

# The Intelligent Traveler

TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP YOU TRAVEL SMARTER

Edited by SARAH BRUNING

## The Perks of Traveling Alone

In this cultural moment when experiences trump trinkets, many luxury travelers are seizing opportunities to take an adventure-driven, once-in-a-lifetime trip—whether or not they have a partner to do it with. Three of T+L's A-List advisors share ideas on where to go now, solo. **BY MADELINE BILIS**

ONE-FIFTH OF ALL leisure travelers journeyed alone in 2017, according to statistics from the U.S. Travel Association, and other research indicates that destinations such as Norway and Australia held particular appeal for their outdoor and cultural pursuits. The solo boom spans generations: millennial women are big drivers (a British Airways study of 9,000 people found 50 percent of females went alone), spurred on by a ▶

*A solo hiker tackles the 2.2-mile Taft Point Trail in Yosemite National Park.*



More solo adventurers are opting for gorilla-trekking vacations in Rwanda.

► preference for experiences over things, as are tourists 65 and older, who boast longer life expectancies and higher median incomes than previous generations, per research from the University of Southern California. Thinking of going it alone on your next trip? Here, three points of inspiration.

#### EMBARK ON A SMALL-SHIP VOYAGE

Cruise specialist **Betsy Patton** ([bpatton@dt.com](mailto:bpatton@dt.com); 259-260-4011) says that vacations on smaller vessels—including expeditions to far-flung destinations like the Galápagos and Antarctica—are ideal for solo travelers. They offer plenty of independence while still encouraging “a feeling of camaraderie,” and on board, staff members often pay extra attention to unaccompanied travelers. At ports, Patton will arrange a private tour for a client who doesn’t wish to join organized outings.

#### SEE A DIFFERENT SIDE OF PARADISE

**Christina Turrini** ([christina.turrini@frosch.com](mailto:christina.turrini@frosch.com); 415-532-8664), a French Polynesia specialist, finds that despite its reputation as a honeymoon destination, her region lends itself well to singles because of its deeply entrenched values of community and

inclusivity. “The local greeting is often ‘Can I help you?’ or ‘Can you dine with us?’” Turrini says—an appealing sentiment for many adventurers, but especially those without friends or family in tow. A case in point: Turrini booked Jerry Gabay, a 74-year-old Oregon resident, on a trip aboard the *Aranui*, a freighter delivering supplies to the remote Marquesas Islands. He quickly befriended locals on and off the ship, sharing yellow watermelon and splitting coconuts with them on the shore. “Sitting around talking, it’s just like home—except in the South Pacific,” Gabay says.

#### TAKE A GORILLA TREK

Solo safaris have risen in popularity, especially among women, according to **Mark Nolting** ([safari@africanadventure.com](mailto:safari@africanadventure.com); 800-882-9453), founder of Africa Adventure Company, whose 72-year-old client Jane Craig went on a gorilla trek three years ago. “I’d given up on the idea of ever going because I thought it was beyond my physical capabilities,” Craig explains. But meeting some female travelers in their late seventies inspired her to train for six months in her hometown of Vancouver and ultimately set out for a 12-day guided trip through Uganda and Rwanda.

## Speed Through Security

Digital news reporter **TALIA AVAKIAN** tests a little-known mobile app to beat the passport-control queue.

Few things dampen the post-vacation high like a long security line. Following a recent trip to Scotland, I decided to try the U.S. Customs & Border Protection **Mobile Passport** app (iOS and Android; free), which lets you enter expedited immigration lanes at 26 domestic airports. When travelers scan their passports, the data gets encrypted and stored in the app as a profile for future use. For each new trip, the user completes a new digital declaration form to get a trip-specific QR code that a customs agent scans. Before leaving Edinburgh, I made sure my profile was ready, and once I landed at JFK, I followed the app’s prompts to answer the usual customs questions and get my code. (One caveat: travelers must wait until they’re on U.S. soil to submit the form and must pass through immigration within four hours of receiving their code.) The lane for Mobile Passport Control was nearly empty, so I waited less than five minutes to speak to a CBP officer. Judging from the length of the regular line, I easily saved 40 minutes—not to mention my sanity.

