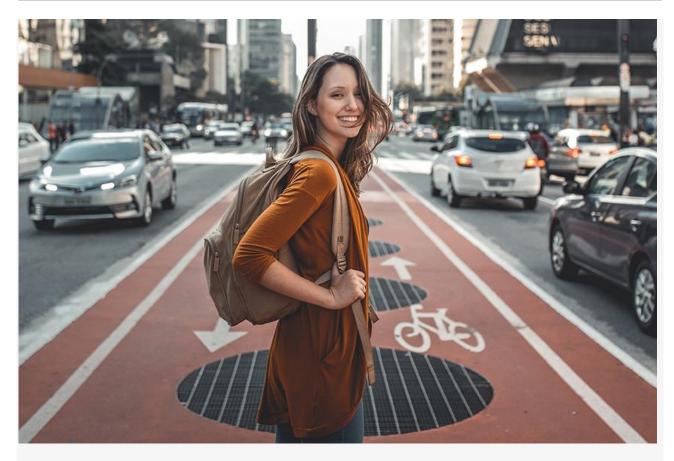# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TRAVELING ON YOUR OWN

GOOD TRAVEL
EMILY ABBATE, APRIL 16, 2018

PIN IT

Photo: Unsplash/Guilherme Stecanella

These days more and more women are traveling—whether or not they've got a partner in tow. And why not?

Flying solo can be empowering and transformative, and can teach you some surprising things about both yourself and the world around you. As someone who took her first trip alone last month to Italy, I can vouch for how absolutely unbelievable the experience can be.

Something else it was as well? Pretty intimidating. "It's normal to be nervous and scared," says <u>Nadine Sykora</u>, a travel blogger with over 100,000 followers on Instagram and a *major* case of wanderlust.

To help you get over the fear factor and on to the fun, keep reading for pro advice on how to travel alone for the first time.

GET STARTED

Photo: Unsplash/Chris Lawton

Plan, plan, plan

For your first solo adventure, Sykora suggests starting small—taking <u>day trips or overnights on your own somewhere close to home</u>. "Use those mini trips to build up your confidence," she suggests.

She also recommends starting a mindfulness practice if you don't already have one. It can help you manage any anxiety that comes up when you're on the road—plus, being able to connect to your intuition and process your emotions will increase your level of self-awareness, which is super-important when traveling alone. "Practicing <u>meditation</u> or <u>going for walks by yourself</u> is a great way to exercise this skill set," she says.

Aside from your emotional prep work, take time to create a schedule—even if it's not ironclad. Having certain activities on the agenda throughout your time away from home will give you things to look forward to during your stay. And don't assume that just because you're a party of one you'll be easier to accommodate when it comes to reservations for things like hotels, restaurants, and tours. "Make your itinerary and plan just like you would for a big group," suggests Annette White, who's visited 50 countries and counting as the travel blogger behind Bucket List Journey. "Plot your transportation from the airport to your hotel in advance, and make sure to leave a copy of your total itinerary with a friend or family member."

Photo: Unsplash/Anete Lusina

Pack smart

Mastering the art of minimalist travel or learning to pack a carry-on only is a good idea for solo trips as it gives you fewer things to carry and keep track of on the road. Doing so will allow you to be more self-sufficient and less likely to have luggage lost or stolen.

Packing cubes or zippable storage solutions enable you to compress multiple items into smaller compartments, which can be a total saving grace for anyone who's trying to easily carry fewer bags on-the-go, solo or not.

Photos: Unsplash/Thought Catalog

Know when to ask for help

The reality is, you're going to have to put yourself out there a lot more as a solo traveler. "It's inevitable that there will be a time when you need someone to watch your bag, share a cab, or give you directions," says travel writer <u>Alexandra Baackes</u>. "You can't do it all, and that's okay. Trust the universe and learn to lean on your intuition when it comes to sussing out who to reach out to for help. You might be surprised by how warm and welcoming the world can be."

Photo: Unsplash/Steven Lewis

Make safety a top priority

My best friend's mom bought me a small, packable pepper spray before I left for Europe. At the time, it made me laugh, but her head was in the right place. You should always be mindful of best safety practices when visiting a new spot, but especially when it's you and only you.

"A good rule of thumb is to follow the same safety guidelines in a different country as you would at home," says White. "Wandering desolate streets after midnight, getting drunk alone at a bar, or accepting rides from complete strangers isn't safe at home or on the road. Most importantly, listen to your intuition. We all have different comfort levels, obey yours."

Take time to learn the laws of the land you plan to visit, as well as any cultural norms, such as dress codes, you might not be aware of before you go. Doing so will ensure you pack appropriately and that you don't inadvertently break any rules without realizing it.

Photo: Unsplash/Alicia Steels

Get in with the locals

It's really easy to get sucked into tourist traps when booking any vacation, especially since a lot of companies have figured out how to get their tours, offerings, restaurants, and the like top and center in popular tourist Google searches. The best thing I did on my trip to Italy, hands-down, was seek out tours that boasted local tour guides.

"Finding a local tour guide, or someone that lives in the area, will put you in contact with the most authentic experiences at a destination," says Claudia Host, who helps curate individualized experiences for Access Italy. "While it's possible to map out seeing the sights on your own, your tour operator will provide guaranteed insight into the local art, culture, customs and folklore."

My guide, for instance, said hi to about six different friends while taking me in and out of some of the best restaurants in Venice. Plus, she knew exactly where to go for the things I really wanted, like outrageous best-I've-ever-tasted tiramisu. It made me feel like I was right at home, with the right person, in such a foreign place.

Photo: Unsplash/Philipe Cavalcante

Make sure to check in with yourself

When you're traveling alone, you won't have someone there to pump the brakes when you're on a one-way train to cranky town and ask, are you hungry? Are you overwhelmed? Do you need a break? Or, are you having an amazing time living your best life and just need to pause and let that sink in?

"You have to learn to be your own best friend, and check in with yourself often to see how your day and your trip at large is going," says Baackes. "This is actually one of my favorite things about solo travel. I never hear my own thoughts louder than when I'm off getting lost in a new destination by myself for a few days."

Now that you've learned the logistics of adventuring alone, check out these <u>6 amazing destination you should visit on your own</u>. Then, commit these <u>tips for traveling like a local to memory</u>.