

Girlfriend Getaways Continue to Thrive

With unemployment rates reaching record highs and morale at an all-time low, consumers are feeling the pressure to put off all non-essential expenditures for more solvent times. The travel industry is among those hit hardest by the current economic crisis, with airline, hotel, and vacation bookings declining in a seemingly endless spiral.



One sector, however, seems to be weathering the storm better than most: the “girlfriend getaway.” Virtually unheard of just a decade ago, women-only holidays have enjoyed a meteoric rise in recent years, with new programs and providers popping up all over the map. And today, even as family vacations and boys’ weekends are being put off, women around the world are continuing to invest in themselves.

It may seem surprising that women - often the guardians of family finances - are indulging their wanderlust even now. But research suggests that this may be an act of self-preservation rather than selfishness. In a recent study, University of California Los Angeles psychologist Shelly Taylor found that women respond to stress not with the “fight-or-flight” response observed in men, but with its polar opposite: “tend-and-befriend” behavior.



Says Taylor, “We think it’s cute when women call up their sisters when they’re under stress. But no one has realized that this is a contemporaneous manifestation of one of the oldest biological systems.” And it’s still in evidence today. As one of the country’s foremost pioneers of the girlfriend getaway, Bev Sanders has seen this behavior first-hand, time and again.

“I think women are in tune with their needs,” Sanders says. “It’s like on an airplane, when they tell you to put on your oxygen mask first, then take care of your family - women really get that. They understand on a deep level that if they are feeling lost, they can’t bring value to their relationships.” Sanders is founder of Manifesta Safaris for Women. Its consistent success (regardless of the economic climate) seems to support Taylor’s “tend-and-befriend” theory.



“That’s one of the reasons we love our girlfriends: they are the compass that always gets us back on course,” says Sanders. “It’s also of the reasons I believe in what I do, especially now.”

Manifesta Safaris offers sunny week-long surf vacations for women of all ages, sizes, and abilities, as well as creative art retreats in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California. Sanders is also the founder of Jennifer’s Journey, a contemporary on-line travel resource for women.

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