

SOLO TRAVEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Cruise the West Indies to New Orleans

25 Let the Caribbean's captivating beat carry you to the soulful sounds of America's Deep South on this voyage where stops include the castaway beauty of the British Virgin Islands, the upmarket chic of St Barts, and reggae rhythms of Jamaica.

● Crystal Cruises (020 7399 7601, crystalcruises.co.uk) employs hosts and hostesses to dance, dine and socialise with guests. It also arranges solo events and hosted solo dining. This 14-night cruise from Fort Lauderdale to New Orleans costs from £5,109 per person, including flights, drinks and gratuities. Departs November 8 2016.

Christmas treats in Belgium

26 Enjoy a festive treat on this Christmas markets cruise to the pretty Belgian cities of Antwerp and Bruges where their town squares are filled with yuletide market stalls. In the Dutch town of Valkenburg, the market is held in a labyrinth of caves beneath the town.

● River Cruise Line (0844 544 6437; rivercruise.com) is not charging single supplements on 2016 Christmas market cruises. A four-night sailing from Rotterdam to Brussels costs from £349 per person, based on return coach and ferry travel. Departs December 7, 10 and 13 2016.

Norway's natural wonders

27 The dramatic scenery of the Norwegian fjords takes centre stage on this voyage, which delves into the rugged heart of this coastline to Flam, Geirangerfjord and Andalsnes, and a scenic backdrop of remote villages, precipitous granite cliffs and spectacular waterfalls.

● Cruise & Maritime Voyages (0844 998 3805; cruiseandmaritime.com) has single supplements of 25 per cent and on sailings of more than five nights offers a programme of solo passenger events. This eight-night round-trip voyage from Tilbury costs from £1,159 per person. Departs May 20 2017.

Historic passage along the Danube

28 Wine-tasting at the historic Nikolaihof Estate in Austria's Wachau Valley, a farm visit in Linz, and a private concert in a Viennese palace are some of the highlights of a Danube river cruise which cuts



Discover the upmarket chic of St Barts, above

SAFETY TIPS
WOMEN TRAVELLERS

DO

- Book hotels ahead. Even small guesthouses now list on booking.com or agoda.com.
- As the rate is often quoted per room, book it for two people as you often get a better room that way.
- Dress conservatively in loose clothes. Outside Europe and North America, shorts are for the beach, leggings for yoga, and see-through shifts for the bedroom. Women should cover shoulders and thighs, in particular, to gain respect and avoid attracting unwanted attention.
- Pack a door wedge to stop people gaining access to rooms in cheap hotels.
- Buy a cheap smartphone and install a local SIM card.

It's a good way to access local mapping, show taxi drivers your destination in the local language, and phone for help. Even making a fake call as soon as you start feeling uncomfortable can head off trouble.

● Book a travel safety course with Objective Travel Safety (01788 899029; objectivegpsafety.com) if you are a novice traveller. They offer advice for travelling as a solo female. The one-day courses, held in London, cost £160.

DON'T

- Walk alone after dark in developing countries. Local women don't do it, so you shouldn't either. Grab a rickshaw or a taxi, preferably one called by the restaurant or hotel.
- Display signs of wealth. Leave expensive jewellery, designer trainers and iPhones at home.
- Accept alcoholic drinks or sweets from strangers, be too friendly with men who approach you at tourist sites, or banter in an overfamiliar way with hotel staff who may misread the signals.
- Rely on a guidebook for up-to-date information on staying safe; instead ask for advice from locals and other travellers.
- Wear earphones while out and about. You need to have all your senses engaged to pick up the signals that something might not be quite right.

● Wear earphones while out and about. You need to have all your senses engaged to pick up the signals that something might not be quite right.

● Wear earphones while out and about. You need to have all your senses engaged to pick up the signals that something might not be quite right.

Gill Charlton

FOOD AND DRINK TOURS

Learn to cook local dishes or just indulge in fine cuisine, says Xanthe Clay

Cookery and culture in Spain

31 On Solos Holidays' six-day Discover the Flavours of Spain tour to Andalusia, travellers learn about cooking classic Spanish dishes and tapas, take part in wine tasting in a vineyard and try local ham in the whitewashed pueblos blancos of Las Alpujarras. Or even go see what happens in a honey museum. There's plenty of culture, too, with various trips to the Moorish Alhambra Palace in Granada and the fascinating cave houses of Guadix, and even some flamenco dancing.

● October 30 2016 and February 19 2017, from £899, including accommodation, some meals, flights, tastings, cookery classes and excursions. Solos Holidays (0844 371 8860; solosholidays.co.uk).

Italian cuisine through the ages

32 Oxford-based ATG doesn't just cater for solo travellers, but the company has plenty of singles joining its house-party-style trips. Staying at the eighth-century Pieve a Castello in Tuscany (two single rooms available for an eight-day Walking and Cooking through History tour, visitors learn about various dishes from the paleolithic to the futuristic, cooking using vegetables from the estate's organic kitchen garden. There are walks to medieval hilltop towns and a trip to Siena, as well as wine tasting in a local vineyard.

● Departures between March and November 2017, from £2,195 full-board, including cookery demonstrations. Excludes flights. ATG (01865 315678; atg-oxford.co.uk).

Beef and booze in Bordeaux

33 Just You specialises in trips for solo travellers, and its Bordeaux holiday has a distinct foodie bent. It's based at Domaine de Fompierre, renowned

locally for its food, and within walking distance from the town of Bazas – famous for its beef – Rick Stein is a fan. The six-day holiday includes a gourmet tour of Bordeaux city, a visit to the wine cellars of St Emilion and an optional trip to Sautesnes to try the sweet wine (from £415).

● Departures between April and September 2017, from £1,059 half-board, including flights and excursions. Just You (01858 896505; justyou.co.uk).

Rustic food in Puglia

34 Puglia is one of the foodies' favourite bits of Italy, with a rustic cuisine based on fabulous ingredients. Singles experts One Traveller has a nine-day trip encompassing both Lecce, the baroque city on the heel-tip of Italy, and the ancient town of Conversano. There's plenty of excellent food along the way, including dinner in a sea cavern and a visit to a masseria, or farm, to see how olive oil is produced.

● Departures between April and October 2017, from £1,950 half-board, including tastings and flights. One Traveller (01760 72201; onetraveler.co.uk).

Ethical eating in Thailand

35 Responsible Travel specialises in sustainable, ethical tours. The company has an increasing percentage of solo travellers, and this 15-day trip has no single supplement. Covering Bangkok, Chiang Mai in the north and Krabi in the south, this promises to get in depth on the regional variations of Thai food, with cookery lessons with locals, a night market visit, a trip to a floating market and even a picnic on a desert island.

● Departures October 29 2016 and February 11 2017, from £2,225, including accommodation, some meals, cooking, activities, transport and flights. Responsible Travel (01273 823700; responsivetravel.com).



The floating market in Bangkok, above; and Ballymaloe Cookery School, below

Food, photography and food writing in Cambodia

36 Masterminded by Australian-born, Cambodia-based couple Lara Dunston and Terence Carter, Grantourismo covers street food, hands-on cookery sessions and market tours, staying in boutique hotels. There are no single supplements and they have welcomed solo travellers from 25 to 69 years old, mostly women. Dunston is a food and travel writer and Carter a photographer, so they are more than well equipped to lead this nine-day Cambodia Travel, Food Writing and Photography Retreat which visits Siem Reap and Battambang.

● October 1 and there are further departures in November 2016 and May 2017, from £1,955 (£1,466.38) full-board, including activities and cookery classes. Excludes flights. Grantourismo (info@grantourismotravels.com; grantourismotravels.com).

Cycle through Yucatan

37 Explore doesn't charge single supplements for those who are happy to share a room with another solo traveller of the same sex. A nine-day cycling trip pottering around stunning Yucatan (mostly on the flat) includes visits to several historic sites as well as a tequila tasting, a pre-Columbian cooking

demonstration and a memorable seafood grill on the palm-fringed beach of San Crisanto.

● Departures between November 2016 and November 2017, from £1,650, including accommodation, some meals and flights. Explore (01252 883735; explore.co.uk).

Cooking in Portugal

38 Adagio runs leisurely walking tours of Europe. Over half of the company's participants are solo travellers, so single supplements are low or there's an option of being paired up with a traveller of the same sex if you don't mind sharing. An eight-day Tastes of Hidden Portugal trip, based in the medieval towns of Estremoz and Evora, includes two hands-on cooking sessions and a chance to try blending your own wine at a vineyard.

● Departures between April and October 2017, from £1,345 half-board, including cooking programme and flights. Adagio (01707 386700; adagio.co.uk).

Learn to cook in Ireland

39 The legendary Ballymaloe Cookery School in the Cork countryside is the alma mater of the likes of restaurateur Thomasina Miers and chef Stevie Parle, and single people are the norm on these courses. Book a room in the shared self-catering cottages and spend the day in the



The floating market in Bangkok, above; and Ballymaloe Cookery School, below

FIRST TIMER?
GREAT REASONS
TO GO IT ALONE

All by myself
Travelling independently doesn't have to equate to being "alone". When travelling on your own, you're very likely to meet like-minded solo travellers, whether you're staying in a hotel, a guesthouse or a B&B.

You can also join a group trip with a tour operator
A number of tour companies (such as those listed here) waive the single supplement. Adventure tours, special interest holidays (such as photography and cooking trips), wellness and yoga retreats and cruises are a great place to start.

Age is but a number
The thought of travelling alone can faze even the most seasoned adventurer, whatever your age. But take heart – while we might think of the typical solo traveller as a gap-year backpacker, many operators report that a large proportion of their passengers are anywhere between their 50s and 70s.

Wining and dining
If you're joining a group tour, check the itinerary to see if dinner is included. If it is (which it most likely does), then this means that you will be dining in the company of fellow travellers.

But even if you're not, dining alone is perfectly fine and can be incredibly liberating.
People watch, read a book, write your observations in a notebook or chat to service staff and people at the bar.

Safety first
Make sure you arrive at your chosen destination in the morning or in the afternoon – well before dark.

Read our guide on the best tour operators for solo travellers: telegraph.co.uk/tt-touroperators-forsolotravellers

For more on solo travel: telegraph.co.uk/tt-solotravel

Trisha Andres

WELLBEING
ESCAPES

For spas, yoga and general wellbeing, Trisha Andres offers her suggestions



Relax at Shanti-Som in Spain, above

Asia meets Spain

41 You needn't fly to Asia to realise your chakra. Just a 40-minute drive from Málaga is Shanti-Som – a wellbeing retreat with a Far East influence. Perched on a hill overlooking the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, it is a quiet haven offering yoga, Pilates, detox and fitness retreats. But there are options for those who simply want a bit of rest and relaxation. If there's one thing you must try, it's the "foot healing" treatment by the gifted Lesley.

● From £800 half-board for a three-day Wellbeing Booster package including flights, classes and treatments. Wellbeing Escapes (020 3735 7555; wellbeingescapes.com).

The Italian job

42 A short drive from bustling Milan is Ti Sana, a monastic sanctuary tucked away in a small village close to the river Adda. The restful retreat, a few miles south of the Italian Lakes, is housed in an 18th-century cottage with stone walls and cobbled walkways. Your "Healthyarian" programme starts with a diagnostic test with nutritionist Mario. "Your health is not good... it's perfect." Mario tells me before revealing that "you are all fat, and no muscle". It's smooth sailing from here, with delicious vegetarian dishes, walks along the beautiful river, trips to nearby lakes Lecco and Como, pilates and aqua gym classes and heavenly treatments.

● From £2,295 full-board for a four-night Healthyarian programme, including classes and treatments. A 10 per cent discount is applied to those sharing a double or twin. Healthy Holiday Company (020 8868 0501; thehealthyholidaycompany.co.uk).

Great British break

43 Nestled in West Sussex, Simply Healing is a detox retreat focused on eliminating toxins from your body. If that all sounds rather clinical, I can assure you it's not. Coming to

Simply Healing is like visiting a favourite aunt at her cosy country home. In this instance, the aunt comes in the form of Vivien Kay, the retreat's motherly patron who will put you on a programme of juices and broths, colonic hydrotherapy sessions and supplements. Not to fret, there are daily rambles in the woods and evening meditation classes as well as some of the best treatments I've ever had (try the REN Wrap – a wrap, scrub, massage and facial all rolled into one). Humble as the place is (a sleek medspa it is not), it is still by far my favourite retreat and arguably the best in the UK.

● From £1,675 full-board for a five-day juice detox, including all treatments. Simply Healing (01403 822117; simplyhealingcentre.com).

New Forest escape

44 Chewton Glen is situated on the edge of the New Forest National Park, surrounded by 130 acres of Hampshire countryside, and is a short walk from the sea. Take in the glorious surroundings before heading to the spa for a massage followed by a dip in the pool. Unlike Simply Healing, above, you won't be with a group – so this will be a truly solo experience. Escape from it all on a bike ride from the spa through a nature reserve towards the magnificent coast.

● From £1,705 for single occupancy for two nights, including all meals, treatments, guided activities and take-home gifts. ITC Luxury Travel (01244 355 527; itcluxurytravel.co.uk).

Continued on page 17

Discover New Zealand with the experts

SAVE UP TO **£400*** per couple

NEW ZEALAND GETAWAY

19 day Premium tour
Auckland to Christchurch

This tour cherry picks the highlights of the North and South Islands of New Zealand. Explore the Bay of Islands, be amazed at the geothermal geysers and rich Maori culture of Rotorua and discover the rugged landscapes of Mt Cook national park.

From only £3,895* per person
Departures from September 2017 to September 2018

SAVE UP TO **£1,000*** per couple

DISCOVER AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

36 day Premium tour
Perth to Christchurch

Make the most of your journey Down Under and add a leisurely paced tour of Australia. You'll visit all of the icons including the cosmopolitan cities of Perth, Melbourne and Sydney, the ancient landscape of the Red Centre, and the sparkling blue waters of Tropical North Queensland.

From only £7,495* per person
Departures from September 2017 to March 2018

From humble beginnings in suburban Melbourne, APT has grown into New Zealand & Australia's leading operator for guided tours. Over 89 years on, we are still proudly Australian family-owned. Our years of touring experience have given us the expertise that few others possess. Using our intimate knowledge of these destinations we take great pride in meticulously crafting the very best itineraries; whilst our long established partnerships with regional experts ensure that you gain a local's insight into every location that we visit.

Everything included for the perfect holiday

<p>ENRICHING SIGHTSEEING</p> <p>Enjoy a good balance of included sightseeing and leisure time, giving you the freedom to explore at your own pace.</p>	<p>STYLISH ACCOMMODATION</p> <p>Stay in hand-picked accommodation, perfectly positioned in central or unique locations.</p>	<p>FRESH PRODUCE, LOCAL FLAVOURS</p> <p>With many meals included, you will enjoy some of the region's most sensational tastes.</p>	<p>EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE</p> <p>A dedicated Tour Director will accompany you throughout, while knowledge of expert local guides will enhance your journey.</p>	<p>EVERYTHING TAKEN CARE OF</p> <p>Return flights from UK, internal flights within New Zealand & Australia, overseas transfers, luggage portage and taxes all included.</p>
---	--	---	---	--

CALL FREE ON **0800 012 6672**
Visit www.aptouring.co.uk/newzealand2017
or see your travel agent

Discover Australia with the experts

SAVE UP TO **£800*** per couple

DISCOVER AUSTRALIA

20 day Premium tour
Perth to Sydney

Discover the vibrant cosmopolitan cities of Perth, Melbourne and Sydney, the Red Centre, and the aquatic wonderland of the Great Barrier Reef on this comprehensive tour. Enjoy a glass of wine as you witness the sunset over Uluru plus a traditional fish 'n' chip dinner on Bondi Beach.

From only £4,795* per person
Departures from September 2017 to March 2018

SAVE UP TO **£400*** per couple

EAST COAST ADVENTURE

17 day Premium tour
Sydney to Cairns

Uncover the smooth sands and sparkling waters of East Coast Australia with extended stays in popular locations so you have as much time to explore all that the sunshine state has to offer. Discover the colourful coral and marine life of the Great Barrier and stay on Fraser and Daydream Island.

From only £4,295* per person
Departures from April 2017 to March 2018

From humble beginnings in suburban Melbourne, APT has grown into Australia & New Zealand's leading operator for guided tours. Over 89 years on, we are still proudly Australian family-owned. Our years of touring experience have given us the expertise that few others possess. Using our intimate knowledge of these destinations we take great pride in meticulously crafting the very best itineraries; whilst our long established partnerships with regional experts ensure that you gain a local's insight into every location that we visit.

Everything included for the perfect holiday

<p>ENRICHING SIGHTSEEING</p> <p>Enjoy a good balance of included sightseeing and leisure time, giving you the freedom to explore at your own pace.</p>	<p>STYLISH ACCOMMODATION</p> <p>Stay in hand-picked accommodation, perfectly positioned in central or unique locations.</p>	<p>FRESH PRODUCE, LOCAL FLAVOURS</p> <p>With many meals included, you will enjoy some of the region's most sensational tastes.</p>	<p>EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE</p> <p>A dedicated Tour Director will accompany you throughout, while knowledge of expert local guides will enhance your journey.</p>	<p>EVERYTHING TAKEN CARE OF</p> <p>Return flights from UK, internal flights within Australia, overseas transfers, luggage portage and taxes all included.</p>
---	--	---	---	--

CALL FREE ON **0800 012 6004**
Visit www.aptouring.co.uk/australia2017
or see your travel agent

*All prices are per person, twin share and include savings where relevant. Valid on new bookings made by 30 November 2016 or until sold out. Subject to availability at the time of booking. Not combinable with any other offer & can be withdrawn at any time. £400 per couple saving based on £200 per person, twin share. £1,000 per couple saving based on £500 per person saving, twin share. Prices are based on 4 May 2016 (New Zealand Getaway) and 24 Oct. 2017 (Discover Australia & New Zealand). Single supplements apply - please enquire for details. Non-refundable deposit of £400 per person due within 7 days of booking, full payment due 100 days prior to departure. Standard APT terms and conditions apply, see website for further details. Premium tours are operated by Travelmarvel, part of the APT Travel Group, UK0685.

*All prices are per person, twin share and include savings where relevant. Valid on new bookings made by 30 November 2016 or until sold out. Subject to availability at the time of booking. Not combinable with any other offer & can be withdrawn at any time. £800 per couple saving based on £400 per person, twin share. £400 per couple saving based on £200 per person saving, twin share. Prices are based on 24 Oct. 2017 (Discover Australia) and 15 Sept. 2017 (East Coast Adventure). Single supplements apply - please enquire for details. Non-refundable deposit of £400 per person due within 7 days of booking, full payment due 100 days prior to departure. Standard APT terms and conditions apply, see website for further details. Premium tours are operated by Travelmarvel, part of the APT Travel Group, UK0684.