



## Disabled Travelers: Adventure Trips Are Now Within Reach

*No need not to hit Alaska's dogsled trails or Costa Rica's rainforests!*

As a result of the events of Sept. 11, many travelers, including those with disabilities, are vacationing closer to home. There is a renewed interest in destinations in the Western Hemisphere—though not the places you might expect.

Disabled travelers are no longer limiting their journeys to large, "accessibility assured," US cities. Instead, disabled travelers are increasingly looking for experiences off the beaten path, expanding the accessibility envelope as they do so.

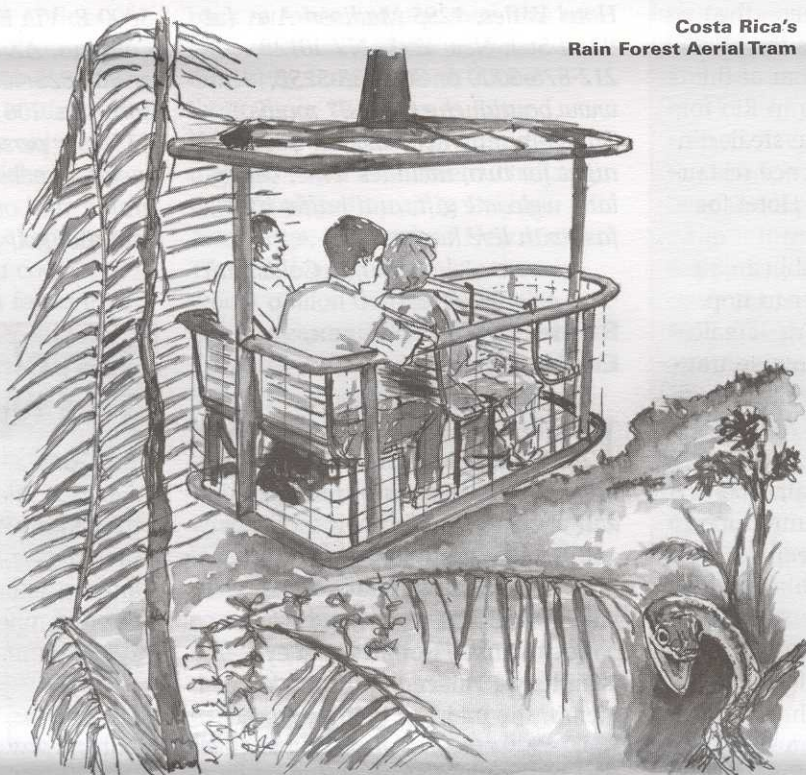
I asked Adam Lloyd, quadriplegic as the result of a sporting accident and editor of the online newsletter *Gimp on the Go*, to find out the hot destinations for those who don't let their bodies hold them back. Adam found that, within the

country, opportunities to participate in such unconventional, accessible vacations as dude ranching and Alaskan wilderness tours are cropping up with greater frequency. Two such adventurous escapes are Stagecoach Trails Guest Ranch and IdidaRide Sled Dog Tours.

Stagecoach Trails Guest Ranch, located in Arizona, was built from the ground up with wheelchair accessibility in mind. Not only are the guest rooms, dining hall, and swimming pool barrier-free, but Adam says ramps and special riding equipment make

horseback riding possible for most mobility-impaired guests. For those unable to saddle up, the ranch also offers two-seat gokarts in which visitors can cruise the desert trails.

Another form of accessible trailblazing takes place in Seward, Ark.,



Costa Rica's  
Rain Forest Aerial Tram

where IdidaRide Sled Dog Tours allows wheelchair users, via an easy transfer from their chairs, to mush their way through the frozen north with a team of racing dogs. The accompanying guide's narration, pointing out local wildlife and expounding on Iditarod experiences, can be interpreted for deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors as well.

Accessible adventure travel in the US is partly the happy result of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But even more encouraging is the expanding access and aware-

ness in neighboring countries, both north and south.

Known for its marine life—the largest concentration of killer whales anywhere—Vancouver, British Columbia, offers some of its finest attractions just off its shoreline. Starline Water Tours has wheelchair-friendly boats that take passengers right out to the action. Getting personal with orca, fishing for the area's famed salmon, and spotting seals, dolphins, and bald eagles are just a few of the possibilities Starline offers to disabled tourists seeking to commune with nature.

If your taste is for something more tropical, Adam suggests checking out Costa Rica. While the tiny nation trails America in barrier-free infrastructure and lodging, the island has made great strides in improving accessibility. A handful of wheelchair-accessible restaurants and hotels—some of the hotels even have roll-in showers—do

exist, and curb cuts are being installed on a few city sidewalks. In addition, a specialized tour company, Vaya con Silla de Ruedas, which translates to "Go With Wheelchairs," offers a variety of excursions using an adapted van, complete with wheelchair lift.

Costa Rica's main drawing card is its natural beauty. And thanks to some extraordinary forethought, disabled individuals can share in its splendor. In 1994, a remarkable aerial tram opened within the Braulio Carrillo National Rainforest. Transporting visi-

