

access all areas

VILLA FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

One family teams up with an intrepid team of architects, lawyers and builders to create their revolutionary Villa, *Katherine Watt* looks into this rather amazing story to overcome the odds

When the Mooney family went on holiday to Bulgaria four years ago, they fell in love with the beautiful landscape and friendly people. Although they wanted keep holidaying in Bulgaria, 16-year old Sean Mooney, who is registered blind with cerebral palsy, did not have the disability friendly facilities available in Bulgaria to fully enjoy the vacations.

In the UK, the Rights of Access legislation passed in 2006 meant that shops, clubs, restaurants and any other public premises had to modernise their establishments to accommodate disabled people. Bulgaria, on the other hand is still working at making the country accessible to disabled people. Sofia is leading the way, with rudimentary wheel chair ramps now installed at tourist attractions, metro stations and public squares. There are also many hotels on the Black Sea coast that are able to accommodate disabled travellers, however the mountain resorts and other city areas are still lagging in disabled access.

A few years ago, it would have been virtually impossible for a disabled visitor to comfortably enjoy a trip to a Bulgarian village, yet now, innovative thinking from the Mooney family is making this possible.



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'We loved Bulgaria, but if we were to continue visiting we had to find better ways to accommodate Sean' says Sean's dad Trevor, a businessman from Abbey Hey, Manchester. 'We decided to take on the challenge of being the first ever parents or company to construct a 21st century villa specifically designed to cater for all people with special needs who want to visit Bulgaria.'

The Villa is typical for a holiday accommodation; it will be fully air-conditioned, have satellite television, a balcony, a barbeque area and a family-sized pool. The villa will sleep eight people in four nicely-sized bedrooms, and have a spacious open plan living and dining area and a fully fitted kitchen.

In addition to these features, the villa will have additions to cater to the needs of our guests. Doors will be wheelchair friendly, ramps will be installed to enable access from outside areas, all bedrooms will be ground floor with door handles low enough to allow a person in a wheelchair to access them without stretching. All bathrooms are planned to incorporate a wet room, and will also have grab rails for security. The 1.5 meter pool will be built with tactile areas around it, enabling blind or partially sighted holidayers to identify areas of danger. It will also include a hoist for easier access. Inside, the house will be decked out with modern appliances to aid visually impaired people, including a



