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Sunday Herald Sun, Melbourne

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**Sunday** Herald Sun

# ESCAPE

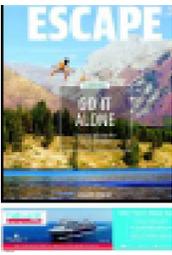
JAN  
27  
2019

**BE ADVENTUROUS**

## GO IT ALONE

Tours that take the fear  
out of solo travel

**ESCAPE.COM.AU**



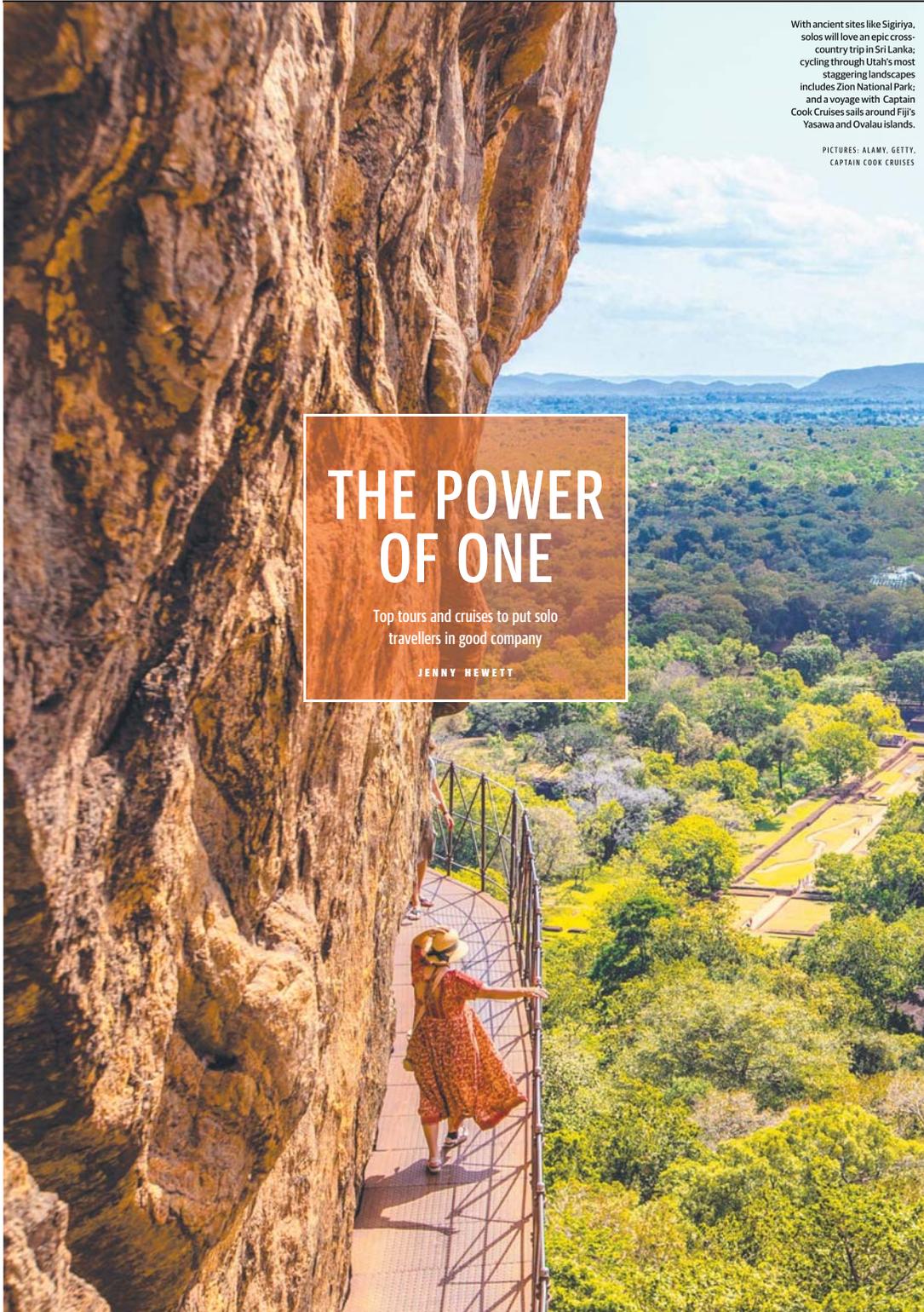
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**T**he ultimate expression of freedom isn't wealth or spiritual cognisance. It's having a burning desire to see the world, and then the spunk to pack your bags and explore it solo.

There's been a dramatic shift in the way we travel over the past few years. No longer a last-resort for loners, travelling on your own doesn't always equate to doing it alone. And if it does, more power to you.

"Travellers aren't willing to wait around for friends to visit their bucket-list destinations. They are travelling by themselves," says Brett Mitchell, Intrepid Asia Pacific regional director. A report by travel portal Skyscanner further emphasises this, with 39 per cent of Aussie travellers choosing to see the world independently this year.

Where once tenacious solos were an afterthought, tour providers are now doing backflips to cater to this growing market, ditching single supplements, reconfiguring cruise ships and creating small-group itineraries within which to share memories and forge new friendships.

Here's our pick of this year's best solo tours.

### **WELLNESS ZEN OUT IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

According to Google, "solo female travel" was searched 100 million times in 2017. Women-only tours are inspiring the next generation of empowered travellers. This three-day, female-only walking, meditation and yoga package takes in highlights of Australia's Larapinta Trail and the breathtaking West MacDonnell Ranges. Campsites come with hot showers, comfortable lounges and a local guide and yoga instructor. Request your own single tent at no additional cost.

**APRIL TO SEPTEMBER, \$1495 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, LARAPINTATRILWALK.COM.AU**

### **HIKE A GLACIER IN ICELAND**

Nature is one of life's greatest remedies. Connect to the land of fire and ice during this seven-day, small-group recharge that's ideal for social

solos. G Adventure's first foray into wellness includes hiking Iceland's Solheimajokull glacier using crampons and pickaxes, yoga overlooking waterfalls, a visit to a horse farm and a geothermal rye bread-baking lesson. Same-sex, twin-share rooming is provided with other solos.

**MAY TO SEPTEMBER, FROM \$3699 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, GADVENTURES.COM.AU**

### **CYCLE THROUGH NATIONAL PARKS IN UTAH**

A two-wheel adventure for energetic explorers, this Cycling Cliffs and Canyons excursion soaks up Utah's most staggering landscapes over six days. Ride underneath natural rock arches, past hoodoos and through canyons in Zion Canyon National Park, Cedar Breaks Monument and Bryce Canyon National Park. Includes a cycling specialist, a recovery massage and transport in a vehicle with Wi-Fi. No single supplements, those who prefer their own space can select the limited Solo Sleep Option when booking.

**MAY TO OCTOBER, FROM \$3459 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, GRANDAMERICANADVENTURES.COM**

### **CRUISING GO ISLAND-HOPPING IN FIJI**

This eight-day solos-only tropical voyage through the Fijian Islands is set to disrupt one of the world's most coveted couple and family havens. For the first time, solo travel experts Two's A Crowd is chartering a

Captain Cook Cruises vessel to sail around Fiji's Yasawa and Ovalau islands by day and enjoy crab-racing and kava by night. Travellers get their own room and tours are led by Australian hosts and local guides.

**SEPTEMBER, FROM \$2995 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, TWOSACROWD.COM.AU**

### **SPOT WILDLIFE IN PERU'S NORTHERN AMAZON**

Watch pink river dolphins frolic in the Amazon or fish for piranhas at sunset with Delfin Amazon Cruises' three-, four- and five-day itineraries. Departing from Iquitos in the Upper Peruvian Amazon, the elegant wooden vessels sail along the iconic river to the protected Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve, a wild menagerie

of sloths, monkeys and birds. Two cabins per departure are now

available for solos without surcharge onboard *Delfin II* and *Delfin III* only.

**YEAR-ROUND, FROM \$4464 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, DELFINAMAZONCRUISES.COM**

### **SAIL FROM MOSCOW TO ST PETERSBURG**

A bucket-list trip taking in the iconic Red Square, the Kremlin, impressive cathedrals, imperial architecture and the renowned Hermitage Museum, this 11-day river cruise is a safe and scenic way to explore Russia. All meals, tours and sightseeing are included on the Volga Classic itinerary and the vibe is friendly and social. Select vessels on the Cruise Russia fleet offer single cabins with no surcharge, but they're limited, so book early.

**MAY TO AUGUST, FROM \$3020 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, CRUISE-RUSSIA.COM.AU**

### **ROAD AND RAIL ROAD TRIP AROUND SRI LANKA**

Voted the world's best place to travel this year by Lonely Planet, Sri Lanka offers adventure, culture, natural beauty and delicious cuisine. The 15-day, small-group Circle Sri Lanka excursion is exclusive for solos looking to meet like-minded people on an epic cross-country trip from the jungle to the sea. Highlights include a trek through tea plantations and the ruins of Anuradhapura. No single supplements, solos share with another traveller.

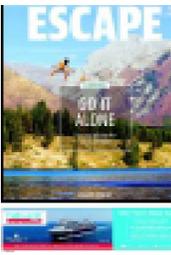
**JULY TO DECEMBER, FROM \$2695 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, INTREPIDTRAVEL.COM**

### **CHANNEL A BYGONE ERA IN SCOTLAND**

Misty glens, lochs and highland castles form the magical backdrop of

this luxury three-day Tastes of the Highlands rail journey on the Edwardian-style *Belmond Royal Scotsman* train. There are stops for fishing and whiskey-tasting, fine Scottish fare, plus no surcharge for solo cabins. Abercrombie & Kent is also waiving the single supplement for the first two solo travellers to book on a select range of their small group journeys booked before February 15, 2019.

**JULY TO OCTOBER, FROM \$5280 EXCLUDING**



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**FLIGHTS, ABERCROMBIEKENT.COM.AU**

**ANCIENT KINGDOMS  
WALK AMONG PHARAOHS IN  
EGYPT**

Tick off the icons of Egypt, including the Pyramids of Giza, the Nile and the Valley of the Kings on this nine-day King Tutankhamun tour exploring one of the world's ancient civilisations. Knowledgeable guides, four- and five-star hotels, and an itinerary jam-packed with UNESCO sites make this one of the best value tours for singles. Solo travellers can have their own room at no extra cost (on select trips and departure dates), or share. Keep an eye on the website for discounts.

**YEAR-ROUND, FROM \$1645 EXCLUDING FLIGHTS,  
ONTHEGOTOURS.COM**

**TRACE HISTORY IN CHINA**

Balancing ancient wonders with modern metropolises, this 14-day small group Charming China itinerary includes the Forbidden City, the Terracotta Warriors, the dreamy river town of Yangshuo and buzzy Shanghai. Wendy Wu Tours guarantees solo travellers their own private room with no supplement and there's lots of flexible free time to dine or explore on your own.

**MAY TO DECEMBER, FROM \$4980 EXCLUDING  
FLIGHTS, WENDYWUTOURS.COM.AU**

**SAFARI  
SPOT THE BIG FIVE IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA**

Ideal for young adventurers, this 13-day overland tour of Kruger, Swazi and Drakensberg promises to showcase the real Africa. Soak up culture in Swazi and visit traditional villages in Lesotho, then hit South Africa's Kruger National Park for a game drive. There's add-on wilderness experiences, too, including horseback safaris and guided scenic hikes. There's no single supplement for shared camping. Suitable for ages 18 to 39.

**FEBRUARY TO NOVEMBER, FROM \$2596  
EXCLUDING FLIGHTS, ACACIA-AFRICA.COM**

**LISTEN TO LIONS ROAR IN  
ZAMBIA**

A six-night safari staying at two luxury riverside camps in Zambia's

best national parks, this luxury Rivers and Rainbows tour departs in the off-peak green season, making it more affordable for solos. Lush landscape, cooler temperatures and the arrival of baby animals are in abundance during this time. Enjoy sundowners and swap campfire stories with fellow explorers, but have the privacy of your own room at no extra charge.

**JANUARY TO APRIL, FROM \$4200 EXCLUDING  
FLIGHTS, TIMEANDTIDEAFRICA.COM**

**CULTURE  
WATCH A WORLD-CLASS  
CONCERT IN ITALY**

It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings. Classical music fanatics will enjoy this five-day cultural immersion to the Omaggio a Palladio Festival in the UNESCO-heritage town of Vicenza in northeast Italy.

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Package includes tickets to three classical concerts featuring pianist Sir Andras Schiff in the Teatro Olimpico and other historic buildings, plus a guided daytrip to Venice. No single supplement.

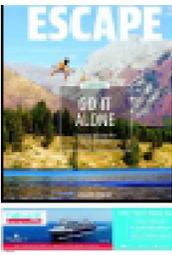
**MAY, FROM \$3966 INCLUDING FLIGHTS FROM  
LONDON HEATHROW, TRAVELFORHEARTS.COM**

**MAKE ART, FRIENDS IN FRANCE**

Mix with other creatives on a week-long art retreat in the French Pyrenees with resident artist and tutor Jacqueline Williams. The surrounding mountains make for an inspiring setting, it's open to all ages, with accommodation at L'Ancienne Poste Avajan catered lodge, walks, breakfast and a gourmet dinner. Solo travellers have their own rooms free of charge, unless the course is full.

**AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER, FROM \$1583  
EXCLUDING FLIGHTS,  
ANCIENNEPOSTEAVAJAN.COM**

**HIKE ICELAND'S  
SOLHEIMAJOKULL  
GLACIER USING  
CRAMPONS AND  
PICKAXES, DO YOGA  
OVERLOOKING  
WATERFALLS**



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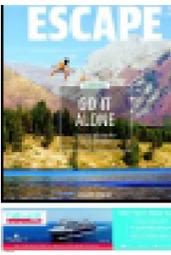
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**TRAVEL GUIDE**

**CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE**

Prefer to set out alone? These two cities are ideal for self-guided travel. Here's what to do if you're going solo.

**TOKYO, JAPAN**

**SEE**

Shinjuku is known for its frenetic pace, but things take a psychedelic turn at the Yayoi Kusama Museum (yayoikusamamuseum.jp) in its suburbs.

Dedicated to the artworks of the contemporary Japanese artist known for her giant pumpkin sculptures, the museum, filled with glowing polka dots and infinity mirrors, is the perfect place to get lost in your thoughts.

**DO**

With its world-renowned shopping and quirky cafes, there's plenty to keep solo travellers entertained in Tokyo. But to tap further into the culture, book a tour with a local on Airbnb's "Experience" portal (airbnb.com). Talented residents host everything from ikebana workshops to sushi-making and tea ceremonies.

**EAT**

If sharing a meal with strangers excites you, sign up for Urban Adventures' Tokyo After 5 tour (urbanadventures.com). Led by a local guide, this three-hour group walking food tour will introduce you to everything from izakaya to yakitori, sake and Japanese beer.

**STAY**

Traditional ryokans with futon beds are the most affordable and authentic option for solos and they can be cheaper than capsule hotels. Search "Tokyo ryokans" on wotif.com to compare. If you're treating yourself, Hoshinoya Tokyo (from \$1356 a night, hoshinoya.com/tokyo), offers luxury ryokan-style lodging in a skyscraping hotel with its own private onsen and sake tastings.

**CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

**SEE**

Safe, fun and packed full of culture, Cape Town is an oft-overlooked solo destination and highly underrated. The city's natural beauty is best admired from the summit at Table Mountain or Lion's Head and Mother City Hikers (mothercityhikers.co.za), offers guided treks on both the popular and lesser-known trails.

**DO**

Some of Cape Town's best "wine farms" are only an hour out of the city. Spectacular scenery, wine, food and live music are a given, but Franschoek's hop-on, hop-off wine tram

(winetram.co.za), is a great place to spark conversation. Book on a weekend when it's really thriving. Ubers are incredibly affordable or take the R99 shuttle bus.

**EAT**

The Mother City has no shortage of hip dining spots, whatever your budget. Expect a warm vibe and friendly locals at The Bitch's Tits at YARD in Gardens most mornings. Both Kloof and Bree streets are a hive of happening spots, from gin bars to baconporium Bacon on Bree (bacononbree.com), plus most have perches for people-watching.

**STAY**

The artful Daddy Long Legs Art Hotel (from \$126 a night) on Long St is central and designed specifically for independent travellers. Or keep it classy at The Silo (waterfront.co.za/accomm/the-silo-hotel/, room rate on request), which sits atop the impressive Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, and has million-dollar vistas of Table Mountain and a rooftop bar to play at.

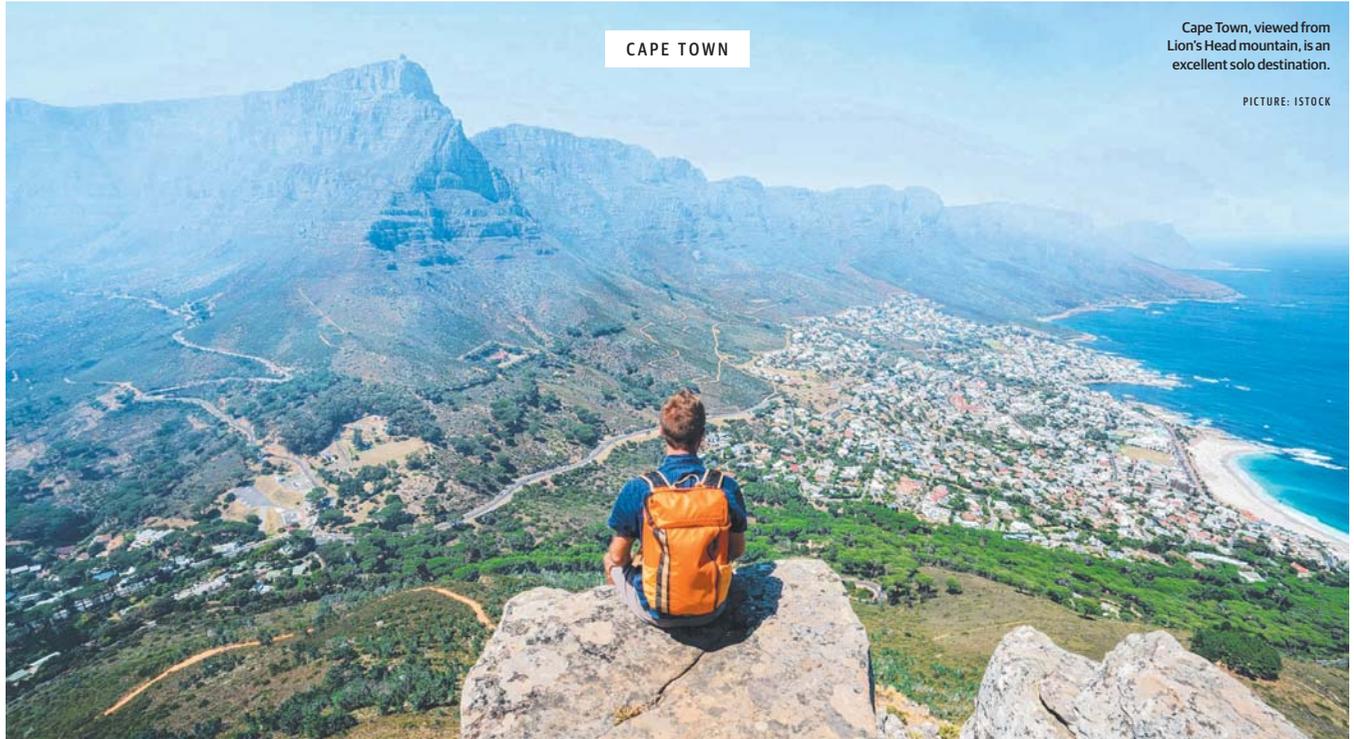


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CAPE TOWN

Cape Town, viewed from Lion's Head mountain, is an excellent solo destination.

PICTURE: ISTOCK