

# Tips For Traveling Women

My first book, *The Woman's Travel Guide to New Zealand*, created quite a flap.

"Why a guide for women?" interviewers asked suspiciously. Many media mistakenly referred to it as the "single girl's guide to New Zealand," which missed the point and really annoyed me. However, the heartwarming feedback I received from readers made it all worthwhile.

This was before many women traveled without a male partner or a group, and I heard from hundreds of mothers, sisters, retirees, widows, wives, and singles who were emboldened to strike out together or solo with my book in hand and had a wonderful experience. The guide was not a huge financial success, but I've never felt more richly rewarded.

Today, of course, women's travel

is something we take for granted. The movement started with "girls' getaways" to a spa or sun-drenched resort and has evolved into a major industry.

Consider the following from Marybeth Bond, award-winning author and founder of The Gutsy Traveler Web site ([www.gutsytraveler.com](http://www.gutsytraveler.com)):

- 72 million U.S. women traveled during the past year.
- Of those who currently take nature, adventure, or cultural trips, 75 percent are women. Ten years ago, there were no such statistics. Now we know that the average adventure traveler is not a 28-year-old male, but a 47-year-old female. And she wears a size 12 dress.
- Last year women spent \$55 billion in outdoor equipment,

from hiking boots to specialized bike seats designed for the female anatomy.

- The number of women-only tour operators has increased 230 percent in the past six years.



Serendipity Traveler takes small groups of women to places of great natural beauty

- Some of those 72 million women traveled solo; others chose to vacation with friends, family, or colleagues. Two of my female friends just returned from a great holiday in San Miguel de Allende. I helped a bridge group of eight plan their trip to Vietnam, and a New Zealand pal recently joined a small group of women for a bike trip across the South Island.

While I'm all for do-it-yourself trip planning, I think it's often easiest to be part of an organized group for equipment-intensive outdoor activities.

Adventure Women, "'The Grande Dame' of Women's Adventure Travel Since 1982," offers small group trips at all ability levels for active women over 30. These include domestic and international vacations with a focus on hiking, skiing, horseback riding, wildlife



Take a tour of Sindabezi Island on the Zambezi River in Zambia



watching, kayaking, and other water sports. The group's February 2012 trip to Burma and Laos sounds wonderful. ([www.adventurewomen.com](http://www.adventurewomen.com))

I also really like the philosophy behind the trips offered by Serendipity Traveler: "thoughtful, imaginative, and enriching travel experiences combined with personal service and the luxury of a tailor-made journey." Serendipity Traveler takes small groups of women to places of great natural beauty and provides opportunities to experience the local culture, landscape, art, history, and cuisine. They also include the option of travel philanthropy — a topic that is near and dear to my heart. ([www.serendipitytraveler.com](http://www.serendipitytraveler.com))

Because I enjoy gardens, drinking tea, and all things British, I wish I

Marybeth Bond at the Taj Mahal

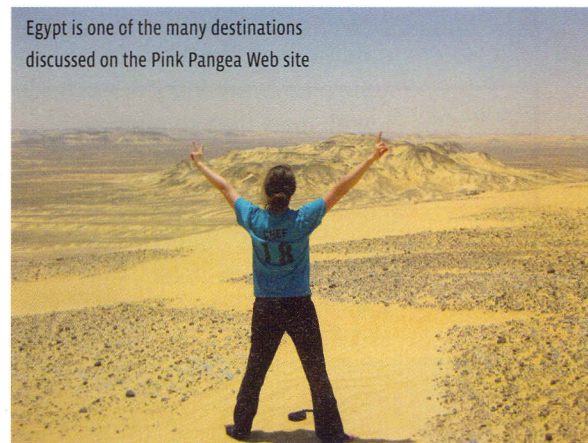


could join Serendipity's trip to the Chelsea Flower Show and the English Countryside. The itinerary includes tea at The Ritz, a chance to stroll through quaint villages in the Cotswolds, and a visit to Sissinghurst Castle and Gardens (the most famous 20th century garden in England).

If you are new to women's travel, spend some time reading about others' experiences on the Pink Pangea Web site. I love their philosophy: "The woman traveler has full access to the world. She can rough it, luxuriate, she can do business, and she can enjoy herself — if she travels right." ([www.pinkpangea.com](http://www.pinkpangea.com))

I also think that Journey Woman, a site full of tips and practical advice, is a great resource for traveling women. I just read founder Evelyn Hannon's *She Learns to Cross Streets in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*, and it reminded me of my own experience and made me laugh

Egypt is one of the many destinations discussed on the Pink Pangea Web site



out loud. ([www.journeywoman.com](http://www.journeywoman.com))

At Her Mail, you can connect with women living in the places you plan to visit and ask for trip planning advice. ([www.hermail.net](http://www.hermail.net))

Whether you travel on your own, with an organized group, or with female friends or family members, please heed the advice I offered in my first book: The number of people you meet and how much you enjoy them will depend entirely on your attitude. Pick a good one. ELIZABETH HANSEN



Adventure Women at Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, Burma