

Unlocking a world of possibilities

“It is better
to travel
well than
to arrive” –
Buddha

Australians are known for their adventurous spirit, and as increasing numbers of us travel domestically and abroad, the opportunity for airlines and travel organisations to expand their disability services is timely and long overdue.

People power can also make a difference. Julie Jones is one person committed to inspiring and helping people with a disability to get out there and experience the world.

Julie, from Sydney, exudes positivity. Her attitude to life and its possibilities is contagious. In light of this, her recently developed website www.havewheelchairwilltravel.net seems like a natural progression.

Julie's son Braeden, now 17, was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy

when he was five months old. Although she says it was a shock at first, the diagnosis put an end to “living in limbo.”

As she watched her son slowly make small gains, Julie became committed to never taking his achievements for granted or allowing his disability to stop them living life to the fullest.

Travel has always been a big part of Julie's life, having travelled extensively with her parents as a child, and later working as a travel consultant and enjoying the fruits

of her labour. She and her husband had planned to continue travelling after their son was born so his disability wasn't about to stop them.

“Up until our son was seven years old, my husband managed to carry him in a hiking backpack for those difficult to get to places. We were lucky enough to do a cruise around the South Pacific, tour New Zealand, Uluru, Darwin, Kakadu and Cairns,” said Julie.

“The backpack enabled us to get to more remote areas. If you are a

family with a younger child with a disability I'd recommend doing any of the hiking type trips while they are young."

As Braeden got older, Julie wanted to continue travelling as much as possible, so wheelchair accessibility became a priority. In 2011 the family, which now included Braeden's younger sister Amelia, decided to embark on a big trip to the US.



The Jones family - bonding time in the outdoors

"We certainly weren't the first family with a disabled child to travel on a long haul flight to America but at times it felt that way," said Julie.

"So I decided to start researching our trip and that's when the idea for this website came to me. I thought why not share all my research and great discoveries with others who are either planning a trip, or are feeling nervous about giving it a go."

Julie's site offers travel tips for Australia and the US. She's a firm



Braeden sees the world from his back pack with his dad

believer that you can never ask too many questions and that doing your research is essential to ensure family bonding time

isn't consumed with unnecessary distractions.

The Jones' enjoyed their family time in the US so much they went back again last year, opting to fly with Qantas which provided them with an upper body harness and was equipped with a disabled toilet.

"An economy seat is challenging for anyone so it's quite difficult for a disabled person, but our attitude has always been to work our way around the situation, so as to not limit Braeden," said Julie.

"Choose your destination carefully- the US has a lot to offer and very good wheelchair access but it might be best to start local, to work out what your needs are. Australia is making a great effort in regards to accessibility and the introduction of the Companion Card seems to have made many attractions more aware."

For information on how to kick-start your travels go to:

www.havewheelchairwilltravel.net or follow Julie on facebook at [facebook.com/havewheelchairwilltravel](https://www.facebook.com/havewheelchairwilltravel)

www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/disability-access-facilitation-plan/global/en

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