



A solo traveller admires the view along the Tiber in Rome on a warm summer day. *shutterstock photo*

Going solo

removing the angst of travelling alone

story Laurie Wallace-Lynch

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Where have you been all my life?" may be the most overused dating pick-up line on the planet, but when women started posing this question to adventure travel specialist Yvonne Mostowy, it was in reference to her introduction of a line of exciting solo travel experiences and the *Women's World Travel Group*, through her agency, *Carlson Wagonlit Port Credit Travel*.

"When I handed out the solo travel brochures at my bridge club and at other events, about eight people asked me the very same thing—'where have you been all my life, and why hasn't anyone realised before that we need help (and there are a lot of us)?" says Yvonne, president of *Carlson Wagonlit Port Credit Travel*. "This just reinforced my belief that I was on to something big that single travellers have been waiting for."

In fact, Yvonne has been creating custom trips for solo travellers for over 25 years. She's created and hosted solo group trips to exotic

destinations like Tuscany, river cruises through Europe and even an African safari.

"In my 49 years in the travel business, I have seen a dramatic increase in the requests for solo travel and solo group travel," observes Yvonne. "People have lost a spouse or a partner and still want to travel, or in many cases, people have travelled before with friends and now prefer to travel alone and keep their friendships intact! The advantage of travelling solo as part of a group is that you can experience bucket list vacations while enjoying the safety, convenience and companionship of travelling with like-minded people. You also get the opportunity to enjoy the privacy of having your own room. After we started a Women's World Travel Group, offering tours for women ranging from their 40s to healthy 80s and beyond, many of our clients go on trip after trip with people they've travelled with before in the group. Great friendships have developed this way."

Solo trips can range from quick getaways to epic journeys; from

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adrenalin-pumping adventure travel to relaxing European river cruises or a staying at luxurious private villas throughout Italy.

Carlson Wagonlit Port Credit Travel has partnered with *Italy Vacation Specialists*, run by Canadian entrepreneur, Jesse Andrews who specialises in women’s tours to fabulous hotels, spas and private villas in Italy, to create packages like the ‘Honour Your Beauty’ spa package offered in Tuscany and Umbria, which includes transfers, a private room in a luxury hotel, access to famous spas, wine tasting, a cooking day, specific tours, several meals and more. The Resilience Retreat is for those who need to relax and rejuvenate in the sun-soaked region of Puglia in southern Italy. Here, surrounded by glistening sea and sun, local farmers grow olive trees and grapes in lush vineyards that produce delicious wines.

Villa Bella Figura in Positano is just one of the villas available for small groups. It looks like it’s straight out of a James Bond film, boasting the ultimate in luxury. Positano is a picturesque village of colourful houses set high on cliffs dramatically overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. *Villa Bella Figura* is an 18th century villa with all the charms of yesteryear and all the luxuries of today. The villa accommodates up to 11 guests with 5 bathrooms, a majestic patio and hidden garden overlooking the rooftops of Positano and the sea!

Yvonne has partnered with a variety of tour operators who support solo travel. One company offers a collection of escorted tours worldwide for both men and women which includes visits to famous historical monuments, landmarks, and awe-inspiring natural wonders. An eight-day Deluxe Dubrovnik Tour in May 2019 includes your own room in five-star accommodation, all breakfasts and dinners and three tours. This company offers single rooms as standard!

“You get to live your dream to travel the world and visit places you’ve always wanted to see,” adds Yvonne. “Solo group travel destinations include Europe, South America, India and Africa—or anywhere on the planet you want to go! The knowledge we’ve accumulated over the years allows us to be able to customize trips for one person or twenty people or more. If you have your own group, we can create a trip that will fulfill your wildest dreams!”

Yvonne says that the tour companies and cruise lines “are now realising that there’s a huge market out



Wisteria frames a vineyard under the Tuscan sun.

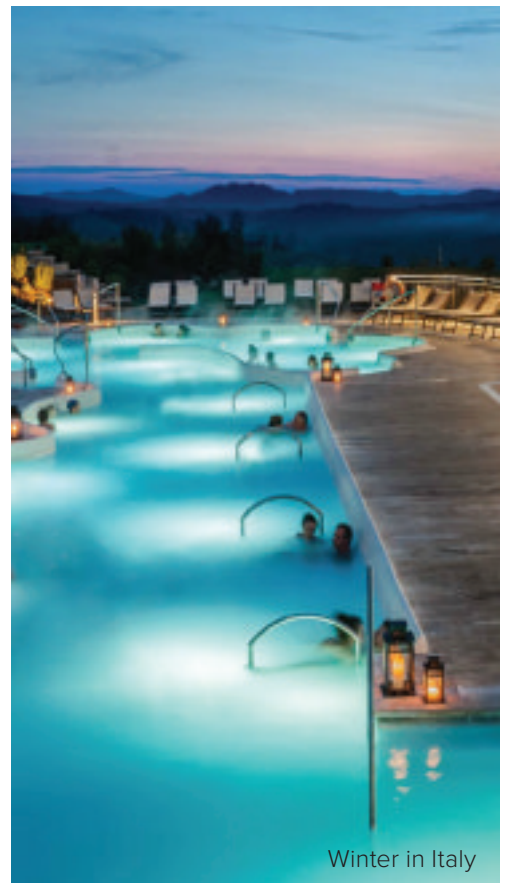


Tuscany’s breathtaking pastoral landscape in April.

there for solo travel and they are finally offering reduced or waived single supplements on certain tours and cruises,” she explains. “Finding these offers can be a bit daunting so having the help of a travel specialist is a good idea.”

Yvonne fondly recalls a trip she took with a group of 16 people to Africa. “I’m an Africa specialist and the scenery is out of this world, along with the fashion and the food. In South Africa, you go on safari in open Jeeps into

the wild and you are so close to the animals you can almost touch them, but you never feel threatened, just awed and exhilarated. For some women, this would be a daunting experience to do alone, but travelling with a group makes it so much more doable. We stayed in a luxurious villa with a separate bedroom, living room, huge bathtub and a magnificent veranda with our own plunge pool. We dined together at a huge table with candelabras and



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white linen tablecloths. It was truly a bucket-list experience.”

While the majority of solo travellers are women, Yvonne says she’s seen an increase in men travelling alone. “My eyes have been opened to the wide world of solo travel and the endless possibilities for my clients. I feel I am making a difference bringing travel lovers together and helping to enrich their lives. My message is, don’t be daunted by travelling solo. With solo group travel, you don’t have to go it alone. No one dines by themselves; you’re all in the same boat so to speak, and part of the group. Travelling solo can be a liberating experience and what makes it memorable is the great people you meet along the way. There are so many amazing experiences out there and friendships to be made—the world is your oyster and we give you the wings to fly!”

For more information on Solo Travel Workshops and Solo Travel experiences, as well as the Women’s World Travel Group, visit Carlson Wagonlit Port Credit Travel www.cwtravel.ca.

For information on the Italy travel experiences visit <https://www.italyvacationspecialists.com>