

SOLO TRAVEL: JUST DO IT

By Patricia Horwell

When you've got the itch to get out there and go, you just have to scratch it.

Sure, it's fun to travel with a buddy, but that is not always possible. Life is too short for "coulda, woulda, shoulda." It's time to plan your adventure. Whether you are longing for a simple road trip, a cruise or a vacation in a foreign or exotic location, you can do it. There's no compromise with solo travel. You can do what you want, when you want.

Plan it. Although you are the master of your trip, remember to be flexible. Sometimes the unexpected can make for the best memories. Choose destinations with good healthcare and consider buying travel insurance.

Pack light. You don't need as much as you think! (Dragging heavy luggage can be exhausting.) Remember to pack any medications you'll need.

Always trust your instincts. You have been around the block a few times and know when a situation isn't quite right.

Choose accommodations where you can socialize. Bed and breakfast inns are great places to meet other nomads. Some tour operators run group trips for solo travelers and many cruise lines now offer single cabins. There are also dining rooms and meeting spaces where you can meet other single cruisers.

Learn a few phrases. Knowing a bit of the language, even if you're not fluent, can help if you need directions, medical care or even if making purchases. The locals appreciate your attempt, even if you slaughter their language. It shows respect for the culture. Remember to say "hello" before you ask for help.

Be fearless. Try hiking, skiing, visiting museums, or something you've always wanted to try.

Stay Connected. Be sure to let family or close friends know your itinerary in case of an emergency. Send daily texts. They'll love following your adventure.

Pay attention. Always know where your belongings are. Make

copies of your ID or passport and keep them separate from the originals. You can also take photos of them and keep them on your mobile phone. It is helpful to know the location of your embassy or consulate.

Hit the road. A solo road trip can be a soul-satisfying experience as you travel at your own pace. Just be sure to give your car a good check before you go. Take your favorite snacks to munch on. You'll have space to bring home some of those souvenirs you just had to have. It's also wise to carry some paper maps.

Take photos. Finally, bring a camera or use your mobile phone to take photos. You might want to make up a book or hang a few prints at home to remember your trip. Stay hydrated and have fun!

