. And at Soneva Chapter Two, everything is included with no request too big or too small for your dedicated personal butler.

soneva.com/resorts/soneva-jani; US\$6,810 per night, everything included.

3. JW Marriott Marquis City Center

Doha, Qatar



Accessible bathroom. Courtesy of JW Marriott Marquis City Center

Doha is hot right now, and we don't just mean the weather. It's one of the Middle East's most exciting cultural destinations, with museums and gourmet restaurants galore — not to mention FIFA World Cup on the way. Among the plethora of luxury hotels, the JW Marriott, right in the heart of it all, has an elegant room on the 20th floor designed to be fully wheelchair accessible. It includes grab rails throughout, a roll-in shower, as well as an emergency button for 24/7 assistance if needed.

Elsewhere, you'll find ramps and elevators so that those with mobility impairments can easily travel through every space in the hotel, including the fitness center, Quan spa, expansive pool and restaurants ranging from traditional South American to Middle Eastern.

[marriott.com/hotels/travel/dohjb-jw-marriott-marquis-city-center-doha](https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/dohjb-jw-marriott-marquis-city-center-doha); from US\$220 per night.

4. Rosewood Hong Kong



Spacious shower with rails and bench



WC with handrails

Courtesy of Rosewood Hong Kong (2)

The floor-to-ceiling views of Victoria Harbour make the posh Rosewood Hong Kong some of the most desired real estate in the city. Happily, multiple rooms in this towering 91-room high-rise come with handrails throughout for guests with mobility impairments.

In place of bathtubs, there are huge barrier-free showers that include handrails and benches for sitting down while showering. Their world-class restaurants serving everything from traditional Shunde cuisine to Indian also have ramp access and facilities for people using wheelchairs.

rosewoodhotels.com/en/hong-kong/offers; from US\$540 per night.

5. InterContinental Phuket Resort Thailand



Roll-in shower. Courtesy of InterContinental Phuket Resort

One of the newest luxury hotels on the shores of the sparkling Andaman Sea, the InterContinental Phuket was built to be wheelchair accessible, and to make beach travel for those with mobility impairments a breeze. So much so that the Thai Paralympic team is scheduled to spend some much-needed R&R time there, after earning 18 Olympic medals in Tokyo.

All of the InterContinental's standard rooms are wheelchair-accessible, and two rooms are fitted with roll-in showers with benches, bars and rainwater showerheads with easy to reach handles. All the resort's paths leading to the restaurants, spa and swimming pool are accessible and easy to navigate in a wheelchair. But if you'd rather hitch a ride to the beach, they have buggies designed to accommodate wheelchair users and people with other mobility impairments.

ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/us/en/phuket/phukb/hoteldetail; from US\$150 per night.

6. A bunch of awesome adventure activities

Japan



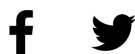
Scuba diving near Amami Oshima Island. ©Zero Gravity

With the most recent summer Paralympics held in Japan, it comes as no surprise the country is home to a variety of outdoor adventure activities for people in wheelchairs.

Head to Japan's Southern Alps and hit the slopes on a seated bi-ski and dual ski adaptive equipment at the highly accessible Fujimi Kogen Snow Resort*. Even further south, the Oita International Wheelchair Marathon is celebrating 40 years as the world's first racing wheelchair-only marathon. If you've got a need for speed, the para athletes pushing their three-wheeled racing wheelchairs in the race hit up to 50 km/hr downhill.

And at Japan's largest freshwater lake, Lake Biwa, disabled people can take advantage of MPG Biwako's specially-designed harness for wheelchair users to paraglide over the lake with a professional instructor. If you'd rather be below the water, fly to Amami Oshima Island, where the Zero Gravity Seisui Villa, owned by a wheelchair user, creates underwater activities from scuba diving, snorkeling, and sea kayaking for marine-lovers who use wheelchairs.

japan.travel/tokyo-and-beyond-2020/en/media/2021/08/11/accessible-sports



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