

BY KIM-MARIE EVANS

One, in fact, is not the loneliest number.
Excursions for every comfort level—from the timid
tourist to the intrepid traveler

GOING

EXCLUSIVO
CLIENTES

No matter your travel style, we've got
the trip for you: from relaxation on
Mexico's Isla Holbox (*this page*),
to exploring the pristine beauty of
British Columbia (*opposite*).

SOLO



Solo travel can get a bad rap. It could be the single supplement charge, the solomangarephobia (fear of dining alone), or a lack of knowledge about where to go with nothing more than your passport, carry-on and thirst for adventure. However, the benefits of jetting off sans partner far outnumber the drawbacks.

Having covered the globe for this magazine, I've made friends with Palestinian professors, twenty-year-old photographers and Cuban artists. With no one there to talk me out of it, I have ridden horseback through the Arabian Desert and climbed an ice tower in Canada. The travel stories that now make up the greater part of who I believe myself to be would be far less colorful had I shared these journeys with anyone other than myself. Harvard philosopher George Santayana wrote: "We need sometimes to escape into open solitudes, into aimlessness, into the moral holiday of running some pure hazard, in order to sharpen the edge of life."

I could not agree more.

BEGINNER:

I'm a little nervous to travel alone



Mexico

RELAX & RETREAT
holboxisland.com
casasandra.com/en-us



Cuban artist Sandra Pérez came to **Holbox** in 1999 looking for solitude and a place to create her art. A few years later she opened her nineteen-room ocean front hotel, **CasaSandra**. The way she describes her search sounds like

a siren song for the solo traveler: "For a long time, I wanted to write by the ocean and went in search of an ancient land, a quiet place, where blue was evident and all-surrounding."

This sleepy island is what every pale, overworked and

CONTRIBUTED



Casa Sandra



vacation-starved traveler dreams of. Located off of **Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, where the Gulf of Mexico meets the Caribbean**, Isla Holbox (pronounced hol-bosh) is a rare combination of hidden beauty and easy accessibility. Unlike its overly Instagrammed neighbor Tulum, Holbox has largely remained a well-kept secret. (Our apologies in advance.)

A network of sandy streets connects the port, beaches and buzzy town square. There is one ATM and no cars—golf buggies taxi people around. Spend days

swimming with whale sharks, photographing the resident flamingos or napping on one of the pastel hammocks strung up over the sea. You can rent a bike for about twenty pesos an hour and cover a lot of the island in a day (it's only twenty-six miles long and a mile wide).

Relaxation is not hard to come by on Holbox. The laid-back beach town vibe puts the most stressed-out traveler at ease.



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Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

Do you really want to share one of those overwater hammocks with anyone? We didn't think so. Though it seems like the ends of the earth, it's actually pretty easy to travel to Holbox. Hop one of the many affordable flights to Cancun. From there it's a three-hour car ride or an up-and-down flight—both of which end with a quick ferry ride. **Transportation on the island consists of faded cruiser bikes and golf carts fitted with ATV like tires.** Stay at CasaSandra. To help you disconnect, the hotel doesn't have televisions, phones or radios on the property.

Cost: CasaSandra starts at \$390 per night for a garden view room. »

2

Costa Rica

SURF THE WAVES
kalonsurf.com



At first glance a weeklong surfing trip wouldn't seem to belong in the beginner category. But before you think we've made a mistake and skip ahead, hear us out. This surfing retreat is not only for the overly athletic or granola types. **Kalon guests stay in a well-appointed mansion, the food is gourmet and every detail is handled.** All you need to do is stand up on a board, which is easier than you think. The water temperatures hover around seventy-eight degrees year-round, each instructor works with a maximum of



"Hanging ten" doesn't have to mean living like a beach bum. Guests at Kalon get the five-star treatment when they are not out conquering the waves.



three surfers and massages are included.

The package also includes all surf lessons, food and accommodations. Instruction is followed up with video analysis. Guests surf every day except Wednesday, which is reserved for relaxation and massages. The local beaches are uncrowded and chosen each morning based on the best conditions.

Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

At Kalon, 60 percent of the guests come alone and over half are female. **At the mansion, guests can choose to spend as much or as little time with the group as they like.** The infinity pool, surf lessons and group dinners

mean lots of socializing. But a private room with luxury linens, a rain shower, balcony with ocean views and a private trail through the jungle offer plenty of opportunity for solitude. Fly into San Jose (Costa Rica) airport, and the team will retrieve you in a Land Cruiser for the two-and-a-half hour ride to Dominical.

Cost: \$3,210 for one-week stay

KALONSURF.COM

INTERMEDIATE:

I'm willing to push my limits

3

British Columbia

HIKE FOR HEALTH
mountaintrek.com



Leave your cell phone and Ambien at home. **Mountain Trek** wellness retreat is perfect for anyone trying to reduce stress levels, reset sleep schedules and get in great shape. *Forbes* magazine calls this timber lodge in the Canadian mountains a "tough-love luxury retreat." Worried you need to be in shape to get in shape? Don't be. The staff promises that if you can climb four flights of stairs without stopping and walk outdoors for two hours



continuously you'll be fine. Days follow a predictable routine (key to fixing sleep issues) starting with **sunrise yoga** followed by a three- to four-hour hike. **Hikes** are divided into four groups to accommodate all fitness levels. Evenings include education, more exercise and massages. Three massages are included with the base price, but you can pay for additional treatments

or relax in the **mineral hot springs** just five minutes away. Guests can opt out of any part of the program but rarely do, thanks to the encouragement of the staff, who are committed to making sure everyone succeeds.

The program can improve more than just your waistline; the daily hikes can also improve your cognitive function. Just as your computer works better when you turn it off for a bit, so does your brain. Studies show that problem solving can be improved by disconnecting from technology and reconnecting with nature. Digital detox also helps improve sleep.

You'll learn about circadian rhythm, the sleep hormone melatonin and how to maximize restful sleep. The retreat cuts out things that interfere with good sleep like caffeine and

alcohol. Lights out and morning wake-ups occur at the same time every day, helping to create a schedule that allows you to sleep deeply.

Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

Over three quarters of guests come alone. Rooms are small but cozy with private baths, down-filled duvets and handmade quilts. The lodge has uninterrupted views of **Kootenay Lake** and the jagged **Purcell Mountains**. Groups are coed and limited to sixteen guests (only one couple per group is allowed).

Cost: \$5,100 for one week, airfare not included. Fly into Spokane, Washington, and the resort will handle transportation to the lodge. »



MOUNTAINTREK.COM

From the breathtaking scenery to the mouthwatering cuisine, this Alaska excursion truly appeals to all of the senses.



Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center and cooking lessons. (One of Alaska's most innovative restaurants, **229 Parks**, is owned by two-time James Beard nominated chef Laura Cole, who offers Alaskan cooking classes exclusively to Access guests.) Tamar keeps the trips small. "Limiting the size of our groups to no more than twelve clients allows our guests access to both planned and serendipitous experiences that simply don't work for larger groups, such as visiting local families, cooking in small restaurants and home-based cooking schools, and exploring off-the-beaten-trail villages," she says.

Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

Navigating this massive northern state on your own would be daunting. A culinary tour allows you to experience the local culture in a completely unique way.

Cost: \$7,380 for eight-day tour; airfare and mandatory medical travel insurance are not included.

in **Fairbanks** and includes stays in a variety of lodges with spectacular views, a visit to one of the few Alaskan birch syrup factories (think maple syrup, but better), a helicopter flight to **Colony Glacier** for dogsledding, a visit to **Denali National Park and Reserve**, a boat tour of **Kachemak Bay**, a visit to the



229 PARKS FOOD BY EVA CAPOZZOLA. DOG SLEDDING COURTESY OF ALPINE AIR ALASKA. COM. BOAT TOUR COURTESY OF ALASKA CONSERVATION WILDLIFE CENTER. @DOUGLINDSTRAND

4 Alaska

CULINARY EXPLORATION
accessstrips.com

Alaska has always been a bucket list destination for nature and wildlife enthusiasts, but it's now also a hot spot for foodies. Don't think of Alaska and inventive cuisine in the same sentence? You're not alone. But **Access Trips'** owner Tamar Lowell begs to differ.

In the summer months, up to twenty hours of warm sunlight

shines down on greenhouses and gardens. The result? Some of the best (and biggest) produce in the world. And the salmon and crab, well, they're called king for a reason. Access Trips explores this remote destination through the lens of food (other trips include Morocco, Peru, Cuba, Thailand and Vietnam).

The eight-day itinerary begins



Nyhavn, the promenade on Copenhagen harbor

Copenhagen is a beautifully unique city that offers everything from bustling bars and cafes to quiet gardens and stunning castles.

the original settlers still live here and the area has a distinct '70s feel. Described as a "society within a society," Christiania's inhabitants developed their own set of rules, independent of the Danish government. Many residents built their own homes, giving the area an extremely interesting architectural feel.

Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

Denmark has held the title of "Happiest Country in the World" more than once and for good reason. Copenhagen is one of the safest and friendliest cities in Europe, and it's easy to navigate by bike or public transportation.

Cost: Prices vary based on accommodations; itineraries are uniquely designed for each traveler. »

5 Copenhagen

DANISH DIVERSITY
butterfield.com

Copenhagen ended up on the solo travel list because Denmark is the first country I ever visited alone. While backpacking in our twenties, my friend and I decided to part ways in Germany. She was headed to Oktoberfest, I wanted adventure. The next train leaving the station was bound for Copenhagen, and soon so was I. A few years (okay, decades) have passed, but Copenhagen is still one of the best places to visit with nothing more than a carry-on suitcase and a little wanderlust.



NYHAVN BY ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/@FOTOVOYAGER. LIBRARY BY MARTIN HEIBERG. HANDLUGGAGEONLY.CO.UK



Library Garden

There are many ways to see Copenhagen, but to ensure you enjoy the best of everything, let a luxury travel planner like **Butterfield & Robison** create an exclusive itinerary for you. They will plan as much or as little as you like and book everything from hotels and restaurants to private guided tours.

Do you dream of staying in a neo-Moorish fairytale suite? **The Nimb Hotel** is tucked right inside the **Tivoli** gardens—here you can enjoy gourmet food amid the terrace's twinkling lights, bubbly at the chic bar, a grand suite and even a roller-coaster ride.

The best way to see the cool outer neighborhoods and get a sense of Copenhagen's layout is to take a private guided bike tour (a mode of transportation the city is famous for).

Butterfield & Robison's local art historian will guide you through hidden streets and passageways to reveal surprises like the tranquil **Library Garden** in the center of town; the legislative parking lot (hint: it's a loooooong bike rack); and **The Booktrader**, a historic bookstore-café.

Christiania, proclaimed the anarchist district of Copenhagen by its residents, is one of Denmark's most popular tourist attractions, but you'll want a private guide when you visit. Christiania was founded in 1971 and used to be famous for its drug culture. Today, many of





EXPERT:

Bring on the adventure!

6 Ecuador

FREEDOM OF THE ROAD
freedombikerental.com



Far more than a motorcycle ride, these excursions offer clients a way to explore and experience the rugged beauty of Ecuador in pure solitude.

the accommodations along the way. You just need to bring your hunger for adventure, and not too big of a travel bag.

The journey begins in the Andes in **Quito**, which also happens to be the highest capital city in the world at 9,350 feet. Motorcyclists are encouraged to arrive a day or two early to experience the city and get acclimated to the high altitude before beginning the bike trip.

Freedom Bike Rental offers a long list of tours, from easy one-day treks to more grueling off-road rides. For a first-time solo traveler, consider booking the **Avenue of Volcanoes, Quilotoa Loop and Amazon Basin Tour**. The four-day self-guided tour takes you through two distinct regions of Ecuador—the Andes and the Amazon Basin. You'll roll past the highest active volcanoes in the world and then on to **Quilotoa Crater Lake** and its distinct blue-green mineral waters. Then, you'll ride through the Amazon jungle with ample opportunities for rafting, kayaking and hiking



along the way. Enjoy a night at **Cotococha Amazon Lodge** and take a guided excursion in a motorized canoe to explore the culture and wildlife. There are also opportunities for bird-watching, hiking, horseback



riding, swimming, volcanic baths, rappelling, kayaking and cave exploration.

Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

Ecuador has the lowest crime rate in South America, not a small factor to consider when embarking on a solo journey. You choose the motorcycle and it will be pre-programmed with each day's route. You will be given a paper map as a backup. Hotels are booked and paid for in advance. All you need to do is enjoy the ride.

Cost: Prices vary based on trip length and bike choice. A four-day trip on a Triumph Tiger 800XC is \$1,350, which includes all accommodations, three breakfasts and two dinners, but not fuel.

FREEDOMBIKERENTAL.COM

7 Patagonia

PRISTINE MAJESTY
introvertravels.com



We asked Jacob Marek, a luxury travel agent who specializes in booking travel for introverts, where he would send an adventure-seeking solo traveler, and he quite literally recommended the end of the earth—Patagonia. The region sits at the southern tip of South America and straddles Chile and Argentina. Because it's barely been touched since humans first arrived tens of thousands of years ago, it retains near mythical status. Patagonia has it all—from rainforests to glaciers and even penguins. The rugged and remote terrain has kept it one of the last undeveloped, pristine frontiers.

Marek can design an itinerary of any length and difficulty. He suggests starting in **Buenos Aires** and recovering from your flight with a guided tour of this European-influenced city. From there he recommends heading to **Torres del Paine National Park**, which is another day's journey. (We mentioned this was the end of the world, right?)

Ecocamp Patagonia sits in the middle of the Torres del Paine park and was voted one of the Best Hotels in the World by *Travel and Leisure*. The property is fully sustainable and offers the world's first domed hotel rooms. Choose from a standard (shared

CONTRIBUTED: TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK BY STEFAN SCHÄFER, LICHT



bathroom, no heat) to a suite dome (heat, private bathroom, hot water, spectacular views and enough electricity to charge your camera or computer—but not run a hair dryer). Ecocamp offers excursions as rugged as a nine-day trek around the park (sleeping in tents each night) or daily walking trips where you return to the comfort of your dome sweet dome.

The beauty of Patagonia is that there is no real jet lag; the time difference is only two hours. A direct flight from New York is about eleven hours, the same amount of time it would take you to get to Hawaii.

If you are booking your own trip, Marek recommends staying at one of the many EcoLodges found in the region. To hike any national park, you'll need a guide. Lodges can organize a guide and entrance to the parks.

Breathtaking does not begin to describe the untouched natural wonders that await visitors to Patagonia.

Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

Looking to get away from people? This is one of the most underpopulated places on earth, yet easy to reach and the excursions are well-guided. The most profound moments happen with a guide who can lead you to magical vistas.

The ideal time to visit is between October and March (summertime), as weather is warmer and there's more daylight. Although wintertime is a bit colder with an increased chance of snow, it also means fewer tourists.

Cost: Marek says a bucket list trip can be designed for about \$1,000 per day, including airfare. »





8 India

A MAGICAL JOURNEY
uniworld.com



Ancient India conjures visions of maharajas, elephant rides and sunsets on the famed Ganges River. While many travelers are lured by the ancient majesty, they are equally concerned about navigating cities where ox carts, motorbikes and sport utility vehicles all barrel down the crowded potholed streets. They worry that they'll be overwhelmed, and not in a good way. **Uniworld** has created the perfect excursion for anyone

The rich history and deep spirituality of India make this a special journey. But this is a trip for those willing to truly leave their cultural comfort zone.

seeking to experience authentic India, especially solo travelers.

The journey starts in **Delhi**, a fascinating combination of old and new, with ancient villages next to modern residences. The first five days are spent on land exploring the cities of **Delhi, Jaipur, Agra** and **Kolkata**. Experienced guides usher you to all of the must-see stops—including the **Pink City** and **Mother Teresa's Tomb**. In Agra, you will stay in one of the most luxurious hotels in the world, the **Oberoi Amarvilas**, where every guest room features a view of the **Taj Mahal** (accommodations in each city are all Oberoi properties). On day six, you board the **Ganges Voyager II** in Kolkata and the rest of the trip unfolds on the waters of the Ganges.

Ganges Voyager II is the most luxurious way to experience the Ganges. Every room on the fifty-six-passenger boat is a suite and features French balconies, large bathrooms with rain showers and butlers for premium staterooms. You will sail into remote riverside villages, where you can disembark to experience rural India. There are sampan (small boat) rides, tours of the temple city via trishaw (colorful pedicab) and a visit to the Hare Krishna complex.



Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

An experienced guide is with you at all times and the excursions are conducted in small groups, creating an intimate experience.

Onboard, the meals are open seating, allowing you to dine with any number of new friends or alone with your book.

Cost: The thirteen-day journey ranges from \$14,299 to \$24,199 (depending on stateroom), airfare not included.



GANGES RIVER, INDIA, FLICKR/CHRISTOPH SCHMALTZ; GANGES VOYAGER II INTERIOR BY ©UNIWORLD RIVER CRUISES INC.; TAJ MAHAL, CONTRIBUTED

9

Greece

RIDE OF A LIFETIME
duvine.com



All those cyclists we spot around town in the warmer months may not just be out for a leisurely ride. Some of them are likely getting ready for their next DuVine excursion, a popular adventure among the Greenwich biking set. The food, luxe hotels and spectacular destinations make these opulent journeys.

Guests can climb hills in the Pyrenees or opt for relatively

easy rides that meander through Napa or Provence. Founder Andy Levine says every place has its scent. "Provence is lavender; Morocco is spices. You don't smell that riding in a car with the windows up."

Levine handcrafts every itinerary and just launched a brand-new Greek isle tour. Days are spent exploring ancient towns by bike and nights are whiled away onboard DuVine's private yacht, **Princess Karia 2**. The itinerary covers some of Greece's least accessible islands. Rides take advantage of the bright, clear



days, coasting through car-free towns, climbing to island pinnacles for unobstructed views and passing lumbering donkeys on stone streets. Highlights include a visit to the town of **Kos**, birthplace of Hippocrates; exploring a fourth-century acropolis and an active volcano; and afternoons swimming in hidden coves

For those concerned about the demanding nature of the rides, there are e-wheels. You've likely heard of e-bikes (a little extra help from a motor), but DuVine offers e-wheels that can be used as you need them. All tours have a follow van for anyone who needs a little break.

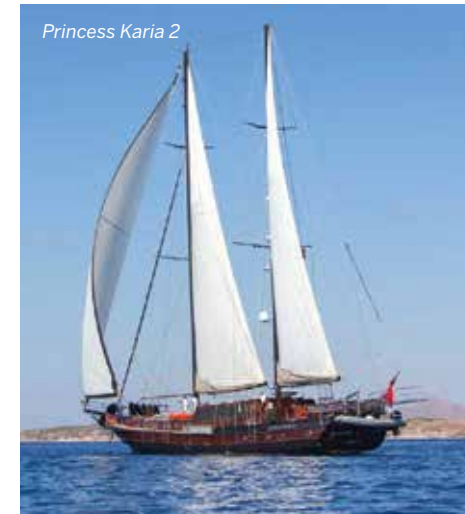
Why it's perfect for the solo traveler

There are never more than fourteen guests on any excursion. You can ride with newfound friends or take the trail at your own pace. Sailing the Greek Islands would be a

challenge for a solo traveler, so a small tour where you can socialize as much or as little as you choose is perfect.

Cost: Low season prices are \$7,895 and high season is \$8,495; airfare not included.

Ride to new heights on a variety of islands (many of which you cannot get to on your own) in ancient Greece.



The island of Kos

10 YOU CRAY CRAY! *Danger is my middle name*

wildfrontierstravel.com

If the trips we've offered up here are too tame for your wild travel soul, consider booking a tour with **Wild Frontiers**. This award-winning adventure travel company was founded by former travel writer/journalist Jonny Bealby, and has a successful history of bringing former conflict zones back into the forefront of alternative commercial travel. In the last few years it has reintroduced trips to **Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kashmir, Dagestan, North Caucasus** and **Iran**. American travelers seem to be particularly adventurous—on average around 25 percent of the Pakistan, Kashmir and Afghanistan groups are made up of Americans. As to why solo travelers would want to book a tour? Well, do we really need to explain? ☑

PRO TIP

For U.S. citizens traveling internationally, consider signing up for the free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which could help the State Department assist you in case of an emergency. step.state.gov