

Escape travel

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It's all about... me!

THE trend for travelling solo is growing and there are many reasons why. Some people find their friends lack funds, some don't have a significant other and many simply don't want to compromise precious holiday time with others.

It comes as no surprise to me. I love going away alone. I have a wide circle of wonderfully adventurous friends but getting our diaries synced to book a trip is a headache and although I'm single, even when I am in a relationship, I often choose to book a single ticket because I like 'me' time.

When I venture abroad solo, I connect with my surroundings, the people I meet and the thoughts in my own head on a much deeper level. I use solo travel to reassess life, contemplate my future and treat myself to some down time.

In fact, the last time I went away with a girlfriend we had a huge spat. We were on an island-hopping trip around the Maldives and it became apparent that her idea of

Solo travel – sad or sassy? **Abigail Butcher** recounts the delights of travelling the world on her own

a holiday wasn't mine. She wanted to sleep in when I wanted to get up. I bored her with stories of previous trips and she bored me with tales of her honeymoon and kids. Our relationship has sadly never been quite the same. It taught me to be more careful in my choice of travel companions.

During my twenties, the idea of travelling alone would make me recoil with dread – I was worried people would think I had no friends or that I would get bored or miss out on nightlife. Maybe it's an age thing – I'm 38 – but I've done the Ibiza party holidays, the group ski trips and coupled-up mini breaks, and have returned exhausted from binge-drinking and penniless from topping up the communal kitty.

I first travelled alone to heal a broken heart, find solace from



All for one: Abigail Butcher in Rajasthan and a solo meal in Mendoza

depression and get over a bereavement all in one go. It took months but with every new horizon, each sunrise and sunset, I found a deeper serenity than ever before. I learned to love eating meals alone with a book and glass of local wine – it's not the sad experience the uninitiated might think.

I am careful not to put myself in risky situations – I won't walk around late at night and maintain the usual travellers' rules of locking doors and respecting local customs. There are a plethora of companies offering 'solidays' but that's not what I'm after. I do sometimes join a course – yoga, sailing or diving are favourites – but often find I don't want to make conversation, so I dip in and out of the group on my own terms. I'll happily talk to anyone but only on my terms and that's the joy of travelling alone. I've made wonderful, lifelong friendships on my trips with people I may not even have met had I not been alone.

They say beautiful people make beautiful places special but I have hundreds of amazing places that make me feel more grounded, energetic and more ready to tackle the world when I get back home. I can't recommend going it alone more highly.

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