

SOLO TRAVEL

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Cruise the West Indies to New Orleans

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.



Discover the upmarket chic of St Barts, above

Christmas treats in Belgium

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.

Norway's natural wonders

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.

Historic passage along the Danube

Wine-tasting at the historic Nikolaifhof 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

SAFETY TIPS WOMEN TRAVELLERS

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 than 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.

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.

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.

Caribbean cocktail This sailing is full of tropical temptations, from all four of its ships, along with dance hosts, solo traveller gatherings and shared tables at dinner.

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FOOD AND DRINK TOURS

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

Cookery and culture in Spain

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Italian cuisine through the ages

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Beef and booze in Bordeaux

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Rustic food in Puglia

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.

Ethical eating in Thailand

35 specialises in sustainable, ethical tours. The company has an increasing percentage of solo travellers, and this 11-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.

Cycle through Yucatan

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.

Learn to cook in Ireland

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

Food, photography and food writing in Cambodia

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.

Gourmet Somerset

The Grange Cookery School has five-day courses staying in purpose-built accommodation next to the owner's 17th-century Somerset farmhouse. Most participants come on their own. The One Week Wonder is great for those with few kitchen skills, while the One Step On course is perfect for confident cooks, covering Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and Asian cuisines.

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.

Cooking in Portugal

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.

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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.

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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.

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

Asia meets Spain

You needn't fly to Asia to realise your chakra. Just a 40-minute drive from Malaga 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.

The Italian job

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 cobble 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.

Great British break

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



Relax at Shanti-Som in Spain, above

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.

New Forest escape

Shewton 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.

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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).

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APT Discover New Zealand with the experts. 19 day Premium tour Auckland to Christchurch. From only £3,895* per person. Discover Australia & New Zealand. 36 day Premium tour Perth to Christchurch. From only £7,495* per person.

APT Discover Australia with the experts. 20 day Premium tour Perth to Sydney. From only £4,795* per person. 17 day Premium tour Sydney to Cairns. From only £4,295* per person.