

EVERYDAY [↪] travel



how to travel solo

Dare yourself to venture out alone! The emotional rewards are plenty and the deals to be had are single-handedly amazing. BY JESSIE KNADLER

GET GORGEOUS

At **The BodyHoliday at LeSport on the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia**, single rooms have poster-queen beds and garden views. Book now for September 2010, aka "solo traveler month," when prices plummet from \$523 to \$215 a night. This rate buys you yoga and archery classes, golf tee times, scuba dives, a 50-minute spa treatment, four lavish meals a day, and all the wine and booze you can drink. (*thebodyholiday.com*, 800-544-2883)



GET STUFFED

Trout Point Lodge in Nova Scotia has waived its \$200 single-supplement fee to tempt solo cooks to its renowned three-day seafood culinary school during the months of May and June this year. At the luxe lodge, you'll have a boat-to-table experience, visiting the source of oysters, mussels, lobster...then it's back to the kitchen where you'll prepare it all in the Acadian/French Creole style. (\$730, *acadianfarm.com/cookingschool.html*)



GET MOVING

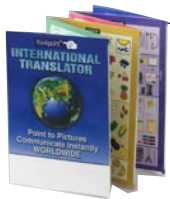
Intrepid Travel, which specializes in off-the-beaten-path adventures, has trips to **Southeast Asia** that are wallet-friendly—we're talking \$780 for eight days in northern Thailand. The trip starts and ends in Bangkok, and in between you'll explore ruins on bicycle, ride an elephant in the jungle and soak in the hot springs of Chiang Mai. There's no single supplement, and the company advertises last-minute bookings for 20 percent off. (*intrepidtravel.com/trips/tsk*)



Cruise ships rarely waive their single supplements, but book at the last minute (in general, 90 days prior...a Jurassic age for most people) and get a discount of around 30 percent.

don't forget

These products make the single life a little easier.



JUST POINT This foreign-language pamphlet displays pictures of common travel needs—a bus, toothpaste, etc. It's more dignified to point to a picture than to cross your legs in the universal sign for "I need to use the restroom." (\$15, kwikpoint.com)



SLEEP TIGHT Packed to 6-by-12 inches, this recycled memory foam pillow expands to a luxurious 13-by-17 inches. (\$22, thehappycompany.com)



WRITE DOWN Ecojot 3-by-4-inch unlined notebooks are made from recycled paper and will (eventually) biodegrade—good to know if you leave your musings on a beach somewhere. (\$5, ecojot.com)



LISTEN UP Shut out neighboring noises with Altec Lansing Backbeat Titanium UHP326 noise-isolating earbuds. Put them away occasionally, or you'll be shutting out potential friends, too. (\$80, alteclansing.com)

the final touch



HOW NOT TO BE SHY

Tips for opening up on the open road



hook up The slick Matador Travel Network (matadortravel.com) is an online travel magazine and social network where thousands of travelers exchange contact info on forums.

look like a tourist! If you fit in too well, locals are less likely to notice you—or want to help you. A map or guidebook under the arm (coupled with a smile) announces you're open to suggestions.

be the photographer Instant icebreaker: Offer to take a fellow traveler's picture and ask that person to take yours. Compare your shots, travel notes...next thing you know, you're exploring ruins together.

find a walking tour You'd be surprised how many low-key (non-stuffy) walking tours are offered for very little. Ask your hotel or check coffee shop bulletin boards. Then chat up your fellow travelers!

be careful

PLAY IT SAFE ON THE ROAD

PACK LIGHT Too much luggage slows you down, and makes you stand out. Never pack more than you can carry yourself.

DRESS CONSERVATIVELY If you're a woman alone, you don't want to call unwanted attention to yourself with plunging necklines. Pack a rain jacket and baseball hat so you can defeminize in a hurry if you have to—say, if your rental car breaks down in the middle of nowhere.

DON'T BLAB In some countries, telling strangers that you're traveling alone could be construed as an invitation to follow you around. Say you're expecting your brother/boyfriend/strapping male person to come along any minute.

SIT WITH A FAMILY While waiting for a train or bus, sit near a family and make a point introducing yourself. Establishing a connection makes you less of a target.

HOW TO EAT ALONE

A five-step guide to breaking bread—by yourself—in style.

- 1. become a regular.** Find a restaurant you like and return the next day. The staff may recognize you, befriend you, maybe invite you out! Who knows? You might even get a free snack out of it.
- 2. sit at the bar.** Tables are islands, whereas the bar is the mainland. You can talk to the bartender

and fellow patrons next to you without encroaching on someone's space.

- 3. order finger food.** Spaghetti bolognese: messy and built for one. Tapas, nuts, chips and dip: made for sharing!
- 4. splurge on lunch.** Eating midday is less expensive and less conspicuous. That night,

you can order a cheese plate while chatting up strangers at the bar.

- 5. bring a journal.** You appear closed-off with your head in a book, and creepy staring into space. Writing in a notebook is the perfect balance: You're engaged yet approachable. And your journal can be a conversation starter.

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS Tips provide by **Marybeth Bond**, author of *Gutsy Women: More Travel Tips and Wisdom for the Road*, **Patricia Schultz**, author of *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*, **Anne Banas**, executive editor, smartertravel.com, and **Carolyn Spencer Brown**, editor-in-chief, cruise critic.com