

LIVING &gt; TRAVEL

# Why Every Busy Woman Should Travel Alone



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Illustration by David Doran

It was 11:57 a.m. on Friday, October 8. A text popped up on my phone from my friend Lisa: “I can’t find my passport. I’m not lying.”

My heart sank. Just the night before I had texted her: “Don’t forget your passport!” Now, the morning of our much-anticipated vacation, I was furiously typing away, exclaiming that she needed to turn her house upside down. We were to leave for Paris in six hours.

Needless to say, Lisa never made it to Paris, and I inadvertently found myself alone in the most romantic city in the world. I've traveled alone before—a quick jaunt to Turks and Caicos, shopping trips to New York before I moved to the city—but it's one thing to plan to travel alone and a completely different scenario to be left solo unexpectedly.

But what began as a frustrating and upsetting situation quickly turned into quite a happy accident. I'm not saying that I'm glad Lisa didn't make it, but I became enamored with being on my own in a new place. I found that I was so distracted by everything around me, there was no desire to pull my phone out and scroll through Instagram or check emails in a bid to digitally stave off loneliness. And there was never a moment where I was bored waiting for someone while they were in a fitting room or taking more time than needed to thumb through terrible souvenirs, because I was doing things that I actually wanted to do, and at my own pace. Imagine that. It was a revelation.

Just a few weeks after my Paris trip I found myself in Boston and solo once more, but this time it was intentional. This was then shortly followed by another trip on my own to Bali. I was hooked. I came to realize that as someone who is constantly busy—with five or more thoughts pulling me in all directions at any given moment—traveling without a companion was incredibly liberating. I only had to tend to me, and boy is that a change from my daily life. There was no need to deal with conflicting interests or to hustle 10 girls and guys to get ready and make it to dinner on time. I only had my schedule to worry about, which meant that I really didn't need to have one at all.

Traveling alone has become my way of making time for myself. Sure, it's not something that can be done weekly the way my colleague had resolved to do for 2015, but just a few trips a year that allow me to decompress has been incredibly freeing, and even enlightening on some occasions. Here, my tips on how to have a successful solo trip.

### **Skip the Touristy Attractions and Just Walk Around**

Be strategic—if you're visiting a city like Paris for the first time, you're bound to return with friends who will want to visit all of the usual spots. Skip a stroll through the Louvre or a day trip to Versailles and explore the beautiful streets and stumble upon some hidden gems that you may not have found otherwise.

## Have a Good Playlist

Make sure you have some good soundtracks on your phone or just set your entire library to shuffle. You'll most likely come across a song that you completely forgot about that'll put some extra pep in your step.

## Keep Your Mind and Eyes Open

Like Grace Coddington says in *The September Issue*, "Always keep your eyes open." Take in all of your surroundings, be willing to go out of your comfort zone, and try just about anything—it's the best way to get a sense of a destination's culture.

## If You're in a Big City . . .

There's no need to spend money on a hotel with tons of amenities—the city itself will keep you occupied. Book a hotel that's right for your comfort level, but skip the luxurious spa resort—you won't need it. When I went to Boston, I wanted to split my time between wandering around and relaxing at the hotel, so I found myself at The Envoy Hotel, which housed a rooftop bar where I could unwind with a glass of bubbly while aweing over the stunning view of the city's waterfront.

## **If You're Traveling for R&R . . .**

Splurge. No, I mean it. If it's truly a trip where you need to shut yourself off from the world, find a place that suits your desires in every way possible. For my Bali trip, I ended up at The Mulia, a property that consisted of a sublime spa, oceanfront pools that are FOMO-inducing, and an impeccable butler service. On the penultimate day of my trip, I switched over to a villa, where I was spoiled with an alfresco living space, private plunge pool, and an outdoor shower to top it all off. With no real reason to leave my new quarters, I sunk myself into a chaise lounge and took in the rays.

## **Embrace Dining Alone**

Eating and drinking by yourself only becomes awkward if you think it is. Don't psych yourself out; entertain yourself by inconspicuously people-watching (see if you can pick out a couple who's on an awkward first date), and bring a book or magazine with you if you think you'll need something to keep you from feeling lonely. And the biggest plus side to going to a restaurant alone? The possibility of nabbing a seat at a hot spot with little to no wait is exponentially greater.

## **Know Yourself**

Not everyone is suited for traveling alone. If you're the type of person who requires constant company (and even if you're the type of person who always needs to be in a relationship or can't separate yourself from your significant other), then solo trips are probably not for you. But if you can revel in quietness and solitude, I'm willing to bet my bottom dollar that you'll fall in love with it instantly the way I have.