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**TRAVELABILITY**  
THE INTERSECTION OF TRAVEL AND ACCESSIBILITY

mélange

# Accessible Journeys

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





# 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.



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





Inclusive Amilla Maldives

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 IncluCare 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 IncluCare 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 IncluCare'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 IncluCare's education program results in a hospitality team that cares authentically about ensuring every guest has the best experience.

Go to [www.worldofinclu.com](http://www.worldofinclu.com) to learn more.

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Richard Thompson





# 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.

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.

## **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

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.

## **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.

Employees participate in IncluCare'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







Silicon 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.





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[amilla.com](http://amilla.com)