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Embarking on a path to independence with the customized Paravan Hyundai Staria***After completing driver's education and having her vehicle custom-modified at Paravan, self-determined mobility is gradually becoming part of Marina's everyday life***

Simply getting in the car on a whim and driving off—for Marina, that was long unimaginable. Since March, the 33-year-old social worker has been driving independently in her custom-modified Paravan Hyundai Staria. For her, this means far more than just driving: more freedom in daily life, more independence, and the ability to decide for herself when and where she wants to go. "Now I can just say: I'm getting in the car and driving off," says Marina. "For me, mobility means freedom, independence, and self-determination."



On the road with self-determination: With her custom-adapted Paravan Hyundai Staria, Marina gains new freedom and independence in her daily life. Photo: privat

In 2024, Marina completed her driver's education at the Paravan Driving School in Aichelau. At the time, she drove a Peugeot Traveller equipped with the Space Drive electronic driving and steering system. The vehicle is controlled via two joysticks: Marina uses her left hand to operate the gas and brake, and her right hand to steer the vehicle.

Embracing her new mobility

The first driving lessons were unfamiliar territory for Marina. Lots of new technology, a large vehicle, and completely new procedures. "At first, I was overwhelmed—in a good way," she recalls. Step by step, she found her way into the new situation and gained increasing confidence in the vehicle and the technology. "I was thrilled from the very beginning—but I also had a lot of respect for it," says Marina. "I drove very carefully because it was very challenging."

Above all, she first had to develop a feel for the subtle movements of the joystick steering. Her goal had never been to master everything perfectly right away. Instead, she wanted to consciously take her time, gain experience, and slowly develop a routine. With every driving lesson, the new mobility became more natural.

PRESS RELEASE

In May 2024, Marina finally held her driver's license in her hands. Then the next stage began: choosing the right vehicle, submitting an application to the funding agency, and planning the custom vehicle conversion.

Custom Vehicle Modification for Maximum Independence

The decision was made to go with a Hyundai Staria. The main deciding factor was the generous amount of space, as Marina needs to transport two wheelchairs in her daily life. At the same time, modern assistance systems and additional safety features played an important role in the vehicle selection. The value for money also convinced her. Next came the process of customizing the vehicle to her personal needs. Marina lives with dwarfism and brittle bone disease. Standing at 85 centimeters tall, she is one of Paravan's smallest customers.

Step by step, a vehicle was created that was precisely tailored to Marina's requirements and her daily life. Marina enters the vehicle with her wheelchair via the Paravan cassette lift. She then transfers to the specially adapted driver's seat via the transfer console and moves directly in front of the steering wheel. The Hyundai Staria is controlled via the Space Drive electronic driving and steering system using two joysticks—accelerator and brake on the left, steering on the right.

The vehicle was tailored down to the last detail to meet Marina's requirements. The vehicle's secondary functions can be easily operated via Paravan Touch. A beeper assists Marina with key functions such as turn signals or windshield wipers. Additional camera systems help Marina see into the blind spot, as she is unable to perform a classic shoulder check. The specially adapted seating solution was also particularly important. In collaboration with mann1 + hauck Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Technology, a custom-made seat shell was developed that provides Marina with the necessary support and a secure seating position while driving. Thanks to Isofix mounts, the seat shell can be flexibly used on both the driver's and passenger's seats. Electric armrests further facilitate transferring between seats.

The first interim adjustments took place as early as July 2025. As further adjustments were made, the vehicle was repeatedly fine-tuned and precisely adapted to Marina's daily life. "You need patience because it's so individualized," says Marina.

Step by step back to routine

Getting back behind the wheel after a long break took some patience. "After such a long break, it was a bit nerve-wracking at first," says Marina. With each subsequent drive, however, her confidence returned and she became more comfortable with the car. The key factor was the fact that the vehicle had been customized specifically for her.

"With the vehicle customized specifically for me, a lot of things became much easier."

Today, Marina is increasingly expanding her daily range on her own. Her daily commute is now just as much a part of it as spontaneous appointments or trips with friends. She has even already covered her first longer distances on her own. "I've become much more independent—that's what real participation looks like to me," she says. "Self-determined mobility has definitely become a reality." Much of it still feels "a bit surreal." But with every drive, this new mobility becomes more natural. Today, she can decide for herself when she leaves, where she goes—and when she comes back. "Now I just get in the car and drive off."



The joy is immense: When Marina passed her driving test in 2024—accompanied by driving instructor Ralf Buhmann from the Paravan Driving School. Photo: Paravan



The Paravan Hyundai Staria is controlled via two joysticks. This is made possible by the Space Drive electronic driving and steering system. Photo: Paravan



The custom-fitted seating solution allows Marina to safely transfer from her wheelchair to the driver's seat of her Paravan Hyundai Staria. Photo: Paravan



For Marina, mobility today means one thing above all else: being able to decide for herself when she leaves, where she goes—and when she comes back. Photo: Paravan

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About PARAVAN GmbH

PARAVAN GmbH, headquartered in Pfrontstetten-Aichelau (Baden-Württemberg), is the global market leader in highly customized vehicle solutions for people with disabilities. At its main location and its Heidelberg branch, approximately 180 employees develop and produce innovative mobility solutions for people with physical limitations—ranging from vehicle conversions and electric wheelchairs to specialized driver training. With its “one-stop-shop” concept, PARAVAN supports its customers from consultation through vehicle conversion to driver training. At the technological heart of the company is Space Drive, a digital drive-by-wire driving and steering system that is the first of its kind worldwide to be approved for road use. The technology enables even people with severe disabilities to drive a vehicle independently. With over 25 years of practical use and more than two billion kilometers driven on public roads, Space Drive has proven itself worldwide. In addition to mobility for people with disabilities, numerous industry partners use the system as a technology platform for developments in the field of autonomous driving. www.paravan.de