

FLYING Solo

Are you taking a holiday this year? If you haven't because money is tight, fair enough. If it's because you didn't have anyone to go with, read on. Travelling alone can be a truly liberating experience says Kirsty France.



Start small

If you've never travelled by yourself before, the thought of a solo trip can be incredibly daunting. Start by getting on a train and going to a new city for the day. You can look around knowing that you can go back to the station and go home any time you like. I love being able to decide how long I want to spend somewhere but it can come as a shock when you're used to travelling with others.

Eat by yourself

This sounds easy, but eating alone can be a strange experience. If you can eat an evening meal in a restaurant by yourself, you're ready for anything – and remember, it isn't cheating to take a book. I often take a notebook and pen with me too. It makes waiters think you might be a critic so they treat you really well!

Overnight stays

A solo hotel stay is a big step. I've travelled on business and the hotel staff don't bat an eyelid, but turn up in jeans and they get confused. Just be polite and they'll generally respond in kind. You can also make an unfamiliar hotel room feel more like home by packing some of your favourite things – I always take a couple of family photos and perfume to make the room smell lovely.

Stay safe

It's a sad reality that lone women can be a target and when you're travelling alone you have a heightened awareness of that. Just take the same steps you would at home to keep yourself safe and find out about any areas to avoid before you travel. I've travelled solo to Buenos Aires and the authorities are very good at keeping tourists away from the scarier parts of town.

Don't be lonely

I'm pretty shy but came to love talking to new people. Conversation starters don't have to be complicated; a comment on the weather or asking about some delicious looking food can be enough. If you meet someone from another country, ask them about their home. If you're rebuffed, just move on.

What will people think?

This can be a worry for lots of people. If your family have legitimate concerns, listen and address them. If you think others will gossip you'll need to decide whether that bothers you enough to change your plans. Personally, I'd rather have the great memories.

Be brave

The freedom that comes from setting your own itinerary is life changing. I've taken on challenges that scared me and loved them. Knowing that you can be adventurous and brave is something that will stay with you long after you return home.

Solo travel might not be for everyone, but if you're in the slightest bit tempted, give it a go. You won't regret it.

Images: iStock

