Lonely Planet calls on the travel industry to do more for solo travellers

1 in 3 travellers say they have felt disadvantaged by choosing to travel alone; Lonely Planet urges industry to cater better for growing trend

World leading travel authority Lonely Planet has called on the travel industry to do more to cater for solo travellers. This follows new research revealing that the growing number of solo travellers face higher costs than those travelling with family or friends, including an average of nearly 20% on travel insurance and over 50% on accommodation, on top of experiencing a poorer level of service too.

Lonely Planet surveyed over 4,000 members of their dedicated community of travellers from across the world, with more than 1 in 3 respondents claiming to have felt disadvantaged when choosing to travel alone, despite over 4 in 5 of those asked having taken or planning to take a solo trip in the future. Examples given in the survey by solo travellers of poor service from the industry included lack of choice in organised excursions and poor service in restaurants and bars.

With recent research by ABTA showing that over-65s are now the most likely age group to travel on their own, it is perhaps no surprise that solo travellers in Lonely Planet’s survey are just as likely to stay in hotels (35%) as hostels (38%), and named Europe as the best continent to travel solo. Solo travel is no longer just a rite of passage for young travellers, but despite these changing trends and demographics, travellers’ reports would suggest that many their needs are not met by travel and hospitality companies.

One in two travellers said that they have had to pay a single person supplement when travelling alone, and 90% of those surveyed said that they would look more positively on a company that did not charge this. Restaurants were also particularly criticised by respondents to the survey, with typical comments involving poor service from staff, being seated in the worst places and even being refused bookings.

Lonely Planet is this month publishing a new specialist guide, The Solo Travel Handbook, with advice and tips for new solo travellers from the practical (meeting people and staying safe) to the inspirational (health, fitness and sustainable travelling), but the travel company is also calling on the industry to look more positively on those travelling solo, rather than just as single occupants of rooms and dinner tables.

Tom Hall, Editorial Director at Lonely Planet, said; “Travelling on your own can offer a whole new perspective and experience, and our survey shows that most travellers will find themselves in this position at some point during their lives. Despite this, a significant number feel that the lack of choices and increased cost of travelling solo puts them at a disadvantage.”
“The demographics of solo travel has changed dramatically; today solo travellers come from all ages and backgrounds, and may travel with others as often as they travel on their own. We expect solo travel to continue to be a growth area for the travel industry in the next few years, and want to encourage companies to consider how they can better serve solo travellers.”

Despite the survey indicating there is still some way to go for the industry to catch up with consumer behaviour, travellers responses also revealed a hugely positive attitude towards solo travel. Nearly one in two said that the best thing about travelling solo was “being completely in charge of your schedule”, while 21% said that it encouraged them to meet new people. When asked to give fellow solo travellers advice, common tips included being open to meeting people, being prepared to be flexible and, perhaps the most common… “do it!”

To find out more about The Solo Travel Handbook, and top tips for travelling solo, visit www.lonelyplanet.com/explore-every-day. Featured articles include: top trips for solo travellers; non-awkward ways to meet people on the road; and Europe’s quirkiest hostels.

Ends

Notes to editors:

Customer insight by international travel company G Adventures reveals that their average percentage of solo travellers is 40%, a number that has increased by 4% in the last 5 years. A number of similar tour operators have reported similar increases in recent years.

Lonely Planet asked over 4,000 international travellers from their global customer database for their opinions and experiences on solo travel. See breakdown below for more details on results:

3,729 (80% of respondents) said they had taken a solo trip or holiday (defined as a leisure trip taken without friends or family) before. Of 377 people who answered no, 303 (80%) said they planned to in the future.

Out of 3,494 travellers who had taken a solo trip, 2,254 (65.5%) said that they had felt disadvantaged by choosing to travel alone rather than with others. 1,180 (27% of 4,339 respondents) said that the cost of solo travel was the biggest barrier to booking a solo trip, second only to safety concerns (32%) and ahead of lack of company (25%).

Out of 3,461 solo travellers who had booked accommodation, 1,840 (53%) said they had paid a single supplement.

Out of 4,310 respondents, 3,876 (90%) said they would look more positively on a company that did not charge a single supplement.

● Lonely Planet spokespeople available to interview
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- Review copies and cover image available on request
- Selected images and extracts available on request

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