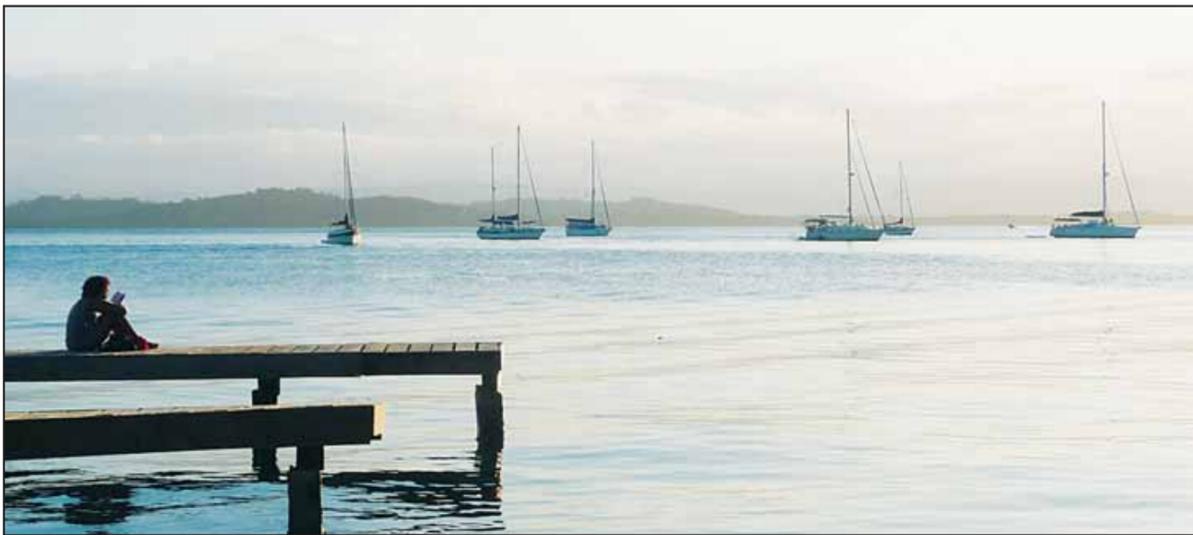


What's On



In this Jan 11, 2012 photo, a lone visitor sits on a pier with a book in Bocas del Toro, Panama. Traveling solo can involve big or small adventures, with all the decisions about itineraries and plans left up to the individual. (AP)

Experience can be thrilling, rewarding

Table for one? Tips for travelling solo

By Carrie Osgood

Are you filled with wanderlust, but sticking close to home because you lack a like-minded companion? Solo travel is an extraordinary, accessible opportunity that can involve big or small adventures, easy or difficult as you choose.

You can do what you want, when you want, how you want, where you want. You pick your own pace, budget, itinerary and can always change your mind on a whim, never having to negotiate. The experience can be liberating and thrilling, igniting a rewarding sense of accomplishment, and the detachment from your "real" life is often therapeutic.

When entering a new place on your own, you may notice more than you do when you travel with others. I strike up conversations more easily when I'm solo, something I've done in dozens of countries across six continents. But not all destinations are right for solo travelers. Here are some tips.

Visit walkable destinations connected by trains, buses, ferries and flights. Getting around this way will be straightforward, prices will be per person, and you increase your odds of meeting others, unlike destinations best seen or reached by car, where there may be fewer interactions. I've

found places outside the US and Caribbean are sometimes more friendly to individuals, with reduced-fare single-person rooms. Youth hostels are great for 20somethings and travelers of any age on tight budgets who crave conversation and don't need upscale accommodations.

Travelling off-season can save a lot of money. One year in October, it was cheaper for me to spend a week in Costa Rica than to visit the Adirondacks in upstate New York. The off-peak flight, local transport and single accommodation in Costa Rica was less than the car rental and pricier double rooms during fall foliage season here.

If you can't fly nonstop, turn your stopovers into perks. I've visited Fiji, Iceland, London, Paris and Rome, at no extra cost, all on extended layovers.

Ask others about their vacations to get ideas for your own trips, and read up online and in guidebooks. Publishers can vary tremendously so look at a variety of brands in a bookstore or library, then travel with a guidebook that best suits your priorities.

Keep expectations to a minimum so you're not disappointed. Instead, be flexible, go with the flow and treasure the unexpected. I've stumbled upon some amazing hidden gems. Bedouins invited me for tea in the caves of Petra, and a

Portuguese model in Lisbon declared his affection for me by saying it was "love at first look."

Be prepared for the occasional bad day. I've been tired, cranky, lonely and frustrated, suffering from food poisoning and stressed out by emergency landings, 14-hour flight delays, altercations with customs officials, bad weather and other complications. But temporary misery is part of travel, and can help you enjoy the magnificent moments that much more. And sometimes the worst experiences generate great stories later on.

Write in a journal every night. It records your adventures while also giving you the conversational outlet to express and process the details of your action-packed day.

When dining alone, bring a book or journal. Eating at the bar may feel more comfortable than a table for one.

Be respectful, inconspicuous and dress to blend in. Local fashion norms vary, but I typically wear jeans with subdued colors, dark shoes and subtle accessories so as not to attract undue attention.

English has become the world's second language, but learning to say hello and thank you in the local tongue goes a long way.

Be cautious but not paranoid. If there's a site that piques your interest, but it's out

of the way or you have concerns about personal safety, take a day tour or hire a guide. Independent female travelers may face harassment and other dangers, while men traveling alone may be targeted by scam artists and touts peddling illicit activities.

Ignoring verbal aggressors — whether beggars, vendors or passers-by — is frequently the best defense, although in some cultures, like the markets in Istanbul, a simple "no, thank you" works better. Intimidation and harassment are never fun; feel empowered by your ability to say no.

Check guidebooks and consult with local tourist offices and hotel staff for advice on what to watch out for. Take special care after dark, in dense crowds, and with likable strangers. The freedom of being far from home can release inhibitions in wonderful ways. In fact, I try to do something new every trip. But if you feel as though you're taking a risk, have an exit strategy, inform the hotel staff of your whereabouts, or make sure you're in a place where you can shout out to others.

Gratifying solo travel comes from following your bliss. Don't let societal pressures rattle you. Don't let loneliness paralyze you. Educate yourself so you know what you can, and cannot, do. Most of all, embrace the exciting possibilities before you. (AP)

travel

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✓ **VIENNA:** Loss-making Deutsche Lufthansa AG unit **Austrian Airlines (AUA)** aims to save 45 million euros (\$59 million) a year by shifting the contracts of pilots and flight attendants to a lower-cost sister company, a source close to the matter said.

AUA's supervisory board was meeting on Thursday to approve outsourcing the on-board staff contracts to regional carrier **Tyrolean Airways**, after negotiations with labour representatives failed to come up with an agreement on cost cuts.

AUA, which has become a major drag on the German group, declined to comment on the number. (RTRS)

✓ **DALLAS:** **American Airlines** wants to eliminate 1,200 nonunion jobs as it cuts costs while under bankruptcy protection.

That pushes the company's overall job-cut target to 14,200. It announced plans in February to cut 13,000 union pilots, flight attendants and ground workers.

American, the nation's third-biggest airline, has about 73,000 workers. American outlined the cuts for many nonunion workers on Tuesday. (AP)

✓ **LONDON:** A fine imposed on **British Airways** five years ago for fixing fuel surcharges on tickets has been cut by around half to £58.5 million (71.5 million euros, \$94 million) by a British watchdog, it said on Thursday.

The Office of Fair Trading said the reduction took into account BA's co-operation in an investigation into pricing on long-haul flights between August 2004 and January 2006. In August 2007, the regulator fined BA £121.5 million after British rival **Virgin Atlantic** disclosed details of the pair's price-fixing. Under the OFT's leniency policy, Virgin was not fined. (AFP)

✓ **NEW YORK:** A jetliner bound from Paris to New York with over 200 people aboard landed safely after blowing one of its tires upon takeoff. **Delta** spokesman Anthony Black says Flight 185 blew the tire while taking off from **Charles de Gaulle airport** at about 2 pm France time. He says tire debris on the runway and a fly-by confirmed the damage. (AP)

✓ **AMARILLO, Texas:** A **JetBlue Airways** captain accused of disrupting a flight when he left the cockpit screaming about religion and terrorists plans to use an insanity defense at trial.

An attorney for Clayton F. Osborn filed a motion Wednesday outlining plans to argue Osborn was insane at the time of the incident on the March 27 flight from New York to Las Vegas. (AP)



John E. Brennan poses for a photo at his Portland, Ore., home April 18. Port of Portland police say Brennan, 49, stripped naked at Portland International Airport Tuesday as a protest against airport security screeners. (AP)

'Nude but not lewd'

A high-tech worker who stripped naked at Portland International Airport as a protest against airport security screeners said Wednesday he was being "nude but not lewd," and characterized his act of defiance as protected political speech.

John E. Brennan, 49, of Portland was charged with disorderly conduct and indecent exposure after taking off far more than his belt and shoes during the screening process before a Tuesday evening flight to San Jose, California. The incident report from the Port of Portland, which operates the airport, said some passengers covered their eyes and the eyes of their children. Others laughed and took photos.

Brennan, in an interview at his home, said he did not arrive at the airport with the intention of getting naked. He said the Transportation Security Administration crosses the line between privacy and security. He decided to protest after he was pulled aside after going through the metal detector and a pat down, he said.

Port police officers arrested Brennan after he ignored requests to get dressed. (AP)

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