

# Going Solo

"I love going to Paris alone," my neighbor Charlotte remarked recently. "I've gone with my daughter and with several different friends, but my first choice is always to go alone. It's so liberating. Here, people see me as a physician or their mother or their grandmother, but there — alone — I can be myself."

I know exactly what she means. I traveled solo for many years and still look forward to trips where I can be completely self-indulgent, come and go as I please, and be concerned only with my own enjoyment.

Traveling solo doesn't mean being alone. It means being able to be spontaneous, to amble and reflect without distraction, and it means having a better chance of meeting local people. Singles are easy to approach, while pairs of travelers engaged in conversation

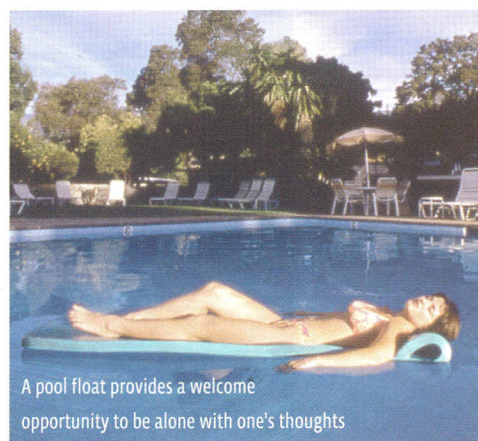
are not. Another benefit is the sense of self-confidence that develops from learning to cope "on the road" with one's own company and resources.

Following are some tips for making your solo journey a success:

- Two things I wouldn't be without: a journal for recording experiences and thoughts, and a novel that can be ignored for days and retrieved on a quiet evening.
- Boutique hotels and B&Bs are more comfortable for solo travelers than, for instance, a high-rise Hyatt. Having said that, if you do stay in such a place, request a room on the club floor that provides access to a cozy lounge. Avoid resorts that cater to honeymooners.
- Likewise, avoid candlelit restaurants and opt for casual

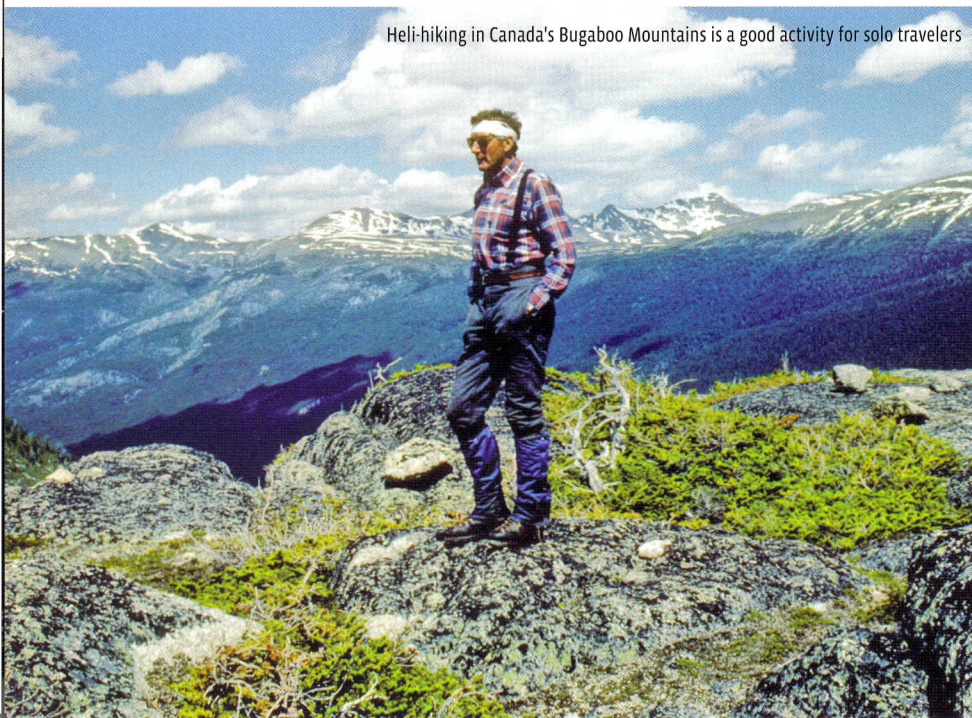


Adventurous woman on the zipline in Costa Rica



A pool float provides a welcome opportunity to be alone with one's thoughts

Heli-hiking in Canada's Bugaboo Mountains is a good activity for solo travelers



dining options with friendly waiters.

- For safety's sake, join a group for outdoor adventures or exploring parts of town that might not be safe for travelers on their own. The concierge at your hotel is a good source for day-tour recommendations.

- Women should check out [www.journeywoman.com](http://www.journeywoman.com), the Web's number one resource for traveling women. The site is chock full of travel tips and good advice — and some of it also applies to men. Two of my favorite sections are "Tour Guides Worldwide" and "She Shops the World." ☛

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✦ Also go to [www.hermail.net](http://www.hermail.net) and consider connecting with a woman living in the places you plan to visit. She can answer your questions and help you plan your trip.

• Plan to keep in touch with folks back home via your choice of electronic devices. I like to get a local SIM card for my cell phone so I can call home economically, and I either carry a laptop for email or visit local cyber cafes.

• If you are toting a laptop, consider packing a few DVDs, or downloading movies from Netflix. Audio books (free from the library) are great for road trips.

• Learn about your destination ahead of time and have a plan for each day. Mix time on your own with days or half days when you join a city tour or guided walking excursion. Traveling solo doesn't mean you spend your entire vacation by yourself.

• Be open to scratching the plan and seizing unexpected opportunities. After all, Frances Mayes, author of *Under the*

Adventure Women organizes trips to Bonanza Creek Ranch in Montana



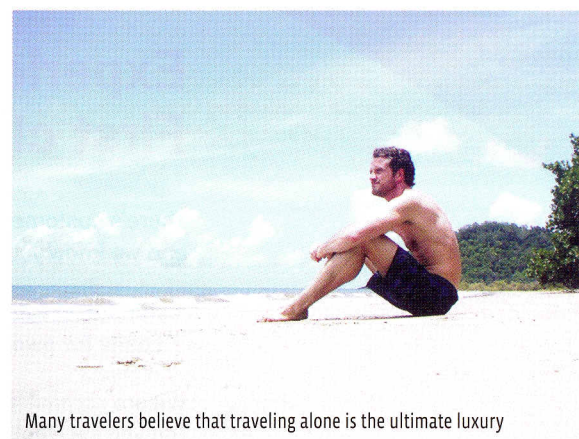
*Tuscan Sun*, didn't plan to buy a house in Tuscany.

• Accept that there will be times you will feel lonely and have a plan for dealing with it. This might include reading, going for a walk, journaling, or chatting with another solo traveler in a café.

• If you're cruising, beware of single supplements. According to Lyndon Waller of Worldview Travel in La Jolla and Solana Beach and Gayle Gillies Travel in Rancho Santa Fe, Crystal Cruises has the lowest single supplement.

• Crystal also offers a very good deal to "gentlemen hosts" — chosen for their dancing abilities and out-going personalities.

• The site [www.cruise critic.com](http://www.cruise critic.com) says Holland America Line is also renowned for catering to solo guests. The Single Partner's Program, its roommate-matching service, matches non-smoking guests of the same sex with



Many travelers believe that traveling alone is the ultimate luxury

others who want to share — and guarantees you'll pay just the double occupancy price, even if no partner can be found.

• The important thing to remember is that solo travel may sound scary if you haven't done it before, and it will make your mother nervous. If you are a mother, it will make your children nervous. You, however, might just have the time of your life.

Visit [www.ranchandcoast.com](http://www.ranchandcoast.com) for additional resources. ELIZABETH HANSEN



Solo travelers enjoy volunteering in developing countries