Adventures without barriers: Phil Quinlan explores Longford Forest Center Parcs resort in Ireland

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Phil Quinlan, 49, is a keen traveller, a lover of anything sports-related and a devoted father to two young children. Having suffered a catastrophic brain injury whilst playing football at the age of 15, Phil was left in a coma for 10 days and had to have a life-saving operation to remove a blot clot from his brain. After a further six weeks in an unconscious state, Phil was left paralysed down one side but fought to regain some mobility with the aid of rehabilitation. Despite facing significant challenges along his journey to recovery, Phil has never let his disability restrict his independence or limit his thirst for life and exploration. Here, Phil tells us about his recent travel experiences with his folding scooter, and how it's helped change his life for the better.

As a child, Phil Quinlan from Navan played every kind of sport going and even represented his county in cross-country, but a clash of heads playing football meant his life changed dramatically overnight. Phil's fascinating life story has been documented in a much-acclaimed autobiography launched this year, entitled "And a bang on the ear", which describes how he comes to terms living with a disability, then travelling the globe, and eventually finding love and starting a family. It's not always been a bed of roses, far from it, Phil's had his trials and tribulations along the way, but he's remained resolute, with a good sense of humour. Nowadays, Phil proudly declares he's actually 'living the dream'.

As a disabled person, Phil along with his family, enjoys nothing more than a relaxing holiday in a beautiful location but this does mean they have to rely on any resort accommodation and travel arrangements to be accessible. Travelling with a disability can come with its complications and challenges, but this doesn't worry Phil too much.

Phil recently travelled with his family to Center Parcs in Longford Forest, in the Republic of Ireland. This was, in fact, the second time Phil had visited Longford Forest. He liked it so much the first time, it didn't take too much persuasion for him to go back. Phil commented, "We really love Longford Forest, it's a beautiful, peaceful retreat and there's just so much to do for all the family, including the in-laws when they join us. We shared an adapted lodge, which was located not too far from the main village, and it's designed specifically with accessibility in mind. Compared to other resorts, Longford Forest is in a totally different league."

Adapted lodges at Longford Forest come supplied with dedicated disabled parking nearby, ramps to help with access to accommodation, lowered countertops, handrails throughout the properties and 'walk-in' or 'wheel-in' showers. The resort can also provide a hoist for use with hot tubs, saunas and steam rooms should guests require additional help with access. The village public areas also provide ramped entrances and walkways in most areas to further help with accessibility.

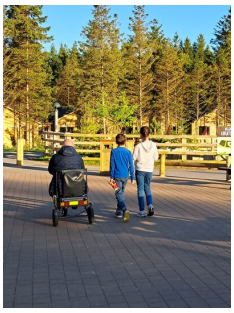
The Center Parcs resort at Longford Forest sits within 400 acres of woodland and is located just five kilometres from Ballymahon. There's a lake, a beach, and miles of paths to walk or cycle. The resort is the newest village in the Center Parcs portfolio, and it was the first venue to be established in the Republic of Ireland. Longford Forest also claims to have Ireland's largest indoor water park and boasts of having nearly 200 indoor, outdoor and water sports activities for guests to enjoy.

Along with his family, Phil travelled to Longford Forest with his portable mobility scooter, which he stored neatly in the back of his car for the journey. Phil commented, "Compared to previous scooters I've owned, it's so compact, I take my eFOLDi scooter with me everywhere I go, and it still leaves me plenty of room for my luggage. When we arrive, it only takes a moment to unfold my scooter and off we go. It's very easy to use and surprisingly lightweight, so it's not too much trouble to get in and out of the boot."

With all the space to roam and explore at the resort, Phil enjoys getting out and about with his family with the help of his scooter. Phil commented, "My kids are still quite young, and having a scooter means I can hold their hands as they run around, which of course, means the world to me. It's little things like that help me feel closer to my family, and it makes all the difference. Having the freedom to do all the things I want to do, without any real hassle or worry is very important to me."

Aside from using his scooter for holidays and traveling the world, Phil also uses it to help him coach his kid's local football team. He can often be seen driving up and down the touchline with his scooter, schooling and supporting his team. Phil commented, "My scooter copes just fine on the grass pitches, and it enables me to coach the kids, which is hugely rewarding for me. It's actually really comfortable to

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drive and very capable with a top speed of 8mph, which means it can handle some pretty tough terrain. My scooter also has a 14-mile range, so it easily lasts the whole day without me needing to recharge it. Being able to support my kids in this way whilst also allowing me to continue a love of the game, really means a lot. It's genuinely given me a new lease of life and the independence to do so much more than I could have imagined."

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