

Travel Without Limits – by Laverne Bissky and David Dziadyk



After our daughter Kasenya was born three months prematurely, we were told that she was very likely to have disabilities but that the extent of the disabilities could not be predicted. It took months and even years for us to understand the severity of her Cerebral Palsy. Perhaps this was for the better, because we vowed in the early days, before we fully understood the challenges, that we would never let disabilities hold us back from doing what we wanted to do.

We both have a strong passion for travel as well as discovering other cultures and we both travelled extensively before we had kids. Our passion for travel is something we want to share with our children. We want them to become the type of people that appreciate the human and ecological diversity in the world.

By the time Kasenya was four years old, she still did not speak, sit up or feed herself. Nonetheless, we decided that we should start travelling with her while she was still small, because the mobility challenges would only grow as she did. So when Kasenya was four and our son Devin was six, we decided to make our first overseas trip to Australia. We chose Australia because we have family connections there and because we knew it would be one of the more wheelchair friendly destinations. Following that trip we have travelled extensively within Canada as well as taking two additional overseas trips as a family. Our goal is to visit all seven continents with our children. Two down and five to go!

We are about to embark on our next travel adventure in September 2008. This trip will be to South East Asia and it will be different from previous ones. We want to travel with purpose, not just to see things. We really want to get immersed in the culture. To do that, we need to stay in one spot for a while. So we have been researching opportunities for volunteer work. So far we have had an offer to teach English at a school run by Buddhist monks in Cambodia and an opportunity to work with kids who have CP in Vietnam.

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It may seem that our family is more likely to be the recipient of charitable works than the givers. But that implies that our needs are greater than what we have to offer the rest of the world. To truly break down barriers, we need to break down stereotypes. We need to see people with disabilities in contributing roles, not just as recipients of charitable work.

Some people have asked us why we would add more stress to our already complicated life, by choosing to travel. There is no doubt that we will meet challenges on this trip, but the answer to this type of question is always the same: because the benefits far outweigh the additional challenge.

Travel creates invaluable abilities in all children and no less so in a child with a disability. Travel teaches the ability to be flexible, adaptable, solve problems and cope with change. Our world is a changing place and learning these skills is an essential part of being a contributing member of

society. Travel also creates a wonderful opportunity to leave your normal distractions behind and spend time connecting as a family in a new and stimulating environment.

People have also asked, why South East Asia? For one it is exotic and has intrigued us since we stopped in Singapore on our way home from our most recent trip to Australia. Also there are more opportunities to do meaningful volunteer work in South East Asia because it is a less developed part of the world. This region is also less travelled by Westerners, than say, Europe.

If travel is going to get easier for people with disabilities, we need pioneers on the frontier. Like almost everything else, the availability of accessible services is driven by demand. In many of the countries we will visit, people with disabilities do not enjoy the social acceptance that we expect for them in Canada. Poverty is prevalent in South East Asia, particularly amongst people with disabilities, so they have little market power. When we go abroad and ask for services for people with disabilities we are raising awareness and improving conditions not only for fellow travellers, but for locals as well.

We each have the right to follow our passion and to expect to live our life to the fullest: ourselves, our son and our daughter. There may be challenges to overcome, but we should never compromise our expectations!

In our next contribution to Journey, we will provide details on where we plan to go and some insight into our trip planning. Anyone who would like to follow our journey in more detail can see our website: www.NoOrdinaryJourney.com.

As we share our story we hope to inspire families and individuals to follow their own passion. Maybe your passion is travel or maybe you have another passion. Whatever your passion is, disability should not be a limitation!

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