



ESCAPE ARTIST  


# Going it alone

Whoever said you needed somebody with you to have a great holiday? With the solo travel boom gathering pace, we look at the ultimate destinations to visit on your own

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**FOR A FAMILY FEEL...**  
*Reykjavik, Iceland*

**WHY?** It might be home to some of the world's longest winters, but Iceland remains a place where locals embrace visitors like family – and share shots of the country's signature distilled beverage. Brennivín with strangers particularly at the Boston bar on Laugavegur in central Reykjavik (facebook.com/boston.reykjavik). The capital itself is fun, walkable and relentlessly warm in spirit (if not temperature). It's also a fantastic jumping off point for group excursions like swimming in the volcanic waters of the Blue Lagoon, riding Icelandic horses across some of the most rugged terrain on Earth, or 4x4 jeep tours of the black sand beaches – made famous by movies like *Rogue One* and *Interstellar*.



**STAY IN NICER HOTELS**

Just because you're travelling solo, doesn't mean you have to go all *Leo in The Beach*. Thrive rather than survive by booking into boutique boltholes wherever you can. You won't regret the extra cash when that sweet rush of air con hits home...

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**FOR FINE DINING...**

*Amsterdam, Netherlands*

**WHY?** The best place for a single person, irrespective of gender, to dine alone is Envy



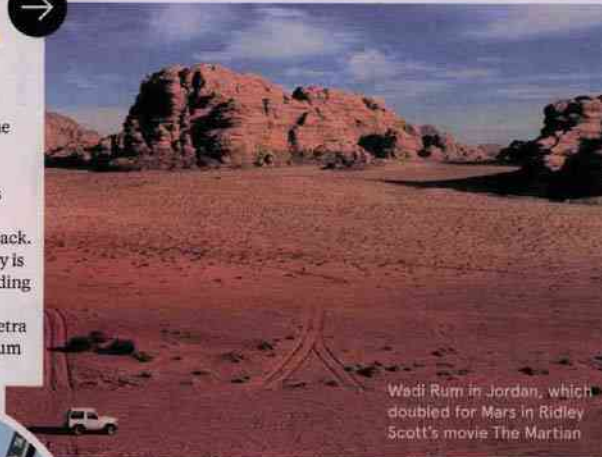
(envy.nl/en). You can sit alone on stools (alongside other single diners) and have conversations with those near you, if you wish. It's all part of a city which more than accepts solo travellers, it actively courts them. With a direct Eurostar service from London starting by Easter, Amsterdam is about to become even cheaper and easier as a weekend destination too. Go the whole hog and explore like a local – by hiring a bike; everyone's a solo traveller here.



The ANTI-VALENTINE'S ISSUE

FOR EXPERIENCES EVERY DAY... *Jordan*

**WHY?** Jordan promises everything from the ruins of ancient cities to floating in the Dead Sea. Locals are hugely welcoming and the country is one of the best-selling trips offered by solo adventure specialists Flash Pack (flashpack.com). The week-long itinerary is full of epic experiences including canyoning in Wadi Mujib, visiting the ancient city of Petra and glamping in the Wadi Rum desert (visitjordan.com).



Wadi Rum in Jordan, which doubled for Mars in Ridley Scott's movie *The Martian*



FOR SWEET SWEET MUSIC (LOVERS)...

*Nashville, Tennessee, US*

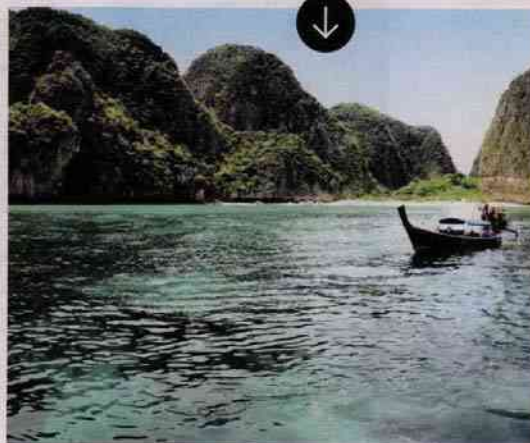
**WHY?** The quickest way to bond with a stranger? Music. And Nashville, as everybody must know, is Music City. Not only is 'Nashvegas' full of fellow music lovers to bump into, but there's masses of fantastic food too. Book onto the Local Tastes of Nashville (localtastesofnashville.com) walking tour to get your bearings. The best place to stay is hipster-friendly Germantown, crammed with cafés, bars and boutiques. Oh yes... and British Airways is scheduled to launch its first direct flights in May. (britishairways.com).



FOR BEAUTY ON A BUDGET... *Costa Rica*

**WHY?** American solo-travellers have been heading to Costa Rica for years and finally the European market is catching on. Book into one of the country's many adventure lodges and head for day trips into the cloud forest, or sign up for a surf camp on the beautifully wild Pacific coast. Costa Rica also benefits from an abundance of high quality hostels, offering not only affordably-priced luxury private rooms, but also the opportunity to meet a wealth of people while you're there. Tamarindo, Santa Teresa, Nosara and La Fortuna, in particular, are all very solo traveller-friendly destinations (visitcostarica.com).

WORDS: JONATHAN THOMPSON. IMAGES: GETTY IMAGES



FOR MAKING MORE FRIENDS...

*Southern Thailand*

**WHY?** Thailand is nicknamed 'The Land of Smiles' for good reason. This is pretty much the friendliest people anywhere and their country remains extraordinarily good value for British visitors, from cheap food and drink to affordable, luxury accommodation. It's just 15 degrees north of the equator, too, meaning year-round sunshine. The country's southern beaches and islands form the spine of the traditional backpacking route, so wherever you head, you're bound to find people you can discuss life with while enjoying a cold Chang beer. (uk.tourismthailand.org/home)

THE RULES OF:  
**SOLO TRAVEL**



**CHAT UP STRANGERS IN BARS**

'When you're on the road, this is something you need to do to make friends and influence people in a platonic (and possibly even sober) sense.'



**GET PROFESSIONAL ABOUT PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

'Making your way through Delhi's train station at rush hour takes stamina, so form a game plan. Where are your entrances and exits? Where's the departures board? How do you get a ticket?'



**TRY ALL THE FOOD AND DRINK YOU POSSIBLY CAN**

'Yes, even the fried insects and local rice whiskey. Saying "yes" to all kinds of local fare opens you up to new experiences and new people: it's a swift shortcut to getting to know the place you're in and its people.'



**FAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT**

'Cultivate an air of worldliness, even when you're secretly bricking it. A poker face is valuable, too.'



**RESERVE ULTIMATE BRAGGING RIGHTS**

'Make a note of everything brave you do on the road and let social media know about it. You've earned this, your Bear Grylls moment, and have every right to feel a smidge smug.'