

## MUSINGS OF A FIRST-TIME

# SOLO TRAVELLER

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Okay, here are some facts. Going on trips is something no one will ever turn their back on, it's always been on the top of people's lists for any approaching holiday season, and it'll always be the go-to plan for any generation facing any existential crisis.

What makes it to the highlights of our childhood memories for most of us? The family trips, the introduction to long, winding journeys and the magical discovery of the explorer in ourselves.

But then you grow up and life gets hectic. Even an hour's worth of a long drive with friends, or a weekend getaway to the countryside with family seems like fleeting moments of harmony that dissolves into busy schedules in just the blink of an eye. When a random chance at a short-lived freedom comes knocking, you go running. But no, your best friend has three exams and multiple dues throughout the week, all your other friends are

barely getting any sleep juggling part-times and tuitions, and your family have their everyday routine to take care of. What do you do then?

Solo trips are not a popular choice, or for many, a choice at all. Most people shudder to even think of eating out alone. Travelling by your lonesome may sound nerve-wracking for some, pointless for others, and not as fun for many, but it has its perks.

First thing first, getting over the misconception that it'll be an anxiety-inducing, no-good, self-pity trip instead of a new experience. There will be so many scenarios depicting the worst of times going around your head at first – losing your passport, getting mugged, getting lost, dying in the middle of an apocalyptic war with the foreign government inflicted with sudden dementia, and so on. There are no guarantees and hundred percent accurate estimations in life; solo trips are just as worth as any other risks you take. They might actually be worth more, with stories to share with loved ones for years to come and memories to call back fondly with bouts of nostalgia.

Overcoming the first-time jitters comes next. From the packing to the planning,

everything's broken down, analysed, re-analysed and then over-analysed with multiple people, just to avoid any possible mishaps once the plane's taken off. There's more nervousness in preparing an itinerary than excitement. Sure, they're not group discussions or scrawling to-do lists over coffee, but it's still something to take seriously. Doing your homework right is key, especially for the first trip. Once the parents have stopped trying to deter you from going at all, the next steps are easy only if you manage to channel genuine enthusiasm into your overseas stay. There's only so much luck can do; what you plan for yourself is what your trip will bring your way. Confining yourself to the hotel room might seem like a safe idea but it would only help to assure you how going on a solo trip was not only a bad idea in the first place, but also a waste of the money that you had saved up for months. Having said that, it's just as much – if not more – important to research, take safety precautions, and stay alert at all times throughout your trip.

The experience itself might surprise you. Saying goodbye to your friends and family at the airport as you head off into the unknown, carrying with you a rough sketch of what's ahead

and an even rougher anxiety weighing you down, might be extremely terrifying. But that's the last step before you leave it all to fate, and accept that you can't run back home to sleep in for the rest of the vacation. The days that follow in an alien land may seem like a trance but it's really up to you to make the most of it. The jetlag and exhaustion are a constant for the first day, but once they settle down, all your worries will seem trivial and the start of every day will be spent greeting a new adventure.

You'll meet new people, experience new cultures, you may even learn bits and pieces of new languages; soon you'll come to realise that even if you're on a solo trip, you're not really alone. The world may have shifted a little from your point of view, but there are people living their lives to the fullest around you. And after seeing that first hand, the concept of solo trips won't seem all that bad. In fact, you'll find yourself planning the next one soon enough.

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