

INTRODUCTION

“Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.”

—Miriam Beard
American Writer and Traveler

WHY TRAVELING FOR HER?

It was my first trip out of the country and I found myself sitting in a small railroad car, looking out over the charming Italian countryside. The rhythmic clatter of the train matched the chatter in my head as I tried to absorb the scene. I had arrived in Switzerland five days earlier, after a whirlwind month of finishing school, wrapping up several big projects for my business, moving, planning and packing for the trip. In the short time since my arrival, I had seen so many sights, felt so many emotions, and experienced so many things; this ride to Italy was the perfect time to reflect on the previous month and where I would be going during my five-week European journey ahead.

While enjoying the view and the welcome solitude, a couple in their early forties entered the railcar, stored their luggage above the seat, and settled in for the ride. They looked to be American so I offered a “hello,” and we struck up a conversation. It turns out they were from the Bay Area in California (I was living in Southern California at the time) so we instantly started chatting about life back home and our various Californian experiences.

At some point during this exchange, the conversation turned to whether I was traveling alone. I was. They both looked quite surprised and commented on how brave and adventurous I was, striking out on my own for the first time in a foreign country. I was flattered, but laughed it off, as my independence has never seemed that odd to me. However, throughout my trip, I heard similar comments from people I met, particularly from women. These comments were variations on “That’s so great you’re traveling and that you’re brave enough to do it alone!” and “I don’t know that I would be brave enough to do what you’re doing.” I can’t count how many times I heard this during my trip. I didn’t realize that traveling as a solo woman today was such an oddity, but even after returning home and talking with friends, many offered the same sentiments. Subsequent travels have confirmed the same. In fact, a woman I’ve known my entire life, now well into her seventies, recently shared with me that she had always wanted to go to Europe, but never had because she had no one to go with.

It was comments and reactions such as these that inspired me to write this book. Whether you’re a college student, a single mom, a recent widow, or even a happily married woman looking to take a trip with the girls or with your husband, this book is for you! Here you’ll find inspirational stories of women travelers, ideas about where to travel, tips on safety, and timely travel resources about everything from tour companies specializing in women’s travel to must-have travel products.

Travel is such a life-changing experience, and I hope this book will serve as an inspiration for other women to start, or continue, traveling—for it is through travel that we not only discover the world, but we also discover ourselves.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

As you may have guessed, this book has a specific target audience: women. This book is for women of all ages,

backgrounds, experiences, interests, circumstances, budgets and adventure levels. If you're a second-grade teacher looking to fill your summer vacation, this book is for you. If you've recently beat a life-threatening illness and want to celebrate life, this book is for you. If you're a newly-single mother looking to show your children the world, this book is for you. If you've recently retired from a grueling life in Corporate America and you're looking to rediscover your own life, this book is for you. If you're a soon-to-be bride in charge of planning your romantic honeymoon, this book is for you. For any woman looking to explore the world and yourself, near or far, this book is for you!

Of course, none of this is to say that men can't benefit from this book as well. After all, a lot of the information in this book applies equally to all travelers regardless of gender. The world holds no bias. However, I do believe that women experience the world differently, have different interests and concerns when it comes to travel, and will hold memories of travel differently than men. For women, travel is often an emotional, introspective journey of self and the world around them. A building is more than the materials used to construct it; it is the place they discovered their history, a place they sipped the world's best coffee, a place they first felt the joy of snowflakes on their face, a place they caught the lingering eye of a handsome stranger. The mind, the heart and the senses make up the travel experiences of women.

I also believe that as women, we may need that extra little push to take time for ourselves and to travel. Women are busier than ever today, and are only getting busier. We're the caregivers and often the breadwinners at the same time. We multitask, organize, juggle and cram extra tasks into each day, and we do it amazingly well. The only problem is, we sometimes forget to take care of ourselves. I hope this book can be the catalyst to change that and help you find time for yourself.

If you are reading this book, I assume you fall into one of a few different categories:

- A woman who is new to travel and is looking for inspiration and information about where to begin.
- A woman who has done a small amount of traveling, but wants to do more.
- A woman who travels extensively and is looking for timely information and ways to relate to other women who do the same.

As a member of any of the above groups, you are probably looking for any or all of the following things in this book:

- Inspiration to take the “travel plunge” and begin seeing the world.
- Inspiration to get outside your travel comfort zone and take some travel risks.
- Information about things such as where to travel, how to research travel destinations, travel logistics, travel safety, travel accessories, packing essentials, and other facts and information related to travel.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is comprised of two essential parts: inspiration and information. Throughout the book, you’ll meet several women who have traveled all over the world and hear their stories of inspiration and discovery. This inspiration also includes a great deal of self-assessment and reflection about why you want to travel, what moves you and what stops you. Finally, the informational part includes all aspects of travel logistics, organized in the order you travel: planning, being on the road, and returning home. This part of the book is packed full of information and resources that will be useful to even the most seasoned traveler.

Unlike many travel guides, this book will not tell you the best restaurants; it won't teach you how to say hello in ten different languages; it won't even give you maps of top tourist destinations. In these respects and others, this is not your typical travel guide. This book is not destined for a dusty home on a bookshelf after a single trip. Neither is it a book to be read through, cover to cover, without thoughtful self-analysis.

This book is a guide to you as much as it is a guide to the world and as such, it will take some work. These pages are full of interactive questionnaires, quizzes and assessments that will help you discover the you that perhaps you've never known, or that has become lost during years of all work and no play. You will discover, or rediscover, why you want to travel, where you want to travel, and what kind of traveler you are. You will learn how to find money for travel, if that's what's holding you back. You will learn how to make time for yourself, if that's what's holding you back. In short, you will learn how to live the life you want.

I know that sounds like a tall order for such a small book, but I challenge you to really take the time to work through the exercises in this book and reflect on what they mean to you. As the saying goes, you only get out as much as you put in. Don't just read from one chapter to the next. Rather, set aside time for the exercises in each chapter so you can truly benefit from them. There may be some exercises that are difficult for you, or that cause resistance. That's okay. Do them anyway.

While reading this book, you'll need a pen or pencil and a notebook or journal to record your thoughts and writings. If you have family members, friends or a significant other that you feel comfortable sharing with, you may find it helpful to work through some of the exercises together.

I believe you'll get the most out of this book by reading through each chapter in order. However, for those of you who

don't have the time, or are just looking for specific information on a travel-related topic, I wanted this book to be useful for you as well. Therefore, each chapter can stand on its own, making this a reference book for information that is most relevant for your current needs and provides answers to your most pressing questions. The index at the end is also packed with keywords for easy reference, and the "Travel Links" section summarizes all links mentioned throughout the book.

This book references many Web sites, magazines and books. I've gone to great lengths to ensure that the information is current and relevant, and at the time of this writing, believe the information to be correct. However, because of the ever-changing nature of information and the Internet especially, some links and information may become outdated after the printing of this book. If you find this to be the case, please notify me so I can make updates for the next edition of the book.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Let me hear from you! I'm always interested in hearing your comments and suggestions. Please contact me at feedback@travelingforher.com.