# MICHAELA BENTHAUS



**Aerospace Engineer**
**Pioneer of Inclusive Spaceflight**

Michaela Benthaus is an aerospace engineer and combines scientific excellence with an extraordinary personal story. She was the first person with a spinal cord injury to fly into space, thereby demonstrating that what appear to be insurmountable barriers do not always lie where we expect them to.

Michaela Benthaus (*1992) studied mechatronics at Johannes Kepler University Linz and subsequently specialised in aerospace engineering, with a focus on space exploration and astrophysics, during her master's degree at the Technical University of Munich. Her professional career took her to the European Space Agency (ESA), where she joined the Graduate Trainee Programme and worked as a space engineer until October 2026. Since then, she has been employed by the space technology group OHB.

In 2018, a serious mountain bike accident fundamentally changed her life. Since then, she has been paraplegic and relies on a wheelchair. Instead of giving up her dream of space travel, she devised new ways to make it a reality. With great personal dedication, she has campaigned for people with disabilities to become a natural part of manned spaceflight. In 2022, as part of the US project AstroAccess, she experienced weightlessness for the first time during a parabolic flight. The project is dedicated to making space travel and space technologies more inclusive and accessible. In December 2025, Benthaus flew into space on a suborbital flight as part of the Blue Origin mission NS-37, becoming the first wheelchair user to go into space.

Michaela Benthaus still continues to campaign for greater inclusion in science, technology and space exploration. She is a regular guest on podcasts, television programmes and in print media. She speaks about inclusion, space exploration, scientific curiosity and how one can gain new perspectives even in the most difficult moments.

**Topics (Selection):**

- Beyond Gravity: Breaking Barriers on Earth and in Space