

WHY IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO SOLO TRAVEL THIS YEAR



Most people love the feeling of jetting off somewhere new, yet so many shudders at the thought of going alone. It may sound daunting, but solo travel is a life-changing experience, full of growth and self-awareness. Getting to grips with a new country is an absolute privilege and going on your own gives you a more realistic feel for the culture. Don't put off your travel plans when your friends turn you down, start planning your solo trip and you'll feel like an expert traveller in no time.

You might assume that going on a holiday by yourself is expensive, but, it's usually pretty affordable when compared to a group holiday. Being on your own means you only have yourself to please: you can plan your budget more accurately, get a cheaper room, and choose a more affordable location on your own—if that's what you want, of course!

Having a backup plan when it comes to money is perhaps even more important when holidaying on your own, as you don't have other members of your group to borrow from if you have an emergency like losing your passport! It's a good idea to plan for all sorts of eventualities when travelling alone. Here's how:

- **Ensure you have travel insurance** - If you lose anything on your travels this can cover it and could also cover medical expenses if you need professional treatment for whatever reason.
- **Look into emergency funding** - Things happen, and you may need to get your hands on cash fast. If your savings have been depleted by the cost of your holiday but you know you can cover the cost as long as you can spread it out, being able to apply for a loan online from Sunny or having a 0% interest credit card to hand offers a little comfort.
- **Use a phone tracking app** - This means your friends - both the ones you make on your travels and back home - can see where you are to ensure you're safe. The Find my Friends feature on an iPhone works well or use Google+ to track your location. Checking in on Facebook regularly is another way to let people know where you are. Ask your loved ones to sign up before you leave so you can keep an eye on one another.

Going away with your friends is fun, but it often means missing out on some of the must-see spots as you have to compromise. Traveling alone lets you explore at your own pace without having to worry about someone else being bored, giving you a more authentic taste of the country. You're more likely to really engage with new surroundings if you're fully immersed in it rather than being part of a group hitting up the tourist spots. Or, if all you want to do is lie on the beach and soak up the sun, that's fine too. You can do what you want whenever it suits you. It's your holiday to do as you please.

If you think you might get lonely on a solo holiday, you can book yourself onto a group tour instead. A guide will show you the best places to visit, encouraging you to get involved in fun activities like hikes and water sports. Group tours are a great option for people who want to holiday alone without being truly by themselves and see more of the world with a helping hand from someone who knows the area. You'll make amazing friends from all over the world while getting to grips with your new surroundings - what could be better?

Some people find the thought of solo travel intimidating; but if anything, finding something scary is even more of a reason to do it. Embrace being out of your comfort zone and your confidence will soar. Going it alone means dealing with everything from organising the trip itself to getting stuck into new activities. You'll learn more about who you are as a person as you deal with unexpected situations on your own, helping to develop self-resilience. You'll also find plenty of friendly locals to help you on your way, so you'll never be truly alone.

Speaking of the locals, travelling solo also gives you the chance to speak to them more than you would in normal circumstances. Ask questions about the history and general life to get a real insight into the country. They'll be able to tell you about all the hidden gems that may just end up being the best part of your trip. You'll learn things you won't find in travel books and will be able to impress your friends on your return - they'll soon regret not joining you on your travels.

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