



Flying solo

Singles holidays and activity breaks are a great way to meet new friends and share an adventure

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There's nothing like shared experiences to cement a new friendship, especially if you're bonding over an incredible destination. And with more and more choice for solo travellers, it's easier than ever to travel the world and meet some like-minded companions. Surprisingly perhaps, the average age of solo travellers is now 54, according to a survey by website 101 Singles Holidays*, while more than half are women. Whether you're new to travelling alone or a singles holiday aficionado, we've found six types of holiday that are ideal for making friends.

1 THE ESCORTED TOUR

Best for: Anyone who's new to solo travel, who wants a sociable group to share the experience or fancies heading further off the beaten track. With different group sizes and room share options, there's something for all personalities too.

Book it: Collette tours (gocollette.com) has a variety of travel styles, from single destination trips to classic tours and more adventurous escapes. The eight-day Spotlight on Tuscany tour mixes Italy's art and cultural treasures with fabulous local food and cooking experiences, plus

extra goodies for WI members.

Or Cox & Kings (coxandkings.co.uk) has guided tours exclusively for solo travellers, popular with over-50s, while the majority on Solo Travellers' (solo-travellers.com) singles-only groups are aged 30 to 50.

2 THE ACTIVITY HOLIDAY

Best for: Guaranteeing you'll have something in common with your fellow travellers.

Book it: For active trips, walking holidays range from ambles around the UK with singles specialist Friendship

Travel (friendshiptravel.com) to climbing Kilimanjaro with Walks Worldwide (walksworldwide.com). Or try a solo cycling holiday from Headwater (headwater.com) where they'll transport your luggage as you freewheel around the countryside.

Keen tennis players are guaranteed a partner with single player weeks from Jonathan Markson tennis (marksontennis.com) in Portugal, while Destination Yoga (destinationyoga.co.uk) has retreats for all levels. Kirker Holidays' cultural tours (kirkerholidays.com) focus on art, literature or music.

The friendship Issue



TOP LEFT Cycling in the Med
MIDDLE Visiting the Taj Mahal on a train break
ABOVE Enjoying the sun outside St Mark's Cathedral, Venice on an escorted tour
LEFT Tempting food on a gourmet escape
RIGHT Photography breaks with Frui Holidays
BELOW LEFT Enjoying a meal on a yoga holiday in Spain

3 THE CREATIVE HOLIDAY

Best for: Learning or improving a skill is a great way to strike up friendships.

Book it: Frui's (frui.co.uk) creative holidays have a reputation for friendliness, as well as great destinations for their photography and painting courses. The Painting for the Petrified trips in Italy have encouraging tutors from a fine art background, while the photography holidays range from short breaks in Berlin to a trip to the temples of Bhutan, all with no single supplement.

Craftier travellers can find a huge range on GoLearnTo.com, including jewellery and mosaic-making in France and Spain.

4 THE CRUISE HOLIDAY

Best for: Sociable singles, and those who like to pack in plenty of exploring. Cruise ships are generally friendly places, and some lines are now offering solo or studio staterooms to avoid the traditional hefty supplements, plus special onboard areas for single travellers.

Book it: For over-50s, Saga Travel (travel.saga.co.uk) has single staterooms on both Saga Sapphire and Saga Pearl II, as well as organising Singles drinks and

lunch to break the ice. There are singles meet-ups on port days too, if you prefer exploring with other solo travellers. (Keep an eye on *WI Life* this year for information on the 2018 WI cruises with Saga: see page 63.)

For younger cruisers, Norwegian Cruise Lines (ncl.com) has studio staterooms on Norwegian Epic, a solos-only Studio Lounge and 'freestyle' dining with 24 different options.

5 THE GOURMET HOLIDAY

Best for: An indulgent and relaxed way to get to know others, whether you're learning about food or tasting it.

Book it: Singles specialist Solos Holidays (solosholidays.co.uk) has short breaks to Italy. The Italian Gourmet Getaway combines trips to local producers, tastings from the area's vineyards and preparing your own menu.

Wannabe wine connoisseurs will love the tours from Arblaster and Clarke (arblasterandclarke.com), some with no single supplement.

A UK cookery school is a great way to get a taste of solo travel. Michelin-starred Lucknam Park hotel (lucknampark.co.uk) has its own cookery school with courses on designing a dinner party and home-

smoking. Don't forget our very own Denman: click on denman.org.uk for a full list of residential courses, from crafts to cookery and culture.

6 THE RELAXED HOLIDAY

Best for: Anyone who wants to sightsee without the stress, as well as those who enjoy time on their own.

Book it: Watching the world go by from a train window is one of the more relaxed ways to explore, and the options from Great Rail Journeys (greatrail.com) include group trips and the chance to explore independently, themed itineraries and more unusual safari rail holidays.

With low single supplements, you could spend your days chatting with fellow passengers or have the privacy to enjoy your own company too. On some of the classic routes, the journey is as tempting as the destination – travel through spectacular peaks on the Glacier Express or Rocky Mountaineer, traverse Australia on the historic Ghan train or enjoy a 'palace on wheels' hotel experience in India.

**research in 2015 from 100,000 holiday bookings*