

A woman is sitting on a sandy beach, her back to the camera, looking out at the ocean. The sun is setting, creating a golden glow on the water and sky. The woman's silhouette is dark against the bright background.

# *She Flies* SOLO

The Single Woman's Guide to  
Planning Her First Solo Trip

Karissa Littlejohn

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Step 1: Push Past the Fear and Anxiety	pg. 10
Step 2: Select Your Destination	pg. 13
Step 3: Plan Your Activities	pg. 16
Step 4: Choose Your Accommodations	pg. 19
Step 5: Locate Places to Eat	pg. 22
Bonus: How to Meet People	pg. 24

*So you want to take a trip alone, but you haven't? Maybe you're nervous. Maybe you're scared. Maybe you're just not sure how to go about doing it. In this guidebook, I will outline the steps to planning your first epic solo trip.*

## Forward

**There are people who have always been daring, bold and brave. People who've never been one to wait around on someone else to do what they want to do. I'm here to tell you:**

*I am not that person.*

I am not daring. I am not bold. I am not brave. I am not overly extroverted. Or at least I wasn't....

Who Am I? To tell you who I am, I have to first tell you a bit about who I was. I've always loved to travel. I grew up traveling with family. Traveled with friends throughout my teens and twenties. I went on plenty of trips, but not nearly as many as I wanted to. There were lots of places that I wanted to go, but couldn't find anyone to go with me – so I didn't go. I would never DREAM of going to a place alone. “That's for people with no friends,” I thought... or people who are super extroverted. Definitely not something a quiet, reserved girl like me would do. I was content to wait around until someone else got ready to go with me.

That worked well until it didn't. In 2013, I was scheduled to fly to Vegas for my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was going with the guy I was dating at the time, let's call him Flighty. We'd booked the trip and paid for it in full. The morning of the trip, I did some last minute shopping and prepared to go. A few hours prior to departure, I realized I had not heard from Flighty. I sent him a text message asking what time he would be on

his way. I didn't receive a response, so I decided to call. He answered, and hit me with some devastating news: he would not be going. I was shocked, stunned, and didn't really know what to do or think. I was in complete disbelief.

*Is this really happening to me on my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday?*

After compiling myself and formulating my words, all that I said was, "OK." He assured me that he really wanted to go, but was not able to get the time off from work. Again, all I could muster up was, "OK." He proceeded to say that we could just reschedule it and go another time. He talked about how much fun we could have right here in Houston. As I let his words go in one ear and out the other, a shift happened. I politely told him that I would need to finish packing because I had a plane to catch.

Now was his turn for disbelief. He couldn't believe that I was still planning to go. I never went anywhere alone. I asked him if he would mind transferring me some spending money. He agreed. I packed, loaded my things in to the car, and headed off to the airport.

I think I went into a bit of survival mode. I surprisingly wasn't scared or nervous. I just knew that I'd wanted to go to Vegas for years, and this is my opportunity. I was getting on that plane. Even if I had to fly solo.

As I sat in the airport waiting on my flight, I began to wonder what I was going to do. I had planned to wing it when we arrived in Vegas, so I had no agenda. I had no idea what was going on in Vegas, other than that they had a lot of pretty hotels. “I need to meet someone,” I thought to myself. So I did what I typically do when I want to meet new people. I went online. I logged into Plenty of Fish, created a page for myself in Vegas, and put something along these lines of, “Coming to Vegas for the weekend. Looking for a friend to hang out with, see some sites, eat, etc. Nothing sexual.” Simple, save, send. Before the plane took off, I’d spoken with someone who wanted to take me out for dinner that evening.

I landed in Vegas around 11pm. By this time I was super tired. I called the guy I was planning to meet up with and let him know that I wasn’t up for going out. He said he was out with friends on the strip, and asked if I minded if he swung by the hotel for a quick meet and greet. Sure, why not? I knew the hotels were pretty large in Vegas, so I didn’t think he’d try to abduct me or anything.

I gathered my bags from baggage claim, and headed out to catch the shuttle to the MGM Grand. As I was waiting on the shuttle, a gentleman approached me and struck up a conversation. We chatted for a moment, and before I left

the airport, I'd already had an offer for a "tour guide." We exchanged information, and I went on my way.

I arrived at the MGM at almost midnight. I was not prepared for how MASSIVE this hotel was. Oh my goodness, it was huge. I scoped out the scene and quickly realized there was no way I'd just happen to run into the guy I was meeting. I called him up to let him know I was there and saw that he was waiting in the lobby already. We met briefly. He seemed nice enough. I told him I was going to check in and get some rest. He asked if I wanted to meet up the next day. I agreed.

I checked in, went up to my room, laid in the most comfortable bed I'd ever laid in, sent Flighty's number to spam, and went to sleep.

The next day started my whirlwind romance with solo travel. I had, hands down, one of the best vacations I have ever taken. Since then, I've been on several more solo trips, and explored tons of places on my own. There is a freedom that comes in traveling alone and truly enjoying one's own company (or the company of a stranger turned friend).

Now I don't know what your backstory is, or why you've not chosen to travel solo before, but I will give you this advice:

# Fly Solo!

*Travel with me as I walk you through the process of planning your first solo trip. You won't regret it!*

## **Step 1: Push Past the Fear and Anxiety**

*We spend much of our lives worrying about things that never happen.*

You've got to step out of your own way if you ever want to get up the nerve to travel alone. We worry about WAY more than we should. This is definitely applicable to solo travel. Some of the common concerns I hear are:

*What if something bad happens to me?*

*What if I can't find anything to do?*

*What are people going to think of me?*

*Who will take my pictures?*

*How am I going to enjoy myself alone?*

**Let's address these one-by-one.**

***What if something bad happens to me?***

Do you go to work? Does someone accompany you to work? Do you go to the grocery store? Mailbox? Mall? We go places every day where something bad could potentially happen to us. Does that stop us from going? Absolutely not. Chances are, nothing bad is going to happen to you. You're just as likely (if not more likely) to be abducted, assaulted, or otherwise hurt in the familiarity of your daily environment as you are out on vacation.

### ***What if I can't find anything to do?***

If you can't find anything to do, then you haven't done your research. We'll get to that in a subsequent section, but unless you're super outgoing, creative or think on the fly, you should not be "winging" your first solo trip. Find things to do before hand, so you won't be struggling once you arrive.

### ***What are people going to think of me?***

They're going to think you're (a.) pretty freakin' pathetic, (b.) pretty freakin' crazy or (c.) pretty freakin' awesome, brave, and someone to be looked up to. Chances are either B or C. But do you want to live your life confined by the opinions of others? If so, stay home. If not, read on.

### ***Who will take my pictures?***

Tell me I'm not the only one who was REALLY concerned about this? I mean, who wants to go to a fabulous destination and only have photos of scenery, food, and selfies? Not I. I need you to know that unless you go to a deserted island, there will be people who are more than willing to snap a quick photo. I can't speak for the quality of the photo, but it will be taken. You may also want to invest in a tripod and a Bluetooth self-timer so you can take photos of yourself if no one is around.

***How am I going to enjoy myself alone?***

Happily. Freely. Fully. Time spent in the company of oneself can be some of the best quality time you will ever invest into anyone. Take the opportunity to really get to know yourself. Or... as you will see in the later chapters, take the time to make new friends. Either way, it is completely possible to enjoy a solo vacation to the fullest. You will find that it is one of the best vacations you ever had, and you'll kick yourself for not going sooner.

*Now that we have pushed past our fears and anxiety (or just chosen to ignore them for the time being), let's get into the REAL planning process.*

## Step 2: Select Your Destination

*I don't care where I go, I just want to get away from here!*

How many times have you said this? If you are anything like me, thousands. It's a beautiful concept, but for your first solo trip, the ***destination really matters***. You'll have to consider what type of vacation you would like to have and select a destination accordingly. Do you want to hike? Site see? Food Tours? Relax on the beach? If you would like to have a nice beach getaway, obviously you wouldn't go to London. If you want to see a Broadway show, you won't go to the Bahamas. This first thing you need to decide is, "What is the general idea of what I would like to do?" We'll cover the details later.

**Some things to consider when selecting a destination:**

***What is the weather like there during the time you are planning to go?***

New York City in July is going to be totally different than New York City in January. Your dreams of strolling through Central Park sipping a lemonade may not pan out how you imagined if you don't take time of year into account. You don't want to get to Costa Rica to find out that you're visiting during rainy season, and that it will be raining every day. That's not to say that you don't visit during that time,

that's just to be aware of what you may be signing up for. As a solo traveler, you don't want any unexpected surprises.

There are many tropical destinations – Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Jamaica that are nice year round, but are less expensive depending on the season that you travel in. This leads into the next thing to consider:

### ***Budget***

What is your budget? Is it flexible? Keep in mind that traveling during the week and during off seasons is going to save you a good chunk of change. Some places are expensive regardless of when you go. Do your research. Pick a few places that you are interested in going, then price them at different times of the year. Google will help you narrow this down. You can simply search, “what is the best time of year to go to...” This will give you the cheapest times, but will also let you know what weather to expect during that time.

When you are considering budget, don't just look at the cost of the flight. Look at accommodation costs, transportation, activities. You would hate to get to a destination, only to discover that while you were able to get there, you cannot do any of the things you really want to do.

***How are you going to get around once you get there?***

Some destinations are walkable if you stay in the right areas. Do you plan to rent a car? Use public transit? This will factor into your budget, but it should also factor into your destination selection. If a person doesn't feel like driving anywhere, I would never recommend they come to Houston. If a person hates to use public transit, I wouldn't recommend that you go to London. It is imperative that you know your options for transportation at the location you are trying to go, ESPECIALLY if you are traveling alone. However, don't let something that you are not familiar with scare you. I never thought I'd be one to enjoy riding on the public bus system, but one visit to Chicago and I was HOOKED. It was actually pretty awesome, and I felt safe the whole time. The news will trick you into both a false sense of security and a false sense of danger. Use common sense. Don't travel alone at night. Don't go into sketchy areas. Be aware of who is around. Use the same judgement that you would use at home.

### **Common Transportation Options:**

- Rental Car
- Uber/Lyft
- Public Train/Bus
- Taxi
- Walking
- Hotel Shuttle

*Once you have your destination down, you can transition into where you would like to stay.*

### Step #3: Plan Your Activities

*It's not where you go, it's what you do when you get there!*

I know I just said destination really matters. However, what you do when you arrive at your destination can make or break a trip. Back to researching. Research your destination like CRAZY. You need to know any and every possible thing that there is to do at the place you are going. You need to know where to eat, where to take pictures, what attractions are there. Is it a good spot for solo female travelers? Some destinations are more solo-travel friendly than others. Again, Google is your friend. Talk to her. Ask her questions.

Whether you are a planner or not, if you are nervous about your first solo trip, you need to have a plan. I make very detailed itineraries, sometimes three or four per day so that I will have options. I don't always stick to them, but there is comfort in knowing what you could do at a certain time if you wanted to.

- 🌍 Make a list of things you can do each day.
- 🌍 Find out what time the places you want to go open and close. (Some places are not open every day, make note of that.)

- 🌐 Find out the costs of everything you want to do and write it down. You may find that some stuff can be marked off the list, simply due to cost.
- 🌐 Take your itinerary with you. Print it off, just in case you are not able to get cell service.

***Hashtags are your friend when planning your activities.***

Some of the most unique, off the grid things that I've done, I found by searching Instagram hashtags. Hashtag the place you want to go. Let's say I am going to Vegas. I would search the hash tags #Vegas, #VivaLasVegas, #LasVegas #ExploreLasVegas, etc. You can also search the Instagram location. If you're staying at a certain hotel, search that hotel location. A lot of times people will upload all of their photos to the place they are staying. Let one hashtag or location lead you to another. You'll find that there are certain pages dedicated to attractions at a city. I found Seven Magic Mountains this way. A colorful oasis in the middle of the desert.

Again, you want a plan. Even if you don't stick to it, it will make you feel a lot better about getting on that plane!

**Not sure what to do?  
Here are 50 activities to get you started!**

Food Tours	Spa
Bar Crawls	Bowling
Beach	Lake
Hiking	Hot Springs
Nature/Botanical Gardens	Top Golf
Shows	Historic Movie Theaters
Amusement Parks	Shopping
Restaurants	Souvenirs
Jet Skiing	Historical Landmarks
Kayaking	Horseback Riding
Fly Boarding	Helicopter Ride
Surfing	Boat Ride
Scuba Diving	Fishing
Swimming with Dolphins	Gambling
Zoo	Ziplining
Skiing	Bungee Jumping
Snowboarding	Plantation Tour
Snowmobiling	Ghost Tour
Swimming	Night Club
Museums	Segway Tour
Parks	Bicycle Tour
Art Galleries	Helmet Dive
Concerts	Snorkeling
Plays	Cooking Class
Festivals	Dinner Cruise

## **Step #4: Choose Your Accommodations**

*Where, oh where will I lay my head tonight?*

While there are multiple options to choose from, I always recommend staying in a hotel for your first solo trip. There will be plenty of people around. You will feel safer and more comfortable overall. Once you get into trip two and beyond, I'd venture into some other options, such as private vacation rentals.

**There are multiple things to consider when choosing your hotel:**

***How accessible is it from the airport?***

You need to get from point A to point B right? If you go nowhere else, you will need to get to your hotel. How far is the hotel from the airport? Does the hotel have a shuttle service? Can you take the bus there? What will the transportation cost? I spoke about transportation when considering where to go, and the same applies when selecting your hotel.

***How close is it to the things you want to do?***

I think it's safe to assume that you aren't going to kick off your first solo trip with a two week stay in Europe (but how AWESOME would that be?). You're likely going to do a shorter trip. You don't want to spend all day driving from

place to place. Choose a hotel that is close to the things that you want to do. If the hotel has a shuttle to nearby attractions, even better.

***How nice is it? Does it meet your quality standards?***

I don't like staying anywhere under a 4.0 *GUEST RATING*. Keep in mind the guest rating is different from the hotel star rating. I have stayed at 2 star hotels that have a 5 star guest rating. Holiday Inn Express' are not 4 star hotels, but many of them are super nice inside. Check the ratings, look at the *guest* pictures.

I love using Trip Advisor to select my hotel, because it gives honest reviews. Look at the good and the bad. You'll find that often the good reviews have some of these negative things intertwined, so you have to decide, "Is this something that would bother me?" For instance, I'm not really bothered by rude staff, but some people are. If a person rated the hotel a 1 because \*a\* staff member was rude to them, that doesn't hold as much rank to me as a review that says that the hotel smells weird. I don't like weird smells. I'll pass. Take the extra time to leaf through them and see what others are saying about the places you are considering.

***Is there anything to eat at/near the hotel?***

Again, you don't want to waste your trip driving to find food. I try to select hotels that have onsite dining options,

as well as restaurants in close proximity. We'll get into planning for food later, but this is definitely something to consider at this step in the planning process.

### ***Are there onsite activities?***

Do they have a pool? Do they have a fitness center? Some hotels even have movie theaters, bowling alleys, clubs or other structured activities to participate in. Consider all-inclusive resorts when planning for your destination, as they have pre-planned daytime and nighttime activities. The more activities they have at the hotel, the less you have to plan. This is also a great opportunity to meet others.

As I mentioned, I think a hotel is the best option for your first trip, but I would be doing you a disservice not to let you know of alternative options:

- 🌐 Airbnb
- 🌐 VRBO
- 🌐 Couch Surfing
- 🌐 Hostel
- 🌐 Homeaway

## Step 5: Make a List of Places to Eat

### *Feed me, and I'll love you forever*

You may have done this in your activity search, but, as a foodie, I believe this one deserves a spot of its own. You can find restaurants in similar ways. Use the name of the city you are going to and add “foodie” (Ex. #LasVegasFoodie). This will pull up restaurant options. Often there are a few pages that are strictly dedicated to food in a particular city. Scroll through, see what’s good. See what’s photographable (that’s really what matters, right?).

Check out the restaurant men; look at the prices. If you are like me, you may go absolutely crazy when left unleashed at a restaurant, so pace yourself, and make sure you don’t end up somewhere that blows your whole food budget on the first day.

Groupon and Living Social have deals on food options that you may not have considered.

Head back over to Trip Advisor. See what the people are saying. You can even get tips on the best time to go. I’m not a crowds-type of person, so if the reviews for the place I want to eat say that the line is 2 hours long if you get there at 7am. I am probably not going to go there. However, if it

says the line is two hours long if you get there at 10 am, I'll consider going early. Again, reviews are your friend.

Consider hotels that have a restaurant in them. You may feel like being a hermit one day, and the last thing you want is to be a hungry hermit.

Eat24 and other food delivery services are awesome. Some cities even have 24 HOUR DELIVERY SERVICE! OMG. I was in Heaven in Philadelphia and DC. Look for promo codes online to get discounts.

Look for restaurants that have a bar. Eating at the bar as a solo traveler is a lot less awkward than eating at a table. I enjoy eating at tables though so I can take my photos - especially if there is a nice view.

## **Bonus: How to Meet People**

### *When strangers become friends*

I will preface this by saying, you can have a great time without meeting anyone on a trip. This is typically an “after the plan” step, but I wanted to include it. You may have noticed that I mentioned on my first solo trip I met some people. Contrary to what you hear, just because you go somewhere alone doesn’t mean you have to remain that way. Don’t be afraid to meet people. We are adults. Exercise caution and fully utilize common sense, but enjoy yourself. If you go somewhere with a stranger, let people know where you are going, and when they should plan to hear back from you.

*“How do you meet people?”* I get this one ALL.THE.TIME.

### *Talk to them*

Simple enough, right? You can meet people anywhere: Hotels, Restaurants, Bars. Spark up a conversation. Ask them what brings them there. See what plans they have, and if you are interested in tagging along, just ask them. You’d be surprised to find that a lot of people are traveling alone, and people traveling in groups never mind a plus one.

## ***Online***

You can meet people on online dating sites. I've set up sites to use for the time I'd be in town, and met some really awesome people. Again, be discerning. Look at their profile, look at their pictures, chat with them, and feel them out. And if you decide to meet them, meet them at a public place. I will tell you, there is no better tour guide than someone local. They know all of the hot spots, as well as the little known places.

## ***Hashtags***

#Hash #tags #are #your #friend. I met a girl in Puerto Vallarta through a hashtag. She'd hashtagged the resort we were currently staying in, and I messaged her and said, "HEYYYY!" LOL. Seems kinda creepy when you think about it, but we met later for karaoke, and stayed in contact for a while after that. Hashtags before you go and hashtags when you get there make for a great trip.

## ***Group Tours***

If you go on a group tour, you will, by default, be around like-minded people. Converse. Get to know them.

## ***Join Meetup Groups and Facebook Groups***

On Facebook, search the name and/or location of the place you are going. (Ex. A search of "Las Vegas Solo" gives you the group "Solo Las Vegas" and "Las Vegas Solo Meetup.") Meetup.com is a great place to look as well. You can search

by location, then narrow it down by interest. Don't be afraid to join groups that are meant for locals. No one is going to kick you out, and you can still meet some great people. The convenient thing about local groups is that they typically already have regular activities planned, so you can just hop on to their things, and meet multiple people at once.

*Now that you've done your research and explored all of your options...*

***#Book #That #Trip***

## About the Author



Karissa Littlejohn is a native Texan and mother to two beautiful children. She grew up in a family of travelers, and has carried on the tradition into her adult life. On her blog, She Flies Solo, she shares her travels and inspires single women to embrace life on their own terms. She believes that life is best experienced through travel. She is most at home on a beautiful, white sand beach - but also enjoys places rich in culture and history.

Contact Karissa:

- Social Media Channels: SheFliesSolo
- The Blog: [www.shefliessolo.com](http://www.shefliessolo.com)
- Email: [kay@shefliessolo.com](mailto:kay@shefliessolo.com)
- Phone: 832-818-7033

*Happy Travels!*