

Pfronstetten-Aichelau, June 10, 2024

Joystick Driver's License

People with disabilities can complete their driver's license training at the PARAVAN driving schools in the Aichelau Mobility Park and at the Heidelberg branch. An extensive fleet of different, flexibly adaptable vehicles allows Marina, for example, who is only 85 centimeters tall, to complete her practical driving training in a relaxed manner.



Marina is only 85 centimeters tall and completes her PARAVAN driving training with the help of two joysticks. A short time later, another student can sit in the car with a completely different vehicle configuration and still receive optimal training. Photo: PARAVAN

It took Marina a good six weeks to complete her practical driving training at the PARAVAN Driving School in the Aichelau Mobility Park. "The first few trips were around Aichelau," says the 31-year-old, who came to the Swabian Alb from the Rhineland. "It's going quite well, but it's more challenging than I thought." The social worker uses the Space Drive driving and steering system and two individually positioned joysticks to accelerate and brake with her left hand and steer with her right hand. Her short arms and limited muscle strength prevent her from using a conventional steering wheel.

However, this is not a problem in the training car, which can be individually adapted to the learner driver. Everything is flexible and can be varied. Marina uses voice control to operate the car's secondary functions. "Now accelerate smoothly and take the bend with a little momentum," instructor Ralf Buhmann encourages and praises: "Navigating with the joystick is going quite well. Now we just need to improve our speed and safety. City driving and special trips are soon on the agenda. "For me, it's freedom, independence and self-determination that I'm experiencing here. It's a completely different perspective from the driver's seat and it's so much fun," says Marina, who wants to drive herself to work in the near future.

Marina completed her theoretical training in her home town. In addition to new drivers, PARAVAN Driving Schools also welcome people returning to driving. People who have fallen ill or had an accident later in life can, under certain conditions, get their license back, provided that they meet the requirements stated in the traffic doctor's report. "It is important not to give up your license right away," says driving instructor Ralf Buhmann. "After an accident or illness, you should first contact a traffic physician and seek advice." This report is a prerequisite for admission to driving training and certifies that the driver is fit to drive under certain technical conditions. Training can then begin. A technical certificate confirms the functionality and correct use of the necessary adaptations.

PRESS RELEASE

The PARAVAN Driving School has a total of five vehicles at its headquarters: two Mercedes Sprinters and a Peugeot Traveller, equipped with the Space Drive driving and steering system, as well as various electromechanical handheld devices and a so-called "light steering system of 10 or 6 Newtons (N)" for when the driver's strength decreases but it is not yet necessary to switch to a joystick. For students who are still able to switch, there are also two other training vehicles equipped with electric skid boards and electromechanical driving and steering aids, among other things. Another driving instructor, Carsten Seidler, runs the driving school at the PARAVAN branch in Heidelberg. Here, too, highly specialized driving training is possible with the necessary force measurements in advance, as well as Space Drive and a variety of input devices.

Driving instructors with the appropriate training can train people with physical disabilities in conjunction with the right training vehicle. PARAVAN instructors are happy to advise and train. The enthusiasm of the students is unique and cannot be compared to a conventional driving school. "The prospect of being able to participate in life independently again after passing the driving test is the greatest motivation. For the instructor, the greatest reward is seeing the happy faces afterwards. After all, being able to drive a vehicle independently means a significant improvement in quality of life.

Marina did it, now she has her license! The excitement was great, but the joy of passing the practical test was even greater! "I feel more comfortable in the city, it's more relaxed, smaller and safer," she says. "On the country road or highway you get overtaken, I still find it a bit difficult to cope with the high speeds." After duty comes freestyle. Selecting the car, customizing the seat, and the associated application marathon are on the agenda. The exact car has not yet been chosen, but it must at least be large enough for "me to get into the car with the wheelchair using the cassette lift," according to the plan. She now hopes to be able to drive herself in a year. "I'll have achieved one of my biggest goals in terms of independence," Marina beams.

Five milestones to a driving licence

The first step is a traffic **medical evaluation**. A specialist will assess your cognitive abilities. If all is well, a **specialized driving school** with modified driving school vehicles can be found. This will determine what aids are needed. At the end of the process, a **technical report** is issued - the basis for the conversion of the vehicle for the disabled at the conversion company. This is followed by the **driving school training**, which ends with the **driving aptitude test or practical driving test** for new drivers. Here, the candidate must prove that he or she can drive the vehicle safely on the road with the appropriate modifications. The **driver's license** is then issued. The next step is to select a suitable base vehicle. Depending on the case, it may be possible to apply for reimbursement of the vehicle conversion costs. **More information** at www.paravan.com.



The PARAVAN driving school is ideal for Marina to complete her practical training in peace and quiet. Thanks to the extremely flexible driving school vehicle and a seat shell, she can complete her driving lessons in a relaxed manner. Later, she will be given a driver's seat specially made for her. She can then transfer directly into the vehicle using a PARAVAN transfer console. Photo: PARAVAN

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*cRalf Buhmann and Horst Hilsenbeck (from left) from the PARAVAN driving school in the Aichelau mobility park have the necessary qualifications and a versatile driving school fleet with which they can train almost any complaint.
Photo: PARAVAN*



*The Mercedes Sprinter of the PARAVAN driving school offers many options and can be converted very quickly as required, from a simple mechanical slope control unit to the Space Drive electronic driving and steering system.
Photo: PARAVAN*

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About Paravan GmbH:

PARAVAN GmbH is the global market leader in customized vehicle solutions for the disabled people. About 160 employees at the Pfronstetten Aichelau and Heidelberg sites develop and produce customized vehicle conversions, electric wheelchairs and even specialized driver training. PARAVAN pursues a holistic approach with its "one-stop shop" concept. The technological highlight is Space Drive, an intelligent digital control system based on the drive-by-wire principle. Thanks to the active redundancy of the servo motors, it is completely fail-safe and the first to be approved for road use. This innovation enables severely disabled people, some of whom have no arms or legs, to drive independently and safely. It is not possible for these drivers to simply take control of the steering wheel. Over the past 20 years, Space Drive has been proven on more than one billion kilometers of roads worldwide and is used by numerous industrial customers for test vehicles in the field of autonomous driving. The system is available as a retrofit kit with an open interface for all known vehicle types. www.paravan.com