

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright orange orb partially obscured by a small, dark cloud, positioned in the upper center of the frame. The sky transitions from a pale blue at the top to a soft orange near the horizon. The ocean is a deep blue, with gentle waves breaking in the foreground. In the lower center of the ocean, a small, dark silhouette of a person is visible, appearing to be in the water. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# GLAD YOU'RE NOT HERE

## A SOLO TRAVELER'S MANIFESTO



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## RESULTS MAY VARY

(A disclaimer.)

Throughout this eBook and on Solo Traveler, the blog, recommendations are made as to how to make solo travel safe and fun. There are also numerous benefits proposed that you'll enjoy by traveling solo. Naturally, results will vary. Every person and every travel situation is different. The content of this eBook and Solo Traveler are meant as suggestions only. Your safety, satisfaction and fun traveling solo are your responsibility alone and not that of Solo Traveler, its publisher, editor and/or writers.

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## NO, IT'S NOT WEIRD.

The world is interesting. What comes naturally – what's a no-brainer – for one person is a struggle for another. For me, solo travel came naturally. I traveled solo in my 20s for one reason and in my 50s for another. But, whatever the reason, always, in all ways, it was a great, growing, gratifying experience.

### **Travel + Alone ≠ Weird**

It seems that some people come to my blog on solo travel out of angst. They search phrases like, "is it weird to travel alone". What a sad query. Either they think there's something wrong with them for having this desire or others are suggesting so. I'm not sure which is worse. But I am sure that the pressures to meet the expectations of friends and family by traveling with them can be overwhelming and that it has to stop. It's time to expand our understanding of solo travel as not only a legitimate choice but a wise one.

### **Travel + Alone = too much for a simple equation**

Solo travel has an impact on the person traveling, those who love them, those who don't, their community, country, the world, the universe... Well you get it, solo travel is important.

It's not that solo travelers don't like people. It's not that we don't send the "wish you were here" postcards. It's just that traveling solo offers a truly unique and valuable experience. This manifesto makes the case for solo travel.



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## TOP SEVEN REASONS TO TRAVEL SOLO

There are certain aspects of solo travel that everyone enjoys - regardless of age. And I'm not the only one who thinks so. I've conducted many surveys on solo travel. Here are the top seven reasons people say the love going it alone:

- **Independence.** No need to compromise. As a solo traveler, you can do what interests you and you're not dragged to places don't.
- **Connecting to locals and other travelers.** Because you're not talking with a travel companion, you are more likely to talk with locals and learn how they live.
- **Special treatment.** You are less likely to be treated like a normal tourist. Going solo raises curiosity, respect, concern, and interest from locals. They tend to go out of their way to enhance your experience in their hometown.
- **Solitude.** You can easily have periods of quiet time for reading, painting, thinking...
- **Growth.** You stretch yourself, develop new skills and often learn more because it's all up to you to navigate culture and logistics.
- **The focus is travel.** A solo trip is more about the destination, culture, and history... than your companion.
- **Confidence.** By traveling alone, you discover new self-confidence.

Anyone of us can enjoy these benefits. But, depending on what stage of life you're at, the pleasures and benefits of solo travel run much deeper. As I alluded to above, what one gains in their 20s is quite different than in their 50s. Here's how.



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## DISCOVER YOURSELF – THE GAP YEAR

Whether it's a traditional gap year between high school and university, or simply time off to explore the world before being sucked into the world of work, it's a fabulous idea to travel as a young adult. It's even better to do so – at least part of your journey – alone.

A gap year is not a year off learning. It is one of intense learning. More likely to be cash poor and time rich, young adults tend to take it slow and really engage with the community they're visiting. As solo adventurers, young adults:

- **Discover themselves** as they discover the world – without the expectations of family and friends who have defined them over the years.
- **Find that they are capable of much more** than they realized simply because they had never been given the opportunities before.
- **Identify what really interests** them without the influence of others.
- **Learn self-reliance** as they book hostels, manage money, and navigate cities alone.
- **Develop skills** in decision-making, relationship building, communication, organization...
- **Gain confidence** as they navigate new cities, situations and circumstances themselves.
- **Develop their own opinions** on issues as they have time to look, analyse, and reflect.
- **Gain maturity** as they navigate the world themselves.
- **Discover that they actually like their own company.**

### Oh the Places You'll Go!

You have brains in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself  
any direction you choose.  
You're on your own.  
And you know what you know.  
And YOU are the one who'll  
decide where to go.

*Dr. Seuss speaking at a  
graduation ceremony.*



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## DEFINE YOURSELF – 20S AND 30S

Unless you've had a driving ambition to be a doctor, firefighter, architect or some other specific profession, you probably went through school and/or university in a general arts, science or management program. You are a generalist. Which, by my measure, is fabulous. But what many generalists struggle with is establishing themselves – finding their niche in society. A niche that is not only fulfilling personally but also financially.

Traveling solo is an exceptional opportunity for those at the age of establishment to:

- **Explore new career opportunities** without the weight of someone else's agenda. Try on a career through volunteer or contract work and see if it suits you.
- **Upgrade credentials** for the next step in your career path by taking time for intensive courses, self-study programs or essential reading.
- **Confirm your commitment** to a relationship. If you're unsure about taking a relationship to the next level, some time away can help you understand who you are, who they are and whether you're a great fit.
- **Demonstrate how capable you are** to yourself and others. This can help your parents withdraw from parenting you.
- **Get grounded in who you are.** Whether it's a last hurrah trip before kids or simply time to experience and reflect, traveling alone helps you find you.

All of the above can be achieved on short as well as long trips.



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## REDEFINE YOURSELF – 40S AND 50S

Being in my 50s and having launched a travel blog, I think I'm particularly qualified to address the subject of redefining yourself through solo travel. It doesn't matter whether you're single or in a relationship, solo travel is an enriching experience. At midlife, it can be even more so.

Midlife is a time for change. Jobs and relationships may have lost their lustre. Empty nest syndrome leaves people with, well, an emptiness. Unanticipated changes can throw you for a loop. Traveling solo helps one through these situations like no other form of travel. By traveling alone you:

- **Discover who you are** when you're not responsible for a spouse or children.
- **Return to your job or relationship energized** with new ideas, experiences and dreams to share.
- **Build confidence after loss** or a divorce.
- **Demonstrate your youthfulness** to co-workers; it's difficult to see an adventurer as old.
- **Reduce stress**, a major contributor to health problems, by relaxing and traveling on your own schedule.
- **Save money**. It's much easier to book hostels, hospitality stays, and great deals when you travel alone.
- **Inject challenge** into your life that may otherwise be on autopilot.

Solo travel is truly rejuvenating at midlife.





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## POSITIVE AGEING - SENIORS

Traveling solo as a senior has a unique quality. There are health and safety considerations that are more obvious at this stage. Seniors can be more vulnerable. But it is also a time when traveling alone may be the only option or, with a “now or never” attitude, a time for adventure. Regardless of the reasons, there are safe ways to travel solo as a senior and:

- **Do what you couldn't** afford or didn't have time to do in the past.
- **Fulfill lifelong dreams.**
- **Rediscover yourself**, you personality rather than your role in family or community.
- **Feel really useful.** Volunteer programs need the lifetime of skills you've developed.
- **Eat dessert first** – or do anything else you want to do that may have been judged in the past.
- **Travel long term.** You now have the time to settle in and enjoy communities for longer periods of time. If you are wealthy relative to the local economy, this can be quite possible.

Solo travel doesn't have to mean that you leave your province, state or country. Travel solo close to home if that is what's right for you.



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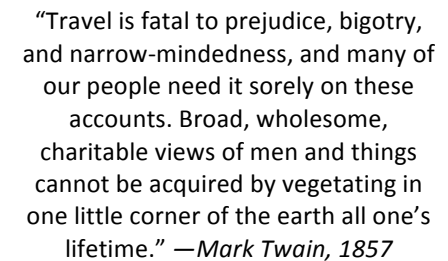
## SOLO TRAVEL AND COMMUNITY

When you travel solo, you're focused on all that is new in the moment, not your companion. Because of this, people are more inclined to talk to you. They feel they have something to offer and less like they will be interrupting.

And you are more inclined to talk to others. You need to reach out because you are, after all, a social being.

My point is that, when you travel solo, you experience the world more intimately than when you travel with a companion. The benefits for communities everywhere are great. Every interaction increases our understanding of others. As a result:

- Stereotypes break down.
- Our common humanity is shared.
- We discover how small our differences really are.
- Our understanding of other cultures deepens.
- Our appreciation of the challenges faced in other countries increases.

A quote by Mark Twain is enclosed in a decorative, light blue frame with a scalloped top and bottom. The quote reads: "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." —Mark Twain, 1857

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When we return home, we bring this new understanding and spread it to family and friends thereby increasing harmony in our home community.



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## SOLO TRAVEL FOR EVERY ONE AND EVERYONE

My argument in this manifesto, is that solo travel is good for individuals and good for society.

Like all travel, it's fun and rewarding. But it goes deeper. There are benefits, like the freedom to follow your own schedule that everyone enjoys. There are also benefits specific to every stage of life. So, solo travel is good for every one of us.

But it is also good for everyone. Solo travel, by bringing us closer to our destination, increases an understanding between different cultures in a way that most other forms of travel can't. This makes solo travel good for communities, cities and states.

Now, after writing for eight pages about the merits of solo travel, I must say that traveling with a companion is a fine way to go. It has its benefits too. But that was not my purpose here. My objective was to legitimize solo travel. To make it better understood. To stop the Google searches on whether it is weird to travel alone. And to encourage people to take to the road solo.

I hope that, as you've been reading, you've also been planning your next solo adventure.



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