



# Going Solo

Erase the fear, embrace the fun and discover  
new travel adventures at any age.

BY DEBBIE DOTSON

**S**olo travel can be a transformative experience that knows no age limits. In recent years, the number of individuals over 55 embracing solo journeys and seeking adventure, self-discovery and connection with the world around them has notably increased. According to travel industry research, solo travelers represent one of the fastest-growing market shares in 2024. Consequently, many cruise lines and tour companies began adding more options for solo travelers in response to this trend.

## START SMALL

Over the past two years, I have found myself embarking on some solo adventures, both meticulously planned and spur of the moment. And I must say that solo travel is freeing—no complaints of being too tired to visit another museum, no disputes over where to go next and generally less stress. I now choose to travel solo as often as possible, and my last trip to Iceland was spectacular.

Recently, I interviewed Deborah Ives, the creator behind the incredible Facebook group (with over 514,000 members) and website,

Solo in Style: Women Over 50 Traveling Solo and Loving It! for my Village Television show, “Senior Travel Adventures,” and this article. She shared with me how her journey into solo travel began, and let me tell you, it is quite the tale!

Her first solo adventure came about by the looming shadow of divorce. Determined not to let go of the deposit she had put down, she decided to take the plunge into solo travel at the ripe age of 50 and hasn’t looked back since. Her travels have taken her around the world, and she has

# Solo travel offers individuals over 55 an opportunity for personal growth, exploration and adventure.

stories for days. She puts the “globe” in globetrotting!

If you are reading this and feel a twinge of fear or uncertainty about solo travel, you’re not alone. Many share the same hesitations, even though they are itching to explore the world. It is normal to feel intimidated by the idea. But fear not! Ives’ sage advice is to start small. Take a local day trip not too far from your own backyard or go to the theater and treat yourself to a solo dinner outing—little steps to ease into the solo travel scene.

I also spoke with Carolyn Ray, CEO of JourneyWoman ([journeywoman.com](http://journeywoman.com)), who echoed the same suggestion: “Start small; don’t overwhelm yourself.” JourneyWoman offers guidance on vetted, small-group luxury tours for the solo woman traveler via a newsletter and a growing social media presence. She suggested that a tour that aligns with something you enjoy, such as cooking or art, is a wonderful way to meet others.

Solo travel does not necessarily mean loneliness or being alone, depending on your travel style. I have gone on tours where I met couples and other solo travelers, and developed friendships on the road. Part of the fun is meeting new people and sharing

experiences. I can appreciate the sights with others but also enjoy the solitude of my own space.

Although solo travel is not everyone’s cup of tea, the many social media groups, websites and content channels about solo senior travel are proof that there is a whole community out there who have found empowerment and joy in traveling solo. The trend is here to stay, and many people are taking the leap of faith and finding out exactly how joyful solo travel can be.

## CAREFUL PLANNING

Whether you are a seasoned traveler or embarking on your



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first solo adventure, careful planning, safety considerations and thorough research are key. Plan a trip yourself or consult a trusted advisor or a travel agency. Just remember that a solo journey requires careful consideration of several factors, particularly for those who are older or have special needs.

**Assess personal health and capabilities.** Prior to planning your trip, consider your physical health and any limitations. Traveling to international locations is wonderful, but accessibility could be an issue, with cobblestone streets, steep stairs and no elevators. While age should not deter you from exploring the world, it is important to choose destinations and activities that align with your abilities. Gather as much information as possible to avoid disappointment.

**Pack efficiently.** Packing light makes navigating airports, train stations and city streets much easier. Prioritize versatile clothing and essential items, and consider investing in lightweight luggage with convenient features such as wheels and compartments. Do not overwhelm yourself—just check a bag and lighten your load. Most airports may require long walks between gates, and a heavy backpack or shoulder bag can quickly become a burden.

**Buy travel insurance.** Protect yourself against unexpected emergencies and cancellations by investing in comprehensive travel insurance. Ensure your policy provides adequate coverage for medical expenses, trip



interruptions and other potential risks. Travel insurance offers a variety of coverage, so research this carefully as there are many options, both short and long term, and a variety of coverages. Some credit card companies include some insurance on the travel portions, but the coverage isn't all inclusive, so read the fine print.

### **SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

Safety is crucial when traveling solo, especially for individuals who are older. Here are some things you can do to ensure your safety.

#### **Research destination safety.**

Before choosing a destination, thoroughly research its safety reputation, including crime rates, political stability and healthcare infrastructure. Consult travel advisories and recent visitor experiences to make informed decisions. Use official websites for those countries when possible. If an area has a travel advisory issued by our government, heed those warnings.

#### **Secure your belongings.**

Minimize the risk of theft by always keeping valuables such as passports, cash and electronics secure. Consider using a money belt or hidden pouch to store essential items discreetly. I use a crossbody bag that is easy to access and offers a measure of security. Backpacks are not a great idea in foreign countries, and men should never put their wallets in a back pocket.

**Stay connected.** Maintain regular communication



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with loved ones back home throughout your journey. Share your itinerary and check in regularly to provide updates on your whereabouts and well-being. Consider sharing your location via your phone or tracking devices. Activate international travel coverage on your phone when necessary or buy an eSim activation for your phone, which allows international cell coverage, too.

**Trust your instincts.** Listen to your intuition and avoid situations or individuals that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. If you meet with any potential threats or emergencies, seek help from local authorities or fellow travelers. Walking alone at night or in dark alleys is not a good idea anywhere in the world.

**Choose reputable accommodations.** Prioritize accommodations with positive reviews and an impressive

reputation for safety and security. Choose well-established hotels, guesthouses or vacation rentals in central locations. Do your research here and ask for personal recommendations. Spend time reviewing as much information as possible to help with your choices.

### **THOROUGH RESEARCH**

#### **Seek destination information.**

Familiarize yourself with the culture, customs and laws of your chosen destination. Understanding social norms and etiquette can help you navigate unfamiliar environments with confidence and respect.

#### **Consider risks to your health.**

Research potential health risks, vaccination recommendations or medical facilities available at your destination. Consult with a healthcare professional to ensure you're adequately prepared for any potential health issues

