

SOFT SKILLS IN WOMEN TRAVELERS

Abstract

Women love to travel. These days' 80-85% travel decisions are made by women and they comprise of two thirds of all travelers. And tourism rightly contributes to UN's Sustainable Development Goal Number 5: which is "to achieve gender equality & empower all the women and the girls". One can be intentional, very focused and global minded during travel. It is said that by lifting one woman up, you can lift the entire household, and finally an entire community, one tiny step at a time. From the nomadic Cave dweller to the modern Homosapien, man has the constant desire to explore. The "wanderlust gene" could be one of the reasons that make Travel and Tourism the second largest industry in the world. It is capable of building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and therefore has great potential to fight problems like climate change without compromising the future needs of the future generations. With the advancement in technology, women empowerment and general increase in awareness among women, more and more women travel these days for leisure, holiday or for work. Not all women have confidence to travel alone, but at the same time they want to explore and have fun too while travelling as they do when in company of others. That is how the idea was born, women travelling in groups who have the same concept of enjoying and relaxing while on the move. Women find it a great way to catch up with old friends and make new. A trip for a woman means fun, energy, rejuvenation and me time. Something must for every woman.

Keywords: Woman, travel, tourism, soft skills, time management, communication skills, stress management, team work, decision making, creative thinking, problem solving, self-management, emotional intelligence, empathy

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I. INTRODUCTION

There are numerous ways to empower women. It can be done by choosing a woman owned business and hiring a woman to handle it, looking forward to indigenous experiences in terms of artisans, tour operators and culinary experts while travelling, preferring a female guide over others, preferring to stay in a woman owned accommodation in all course of your travel, cooperate and support women writers, authors and story tellers, do volunteering with women when you travel, one can also choose to donate when you travel or after returning home, by bringing one's own menstrual supplies when you travel and by celebrating women's stories and their travel history.

The number of women travelling for pleasure or business is increasing each day. There are hotels which compete for their clients with special offer for businesswomen and for woman who travel alone. They give a pleasant surprise with the spa offer and beauty packages which is difficult to refuse and promote their rooms boasting about luxury bathrooms and other convenience amenities. Sometimes they have the whole floor kept reserved for only women, like the Bella Sky Comwell in Copenhagen. In the year 2011, when its entire floor was dedicated to women, called bella donna floor, a lawsuit was filed for banning men on these floor.

Uta Brandes, who is a professor at an International School of Design, produced results of her research on the wishes of female business travellers. She concluded that there are 3 main areas which are important to women on business as guests: sensuality (well-equipped room's design specially bathroom), safety (good orientation in the hotel) and sociality (personal address by the hotel service staff). The tour operators these days offer women's holidays, arguing that women have other demands on priority and wishes for their journeys or tours than men, ranging from accommodation over sports, activities to do and places of cultural interests. Women travelling alone often report bad experiences such as poor hotel rooms, harassment and ignorance. By selecting the hotels, tour guides, activities and offers wisely, tour operators try to agree to women's needs. This type of trip schedule includes spa offers, fitness regime, culture, education and creativity. There are numerous tour operators who try to consciously support women in the travel destinations.eg. by cooperating with accommodation, restaurants and shops that are managed by women or by hiring women as tour guides and contact persons in the destination.

II. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The reasons why women travel is large and wide. But the commonest of it all is "to do things as and when I want". Solo travelling by women is to express their sense of identity, there were trends of individualism and independence emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, and since then the trends have been followed by generations of women. Apart from this women continue to play the traditional roles as primary caretakers of children and dependent parents. The urge to travel solo is most often to take a break, do self-care, thereby improving ones essential soft skills.

To understand how a safe and supportive environment for women can be created, to come together, to share their stories and step into one's full potential. To understand how resilience of women is increased by endurance, which simultaneously help them grow, learn,

change and thereby changing the world. Women too love to travel irrespective of age, background and from all walks of life. They are united in the thought of travel as a passion for gaining new experiences in the world. To understand how each trip is different from the other and it promotes a deep sense of connection with oneself, with other similar thinking women and with the world around them. And while they travel they look for curated local, national and international travel opportunities enveloped by a community of like minded and supportive women. Travel fuels personal transformation and empowers them. Most women travel to escape from the mundane routine tasks of the day. One trip leads to another and gives them a sense of liberation. Moments earned in such trips enables to understand oneself as a person and rise above difficulties and problems in life. It enables one to understand how to overcome separation or bereavement in personal life. Another important fact is emerging communities and online support systems permit women to encourage and support one another to reach their travel destinations, especially those that need to be done alone.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the reason for travel for women and finding themselves improving on their soft skills.
2. To expand one's horizon for thoughts and travel.
3. To build confidence while forming enduring friendships and have a fabulous time in doing so.
4. To understand that women from all walks of life tour and travel and in doing so take out well deserved time for themselves.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The data collected for the study is from secondary sources. The sources are as under:

1. Information from clubs, travel blogs and women tour operators.
2. Discussion with friends, family and acquaintances.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is purely based on secondary data, i.e., the data which is already available on various research studies conducted on wanderlust aspect of women. Further, the study is confined to understanding the concept of women travellers, their destinations and the results and consequences of a satisfied wanderlust woman.

VI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. P. Gerald, P. Kumar & E. YJ Tee (2017) in their research paper titled **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WANDERLUST AND DISCRETE POSITIVE EMOTIONS** aimed at studying the various emotions associated with travel. It mentions Wanderlust, as a personality characteristic which is a strong desire to travel and is always associated with positive emotional experiences. But little is known about this individual difference and how it transforms the quality of travel experiences. The study also aimed to find out relationship between trait wanderlust and discrete positive emotions. A tremendous positive correlation between wanderlust and being in awe, interest, inspiration and joy were hypothesized, based

on the consistency between nature of travel and the other four positive emotions. This research paper adopted non experimental correlation design where 102 participants between the ages 18 and above answered questionnaire about wanderlust with the emotions associated during their past leisure travel experiences. Analysis of the data was done using ordinal logistic regressions in order to test the hypothesis while controlling for openness about experience, gender and number of earlier trips done. Their results showed that higher levels of wanderlust were associated with odds of experiencing higher intensities of awe and joy during all travel for leisure. But, wanderlust was not correlated with interest and inspiration. This way two hypothesis was supported, suggesting that the higher wanderlust levels correspond to higher intensities of awe, joy and happiness during leisure and vacation travel. This study contributes to original and personal experience understandings of wanderlust. It gives the travel and hospitality industry with plenty of information about potential clients, business. It also gives an insight into potential mental health benefits of leisure travel and makes individuals comprehend their streak in being wanderlust and positive emotional experiences through them.

E. Gurung (2018) in her research paper titled THE SOLO INDIAN WOMEN TOURIST aimed to study the reasons why increasing number of women are wanting to travel solo and about their experiences. The study also aimed to understand the limit to being an Indian woman affects solo travelling decisions. And understanding how to deal with these limitations and difficulties in a patriarchal society which idolises solo male travelling but goes to questioning female solo travelling. The data was collected from 20 detailed interviews, and it collected information about travel motivations, their experiences and the difficulties they went through. The results showed that all these women chose to travel as they wanted to experience freedom. For few it was planned travel whereas for others it was unplanned itinerary and to experience flexibility. More than half of the women felt men have more freedom to choose destinations and indulge in activities at their choice of destinations. This study has also given a reason to understand that women travel to escape identity and roles with which the society associates them. Women wanted to escape role played as daughters, wives, employees or students and wanted this time in their life to introspect themselves. Solo travel gives them a chance to understand themselves properly, giving them an opportunity to focus on their well-being than of others. Few were also of the opinion that lack of companion while travelling gives them more flexibility and freedom on deciding about their destination and itinerary they wanted to follow. It was concluded that the study attempted to understand reasons why Indian women take up solo travelling. Indian women solo travellers have to undergo many difficulties in all phases of their travel. The main difficulty was to explain family why is the need to travel alone. Main concern for family was the safety and security during travelling. It was also found that many women did not have the freedom and flexibility in their mind as the main reason for solo travelling but it was the lack of a companion as usually people are busy these days with their professional lives and do not find a convenient time for their own self. Also, once these women decided to travel alone, there was no reason which could stop them from not continuing with the travel. A common thing found in all the women travellers was the desire to travel solo after their first adventure and then enjoy the other destinations in their own terms than depending on someone else or someone else's itinerary.

K. E. McNamara (2010) in her research paper titled A TYPOLOGY OF SOLO INDEPENDENT WOMEN TRAVELLERS aimed to study the profile of solo women

travellers in Tropical North Queensland and describe their main motivations for travel and behaviours, and then locate this group on a typology of solo independent travellers in Australia. The earlier research has portrayed solo women on one hand as fearful and risk adverse while at the other end as brave risk takers who has less concerns about safety within their destination. This analysis was based on visitor surveys conducted for 21 months at the Cairns Airport numbering 2618. The results also showed about 228 women independent travellers felt really safe in the destination and participated in different activities including those with an amount of risk.

G. Jogratnam (2006) in his research paper titled WHY DO WOMEN TRAVEL SOLO FOR PURPOSES OF LEISURE? Wanted to understand why women choose to travel alone instead of travelling with others or with groups. The study also explored to understand why women travel alone for leisure. The method of data collection was an online questionnaire from 194 women who travelled alone for pleasure. Analysis was done by factor analysis approach, whereby five motivational dimensions for women who travel alone was derived at. They are escape, relaxation, social needs and self-esteem. The importance of these factors were based on demographic and trip characteristics of the different respondents. The purpose of their research was to discover travel motivations of the increasing number of influential women travellers. Lastly, independent sample tests and one way ANOVA's were conducted for exploring significant differences in level of importance attributed to motivational dimensions. It was concluded that culture, travelling, knowledge were the elements which was important for female solo travellers. Travelling alone is still considered a status oriented activity for women and there are safety concerns and solo travelling is not an easy task. Research has indicated that self esteem influences travel motivations. Their study also confirms the previous conclusion of McArthur who stated that solo travellers are economic travellers. She stated that many women solo travellers stay at reasonably priced hostels, ate the local food and went ahead with their trips by backpacking. Results also showed different motivational factors among travellers based on when solo trips occurred, the length of their solo trips, marital status and different categories of income levels. A promotional campaign specifying motivations of new experience and escape, e.g., adding of some cultural activities at a spa, may attract women who wants to escape from mundane routine pressures and then see and experience something different and interesting. The results also showed that women who took short vacations got away from pressures and responsibilities than women who took longer trips. The tour planners can plan short trips which is of less hassle, with few activities at a vacation oriented destination to fulfil the escape need of certain group of solo women travellers.

O. Junek (2006) in their research paper titled ALL FEMALE TRAVEL: WHAT DO WOMEN REALLY WANT? Studied the importance of women only element to women travellers and the advantages one can get from this type of travel. A structured survey questionnaire was completed by their past clients of an all-female Australian travel company, to understand and mark the client satisfaction with previous travel and also to find out the advantages of all female travel, their further personal plans for future travel and their demographic information. Qualitative and quantitative information was collected for data analysis. The participants selected for their study were women over 40years, mostly in the age group of 50-69. These women were experienced travellers as 89% of them had travelled earlier and 64% of them had travelled more than four times. The information collected assisted in comparison of importance of certain criteria before and after the tour. An

increasing confidence in tour leader, any destination and its culture and not being a mass tourist were seen as important before and after the tour. Travelling in an all-woman group was great company, being cared for and pampered was feeling to be cherished for and sharing the accommodation increased in its importance after each tour. There were numerous benefits in women group travels. These also included a more relaxed, congenial and intimate atmosphere in the group, sharing of similar interests and absence of any competitions and tensions.

S. Hamid & others (2021) in their research paper titled SOLO TRAVEL AND WELL BEING AMONGST WOMEN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY attempted to contribute towards solo travel of women. Secondary data collection was done and the discussion aimed impact of solo travel experiences on women's well-being. Numerous research papers, articles, blogs and other social media contents were reviewed to get conclusive results for their study. It was found that self-transformation and positive changes in well-being came as the major factors for the reason to travel solo. And the reasons for solo travelling were found to be to overcome and handle stress and depression, to bring positive change in present state of life, to escape, happiness, feeling of empowerment, self-growth and self-realisation. Their study also added to further researches on women solo travelling trends by giving insights into independent form of travel. They also tried to bring attention to women's health and its importance.

It was found that solo travelling brings about positive changes in women in terms of a feeling of freedom, creativity, happiness, self-growth, bonding's in the outside world, a feeling of contentment, self-realisation etc. Solo travels brings about a feeling of giving meaning to life and transforms one's life too. This is because this form of travel provides women their personal space and time for reflection and self-development away from family and friends. This kind of travel experience gives more self-confidence and empowerment, taking into account their life decisions.

Other than fears and challenges women face a lot of restrictions while opting for solo travelling but these limitations are different for different women in different parts of the world. Difficulties and challenges faced by women in India is different from those of other Asian countries or in western parts of the world. The women in the west are comparatively braver and bolder while taking solo trips. It was also found that in many cases women left their jobs to travel to escape monotonous and unhappy life. This shows that women are now concerned towards their health and they understand it pretty well when they need to take a break from their job, family and mundane daily life to keep them stress free. Women have overcome these and have developed a feeling of self-care and self-love for their own greater good.

It was concluded that women travelling alone constitute an increasing segment of international travel. The travel providers and planners can market efforts on delivering service to this market segment by understanding and recognising travel motivations for women. Destination planning managers should promote safe travel space, atmosphere as security is one prime concern of Asian solo women travellers, when going on a solo adventure it could also facilitate a feeling of safety and comfort. All the women travelling from emerging developing economies are important participants in any change in social process. It was suggested in future research, there is a need to enhance understanding of

country wise preferences and needs of solo women travellers so as to provide information to cater to the needs of this rising segment of travellers and to spread the knowledge beyond wider academic community to raise consciousness on women travel and bring about a real change.

H. Osman & others (2019) in their research paper titled **THE TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE VIETNAMESE SOLO TRAVELLERS** explored main motivations and limitations of 10 female Vietnamese students solo travellers through in depth interviews. It was found that travel motivations can be categorised into personal factors like freedom and flexibility, self-empowerment, independence and exploration, social interaction factors include lack of companions and getting to meet new people. Travel limitations related to being women, solo travelling and being of Asian descent. This study aims at understanding of this important market segment. This study can lead to tourism providers and destination marketing organisation (DMOs) to capitalise by developing their products and marketing. This study is informed of personal situations of a co-author, an international Vietnamese student, studying in UK, who is passionate to travel solo in between study breaks. The findings are useful for travelling marketers who design and promote travel packages for student market generally and also for solo student travel specifically.

This study wanted to explore experiences and motivations of Vietnamese solo student travellers, qualitative approach gave best access to participant stories. Interview was chosen as the best method for data collection, which allowed to explore experiences, motives and opinions and to observe world from others perspectives. The interview guide included student background, reasons for solo travel, their feelings of solo trips and about their encounters at their travel destinations. The researcher tried to remain open, flexible during entire interview process and tried to use prompt and probe questions to encourage interviewees to share as much information as possible.

It was found that the participants travel motivations were governed by their curiosity and desire to learn about different cultures. Participants were driven by feelings of excitement about exploring different ways of life and new experiences. Some participants stayed with locals to immerse themselves into their culture. Taking a trip alone enhanced their chance to know locals better. The freedom to explore a different land with its distinct civilization and local norms was a deciding factor to travel solo.

Additionally, empowerment and independence were quoted as major factors to travel solo. All the challenges involved in solo travel and the need to negotiate the limitations were faced by women alone. Riley (1988) mentioned that women are likely to increase their sense of independence and self-control by travelling solo. Nhung mentioned facing and overcoming difficulties and challenges was empowering. It also gives an opportunity to be independent and develop your self-esteem.

It was concluded that the participants in the study were all young who were inspired to travel alone based on ideas on being free, autonomous and being curious about the outside world. Solo travel was considered as an inner journey of self-growth. Social interaction with localites enabled cultural exchange and formed new friendships. An unanticipated study from the research reveals contemporary Vietnamese women who enjoy high level of education and freedom are still influenced by a history of war and colonisation which accompanies them on

travel and gives them a sense of lower self-worth. It was interesting to note that historical baggage can affect tourist experience and the relationship with their destination.

VII. MAJOR CAREER SKILLS THAT IMPROVE DUE TO TRAVELLING

Travel is an activity which improves ones understanding and the world around, sharpening skills not only to improve your work life or to get that dream job, but also in enhancing other aspects of your life. Mentioning about these skills during interview or sharing portions of your travel diary will set you apart from those who have not stepped out of their hometown. The soft skills acquired during travel are as important as any previous jobs one may have had.

- 1. Time management:** The most important factor to planning and enjoying any holiday is best use of time. It takes a good planner to maximise time on a trip. Catching a train or a flight, trying to visit all places of site seeing involves calculation, to do lists and smart goals and this is the essence and joy of travelling.
- 2. Social and communication skills:** Interacting with people from different parts of the world will make one a better listener, empathetic, compassionate and finally better at communication. A conscious traveller will try to immerse herself in spite of differences, take part in activities of surroundings at the same time respecting the cultural boundaries.
- 3. Languages:** Being fluent in a language will set one apart from other job candidates. Managing to use another or a new language doesn't only mean one can communicate better with its speaker it also means that one learn faster, listen well and connect better with others. Learning a new language highlights the resume. The best way to get it is socializing with native speakers.
- 4. Visualization:** Travel opens the mind. When one travel one reads maps, ask for directions and try to get used to a foreign place. One gets to view and experience things never seen before. One need to find directions to mountain trails and think of ancient civilisations in these distant places. Nothing opens anyone's mind or eyes like travel does.
- 5. Stress management:** Learning how to handle a situation and deal with it in a proper manner becomes a huge factor of globetrotting. Either being lost in a village and not knowing the local language, or getting ones passport or Aadhar card stolen on the last leg of journey, travelling has a lot for surprise and one simply have to deal with it. Learning all of these makes one better at handling tough situations. The stress levels decrease while one is away from home and one get a knack of dealing it with a clear mind.
- 6. Teamwork:** During travel with others one has to give ideas, contribute on trip planning and leave some wishes to cater to common and team goals. For the trip to be remembered for a long time everyone needs to communicate and actively involve in group efforts.
- 7. Organisation and planning:** Long term travel involves a lot of planning, preparing budget as many things are put into consideration like food, lodging, transport, money, supplies, health, safety etc. At times while on the move original plans needs to be changed for new and improved ones.

- 8. Adaptability:** A person who can adapt well to changing situations has the qualities of a leader. Travel teaches to be aware of surroundings, to observe of sights and sound around us and to be prepared for any changes. Even after advance planning things might go wrong and one immediately shifts to an alternative plan in a completely unfamiliar surroundings. This is another life skill which is learnt.
- 9. Decision making:** For any journey one must know what one wants to do, what to see, research and assess the alternatives and decide fast. A bad decision can spoil a trip by putting one's health or safety at risk. Travel assists in understanding goals and make one decide how to achieve them.
- 10. Creative thinking:** The more one views and experience, the more one meet people and places, the more ideas one has for creative thinking. Creative thinking includes brainstorming, coming up with new ideas, using ones imagination, connecting between ideas that seems least possible. Thinking out of the box is increased by finding one in a not so comfort zone.
- 11. Problem solving:** Problem solving skills involve being able to recognize a problem, identify the reason, create and implement a solution and then see if it is effective and functional. One sees an opportunity to improve and creatively solve a problem.
- 12. Self-management:** Some of the rules for self-management are living by values, having work ethics, being disciplined, honouring ones word, speaking ones thoughts, being accountable to ones responsibilities and being productively useful by good habits. Travel makes you a better person at all of these.
- 13. Emotional intelligence:** Before going on a vacation to a new destination we are overwhelmed and anxious how the trip is going to be. But on returning we realise it has been a pleasant and all revealing powerful experience. We feel confident and stronger than before. Emotional intelligence is about our ability to recognise, judge, controlling our emotions and of others in the group. It builds us by:
 - **Self-awareness:** Travel enables us to grow through our experience. We grow our mind and wellbeing by understanding ourselves with respect to others, their customs and culture and their places.
 - **Self-actualization:** We plan a destination, organise funds and money required, make arrangement, going on a trip is self-exploration, learning and living through new experiences. This helps in the process of goal identification and attaining them.
 - **Emotions and empathy:** Each trip makes you go through a lot of emotions before, after and during the trip. Travel takes you through an emotional roller coaster ride from anticipation, excitement, nervousness, acceptance, frustration, comfort or any other kind of emotion. And then in the next trip we again pack empathy and it gives us new experiences.

- **Networking:** When we travel to new places and meet with a different culture we come out of our cultural bubble and allow new connections to occur. Building connections with fellow travellers develops new relations.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

A more accepting society is the need of the hour today where women should be considered at par with men. Women should have the freedom to choose destination for travel where they too can indulge in activities of their choice. Women majorly want to travel to escape their stereo typed identity and roles which the society has usually associated with them. It could be the role of being a daughter, wife, an employee or a student, they want to utilise this leisure time of travel to introspect their life. Solo travelling enables one to understand themselves better and it also gives them an occasion to focus on their well-being alone than with whom they usually are.

Women travelling alone gets a chance to challenge themselves in any unknown place. Indian women upbringing has been that of protected and in a conservative environment. Travelling alone gives them an opportunity to understand whether they can handle difficulties or they need a person to rely on. This gives them an opportunity to increase their confidence and to look at life with a different approach. People are busy in their professional life these days, but it should not hold back the need to travel because of a lack of companion. This should rather give them flexibility and freedom to decide on their destination, location and to choose and create their own itinerary of travel.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

Many papers have been presented and numerous discussions keep occurring on how and why to understand the need for women to travel. This is another attempt to study the same, but there is always a dearth on the understanding of Indian women's urge to travel solo. This study has tried to shed light in understanding at least few reasons for Indian women to take up and encourage solo travelling. In a conservative society like India the patriarchal nature considers women a weaker sex in comparison but they have come a long way by overcoming all types of obstacles along their solo trip phases. This is understood and stood the test of times by the recently concluded Olympic games at Tokyo, or the Women's World Boxing Championship in Istanbul. There are women business leaders every girl can look up to like Biocon Chief Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Nykaa's Falguni Nayar, IMF's Gita Gopinath, Philanthropist writer Sudha Murthy, former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, Chanel's Leena Nair, HCL technologies Roshni Nadar Malhotra etc. who travels around the globe and creates an impact. Many women from different strata of society have overcome these challenges by proving themselves and excelling at it in different arena of games. It is often very difficult to explain friends or families the need to travel alone. And it is right so as the safety and security of solo travelling women is always still a matter of concern. Often if the woman in consideration is employed it is a little less matter of concern, nevertheless the fact still remains. In the current evolving society things are changing but still a lot needs to change. Slowly unemployed women are also discovering the passion to travel and explore things themselves. Many women still continue to fear from exploring the unknown because of the insecurities involved and an earlier travelling in protected and safe environment. It is noticed that once women decide to travel and explore taking that ultimate challenge first time

nothing in the world can stop them or make them take a back stage. It is this determination which makes them chalk out well planned itinerary to have an enjoyable trip. Once a solo trip is successfully accomplished more and more trips keep following.

There were limitations to the study as some people gave their references, some shared experiences and some spoke at great length to their details of travel. However, these could be only considered as majority opinion for the study. Literature reviews gave global opinion of women elsewhere and their nature of wanderlust. Women travelling solo or in any groups generally aim for better self-confidence, exploring self-introspection and gives them a lot of time to think and care about themselves, which usually in a routine day they try to avoid as there are more demanding things to accomplished. By such trips women gain a lot by understanding shared experiences and the ways and means to cope different situations in a better manner. This also leads to good companionship, building comradeships and networking for later use. One also gets to understand and improve on their soft skill which is the need of today. This study would help organisations in building strategies for promoting such services encouraging more Indian women to take up solo or group travel.

There is scope for further research to understand if women continue to remain restricted throughout their life and how it can affect solo or group travel affecting the tourism industry at large. Another area which also needs to be explored is how travelling for Indian women is different from women in other parts of the world. Sooner or later the pandemic will end and the global tourism industry will soon prosper. If the limitations gets lessened there is scope for a better tomorrow and better times to come for tourism industry.

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APPENDIX

Reasons to Travel - Anecdotes from a few respondents:

1. Ms. Anu Iyengar

“At heart, I am a nomad. I love being disrupted, uprooted and placed in another place till the cycle repeats. It is just an extension of a fauji childhood (father was in the army) that saw me travel every couple of years. My love for travel comes from this urge to explore new places, to understand the culture, pick up few words from their language, trying out local cuisine and if possible, walking through the lanes and terrains to get to know it better.

Solo, with friends or with family, it gives me a sense of complete freedom from routine. My curiosity gets aroused, I look for interesting things to do and yet have a relaxed schedule so am not rushed through anything.

Each trip has different expectations - while most of my trips are outdoorsy and experiential, some have been a more history oriented one where museums, concerts, plays, monuments etc. form a large part of the travel.

Travelling widens your outlook so much more than any other medium. I feel, it makes me understand people better and see things from their point of view. And this is what makes me a better person in my mind and what inspires me to keep on traveling!”

2. Ms. Sanyukta Roy

“My First Ever Foreign Sojourn :I have been working for 19 years in Mid - Senior positions in the fascinating Travel Trade. In 2005, while working at my 2nd job at Cox & Kings India and after being in a pretty much sheltered upbringing, I got a chance to visit Singapore and that too solo ! I was very confident and managed to convince my parents.

You can imagine the thrilling sensations inside my heart and mind, when I saw my first visa. Going to Singapore for 5 nights, I made sure to book my hotel in a good location, learn about the metro lines, transport, sightseeing options and just set off. Those days Air Sahara was flying to Singapore.

Reaching there I craned my neck up every few minutes to see the tall skyscrapers, while walking all over the fabulously organized city, one of the safest and cleanest in the world. I interacted with the locals, learnt some greetings and basic words, took every possible form of transport, enjoyed the interactions with animals in free range and all the lovely natural spots. The food was delicious with so much variety, even South Indian food was available. So was the shopping !

After this trip, there started a plethora of trips all over India, for work and leisure, to name a few, Agra, Pondicherry, Mumbai, Indore. I also went for another trip to Singapore & Thailand later with my sister in 2008. In 2008 itself, there was a work trip where I escorted a group of 100 people to Hong Kong and was travelling on a 2 night High Seas cruise with them. In 2009, the highlight was a wonderful trip to Switzerland, again a dream destination,

as part of the Swiss Tourism Tours Division, where I was working. In between again, I had been to many places all over India for work. Then to Taiwan in 2018 but that was a group tour with Industry colleagues.

Travel is like food for me, I do eat to live and live to eat, but I eat, sleep, walk, talk Travel ! It is one of the most driving forces, which constantly helped me enhance my life and discover what the world and its people, culture are like. I do have a huge wish list of many more places to see and experiences to delve into, before I travel up, which of course is everyone's final journey in life.

People keep asking me about my next trip. I wonder when next, as the prevailing deadly Coronavirus has put a temporary stop to travelling bindaas !

I do wish to explore as much as I can, time and budget permitting and of course travel safety in times of Covid.

But patience people, I firmly believe Shakespeare, when he said, The World's A Stage & We Are All Actors !

Well, I know one thing, my fascination with travel is like a new play I love to create each time, whether for my clients or for myself and we stop acting when we start travelling.

Each time travelling to a new place, has broadened my horizons. We Will Travel Again Without Worry, But With Precautions, Very Soon!"

3. Ms. Mona Anand

"I have travelled to various places in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Kerala, Bhutan etc. Love trekking in Himachal. I travel to meet new people, to bond and to network. I get to be close to the nature away from the busy city life. I see and understand different life styles, cuisines, culture. I feel rejuvenated after each trip and it gives me energy for all the months of stressful work. I feel physically stronger and healthier. And then again I look forward to the next trip."

4. Ms. Namrata Wakhloo

"I love to travel – whether with family or friends or solo. The best way to acquaint yourself with different places, people, cultures and history is through either books or travel. Of course, travel takes precedence because you physically experience it all. And since, I am a history and culture aficionado, I love to explore different places.

My solo travel began very early because I travelled for work right from the beginning of my 24-yr old career. I started travelling solo for pleasure only much later, when my kids grew up and could manage on their own for longer periods of my absence. When you are on a holiday with friends or family folk, it's a lot of fun and excitement, however, I enjoy my trips alone a lot too, as it gives me the freedom to plan my day as I will. Above all, the solitude it brings is very soothing, as you are away from all the noise of everyday living. I do not do group tours generally.

I have travelled extensively in India, and to Europe mostly, when it comes to international trips. I choose places with a rich history and culture, or for its beautiful landscape like mountains and lakes. In India, Kashmir is one place where I like to return to often, and Italy remains my top favourite foreign locale.

After returning from a travel, I am physically exhausted to some extent, but I feel blissful, as I carry back memories for a lifetime. The most precious item that I carefully tuck in my luggage along with a few souvenirs, is my camera and the moments captured therein. If a particular trip has been very close to my heart, I later, try and put it into words in the form of a blog.”

5. Ms. Bindu Vaid Chhibber

“ABOUT THE BIGGEST TRAVEL COMMUNITY OF WOMEN - this is all about the awesome women who wander with us! Meet Bindu Chhibber from tranquil Shivpuri, a small town wedged between Gwalior and Jhansi.

Bindu is a school administrator, teacher, trainer and a poet too - 'the best lessons of my life have come from sunsets and suffering, trees and children' she says. Her only child was just four when fate cruelly snatched away her husband in a sudden accident. But she had the grit and determination to nurture and further develop the 60 year old family legacy, the school that she inherited. She was a happy zombie, calmly carrying out her duties and responsibilities.

Bal Shiksha Niketan was set up in 1961 and there has been no dearth of its students gaining accolades, becoming top doctors, judges and entrepreneurs across the world. "for 28 years it has occupied me and I have somehow found the strength to carry on the good work and hope to start a music school and a section for mental health of children once we are back on our feet after the pandemic is over"

“Earlier travel meant accompanying my family to pilgrimage places, or leading those exciting but strenuous school trips with my school children. But yes the Wander lust was latent and gradually I started yearning to get away from the routine and turn my dreams into reality by traveling the world" AND... then WOW happened! Meghalaya and Kaziranga opened a gateway for me, through which travel meant beauty, ease and bonding.

In the span of four years, (to the envy of my town and beyond), I had explored Ladakh, Bali, Phuket, Cambodia, Coonoor and many other destinations in between! Scuba-diving, rafting and paragliding were all exciting, successful challenges. I think some women are still reluctant to travel without families and known friends. I tell them,” Don't carry friends from home, make new ones.” The friends I made while traveling with WOW are for life! Gratitude.”

6. Ms. Shiny Varghese

“For many of us, time and money shall always be restraints. But occasionally when we find our way around these blocks, it is a whole new world.

And there's no end of voyaging, when once the voice is heard,
For the rivers call, and the roads call, and oh, the call of the bird."

In a world fast realizing the uncertainty of life and the fact that the journey is the destination, why not steal moments of carefree bliss?

This life is for experimentation and the world is your lab. Tread confidently, leave your fears and hesitations behind and just follow your passion. After all, you only live once!" This quote gives me the motivation to travel .

I travel at least two times a year with only women, we travel as it gives me my space and makes my adrenaline flow. There is no correct way of traveling as long as we are sensitive to local traditions and environment, every style of travel is fantastic!"

Travel gives an edge to my persona it make me compassionate, strong-willed, polite but unconventional, and redefines pretty with an adventurous heart."

7. Ms. V. Leena

"Challenges are truly opportunities. Opportunities to grow and learn, to strengthen ourselves, to test ourselves. They reveal how badly we want to create the dreams in our hearts, and how hard we're willing to work for them. Once we begin to change our attitude about obstacles and challenges, they can actually become fun. That goes more with adventure, travel, and sports for me. I love to travel because not only is it the ultimate adventure but it also exposes you to different types of people, different ways of living, and opens up your mind.

I have been to Brahmatal (Himalayas on the Uttarakhand side), Kulu-Manali, Udaipur, Shillong, Gangtok, Kodaikanal, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Goa, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Hyderabad, Indore, Mangalore, places in and around Visakhapatnam , where I lived & now I reside at Kolkata.

Sometimes all the words in my vocabulary is not enough to describe the feeling and I can vouch for it. If I had to put it in two words, I would say that each travel I did was 'Simply Awesome' .It recharges you & gives more zeal in itself and gets you ready to take more responsibilities.

These challenging travel situations have taught me a lot. I could have backed out of every single one, but I didn't and as a result, I know how much I have grown. They have also made me more invested in continuing to challenge myself. There are too many adventures left to tackle, and if my health permits, I am game to all of them.

Lastly, I'm rather proud that penning this write-up has reminded me to be excited about the challenges to come. If these past experiences are anything to go by, it will make my life much more interesting."

8. Ms. Supriya Nair

“Surrounding you is a universe overflowing with magnificent beauty. My motto is to let myself be positive, joyful thankful and be amazed at the endless wonders & possibilities around me. This is what travel means to me in a nutshell. At the ripe age of 50 plus , I believe that ‘Storm clouds on the horizon cannot dampen my spirits’.

I have been fortunate to travel far and wide in India and a few places abroad which includes Sri Lanka, Thailand, UAE, Kazakhstan, Singapore, US and recently to Nepal.

Each travel teaches me about the diversity around us in terms of people, geography, culture & the food. Whenever I travel, I keep my mind open and absorb new things around me eagerly. At times I do feel that life is too short to visit the vast world around us. I understand after travelling so much, we are a tiny speck in the universe!

My quest for learning more about culture & people in the world drives me to explore new places on the globe extensively. How I wish I could be a backpacker and be a Marco Polo! Hence, with travel I’m still yearning to connect with universe in a meaningful way.”