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Travelling to a sense of identity: the rise of solo travel and where it's taking us

By ROBYN IRONSIDE

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4 Comments

Travelling solo is fast becoming the preferred way to see the world, with growing numbers of Australians going it alone.

Research by [online travel agency Webjet](#) showed it was Baby Boomers rather than backpackers who were leading the solo travel trend, with nearly half of over 65s contemplating a solitary adventure.

Generation X — aged 45 to 64 — was also well represented in the solo stakes, while Millennials (35 to 44) had embraced the trend out of a desire for “solitude and peace” and an antidote to burnout.

Sydney mother Monique Van Tulder, 56, said she took her first solo trip when her children were quite young to rediscover herself outside of the family dynamic.

She fell in love with the serendipity of travelling alone, and annual ten-day jaunts turned into a whole year in Europe after her sons finished school.

“I woke up and found myself at the top of everyone’s pyramid of people we need, and very much at the bottom of my own, and I didn’t really like what I saw in the mirror,” said Ms Van Tulder.

“I got a bit slumped and thought bugger it, and headed off on what I thought was a gap minute or two, and then it turned into a gap year.

“For me, solo travel is about becoming yourself again.”

Webjet research showed solo travellers were not necessarily seeking out-of-the-way or intrepid destinations, rather good value and great experiences.

Perennial holiday favourite Bali was the most popular place booked by lone travellers, followed by London, Auckland, Queenstown, Manila and Tokyo.

Ms Van Tulder said Japan was among her favourite countries to explore alone because it was safe and well set up for solo travellers.

“When I visited Kyoto, I found this lovely new hotel chain that had single beds,” she said.

“A lot more properties are doing single beds where you can stay for about \$75 a night, which is not much for a lovely, clean, centrally located hotel with a bed, window and a bathroom.”

[Women tended to be more likely to travel alone](#), outnumbering men by about three to one, and Ms Van Tulder said the question she was most asked was “what words did she use to tell her husband she needed to be away?”

“I’m probably a bit naughty,” she laughed.

“I just texted to say I’m not coming back after three weeks, I’m going to stay here (in Europe) a while. We all need space in relationships; we’re individuals and we should live life like that too.”

Webjet B2C chief executive Katrina Barry said solo travel was being embraced by people of all ages for a variety of “enriching reasons”.

“Whether it’s celebrating personal milestones or embarking on a journey of self-discovery, more and more individuals are choosing to travel alone,” said Ms Barry.

“This trend is reflected in Webjet bookings for 2024 and 2025, with Aussies of all ages and genders exploring all sorts of destinations around the world.”

Despite the perception solo travel was more expensive than “twin share” arrangements, Webjet data showed holiday package bookings for singles were roughly 60 to 70 per cent the price of couples travel.

For the period from January to June this year, the average booking value for Bali trips by solo travellers was \$2066, compared to \$3488 for couples.

US trips taken by solos added up to about \$4782, compared to couple holiday packages costing \$7047.

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