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Unit 1

Foreigners and Foreign Countries

Learning Objectives

	Lesson A	Lesson B
Topic	Travel: Going Solo	A Tale of Two Islands



Lesson A

Travel: Going Solo

I Pre-reading

Pre-reading Questions

1. When it comes to travel, what first pops up in your mind?
2. What is your attitude towards traveling alone?

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II While-reading

Note down your starting time and ending time, and then calculate your own reading rate.

Starting Time: _____ Ending Time: _____

Travel: Going Solo

Megan Rutherford

The yearning to see faraway places and the fear of visiting them alone seem to be universal human traits. Whenever travel writer Arthur Frommer gives a lecture and opens the floor to questions, a woman inevitably raises her hand and asks whether a female can safely travel by herself. "I always notice that all the men are leaning forward to catch the answer too," says Frommer. His verdict, for all concerned: an emphatic Yes!

Once fear is conquered, many older adults find they actually prefer traveling solo. Mature Americans, 55 and older, stay away from home the longest, according to the Travel Industry Association of America, and are also the likeliest of all age groups to journey alone or with someone outside their household.

Every couple of years, Dolores Perez Priem, 66, who was widowed 25 years ago, takes a break from her **hectic**, 14-hour workdays as the owner of a medical-transcription company in San Francisco and embarks on a solitary **ramble** in a foreign land. This year she's off to northern

Europe to look at paintings by Van Gogh and the Dutch masters. "I don't know anyone who would want to spend as much time as I do in a museum looking at these paintings," she says. "And at this point in my life, I want to indulge my interests." Bernice Price, a divorcee in her 70s who retired five years ago from her job as a special-ed teacher in New York City, first traveled abroad aboard the original Queen Elizabeth in 1949 on a **lavish** group grand tour. But her less luxurious solitary journeys in the years since have provided her with some of her most treasured memories. "I've had my best adventures and met the most people traveling by myself," she says.

Of course there are downsides and outright dangers that may discourage some seniors from venturing forth alone. Perhaps the greatest **deterrent** is the despised single **supplement**, the practice of charging individuals more than what members of a couple pay for lodgings. But even "Noah's rule," as it is called, has its **scofflaws**. For some of their programs, Saga International Holidays and Grand Circle Travel—both of which cater to people 50 and older—eliminate the single supplement entirely. For other programs, where single accommodations are unavailable, Saga provides a "guaranteed share", a roommate-matching service for unaccompanied travelers willing to occupy a double room; the single supplement is **waived** if a match can't be arranged. Elderhostel, the popular **purveyor** of learning vacations, also offers guaranteed shares—plus activities based on common interests that turn strangers into friends. In addition, a traveler who's willing to book at the last minute can often find bargains on the Internet from hoteliers willing to rent rooms inexpensively rather than let them go empty. Bernice Price has even discovered that some **proprietors** are willing to negotiate cheaper room rates over the phone.

Sharon Wingler, author of *Travel Alone & Love It*, is a domestic flight attendant who began taking trips abroad by herself after her divorce 15 years ago. "It takes me out of my everyday existence and makes me feel like I'm a citizen of the world," she says. "As a solo traveler you throw yourself on the mercy of strangers constantly—and someone's always there when you need them. It has restored my faith in humanity."

Still, there can be lonely moments. "If you see something really fantastic," notes Wingler, "there's no one to nudge and say, 'Wow! Look at that!'" Mealtimes are often the hardest. In addition to the self-consciousness many feel when dining alone, restaurant staff members sometimes glare at singles who take up a table that could be producing double the revenue. The solution for lunch: eat before or after the midday rush. At a slack time, a restaurant will welcome the single customer and provide more efficient and personal service to boot. For dinners, have the **concierge** at your hotel make a reservation; restaurant personnel will go out of their way to be hospitable, since they'll want future referrals from that concierge.

Whenever you feel lonely on the road, write a letter describing your itinerary, advises Eleanor Berman, author of *Traveling Solo*. "It will sound wonderful to someone at home, and it will lift your spirits to write it." It's also worth noting that loneliness can be preferable to unwelcome attention. Mature women who last traveled alone in their youth may take comfort in the fact that they no longer elicit as many unwanted sexual **overtures** as they once did.

Even the normal hazards of travel that afflict everyone can make solo travelers feel particularly

vulnerable. To reduce the misery and inconvenience of falling ill far from home, singles should be sure to pack basic medicines. Wingler suggests eating yogurt every day for a couple of weeks before a trip abroad. "It helps build up the friendly bacteria in the intestinal system," she says. Well before departing the US, check with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for health advisories about the region you'll be visiting, and make sure you have all the recommended vaccinations. Buy medical insurance that covers you overseas (the Original Medicare Plan does not). Anyone traveling alone to a remote area of an undeveloped country should consider evacuation insurance as well.

Such precautions should not daunt the traveler-to-be. Dolores Priem still gets a **frisson** of excitement when she recalls her visit to Morocco in the 1970s. "In Tangier, I had a profound awareness of being completely removed from Western civilization. It was like stepping back in time 1,000 years. It was a very powerful sensation, because I wasn't distracted by fellow Western travelers." Indeed, many singles extol the advantages of immersing themselves in another culture, without the comments or presence of a companion to dilute the experience.

At the same time, it is wise to guard against the **predations** of pickpockets and con men. Try to dress so that you blend in with the locals. Fanny packs may be handy, and white athletic shoes may be what you wear at home, but single-travel expert Wingler says both are like neon signs announcing your tourist status. They may make you a victim waiting to be scammed. Don't carry anything valuable, and don't wear gold.

Packing light is key. "No one's going to see you every day, so you don't need as many clothes, and it's important to be able to manage your own luggage," says Berman. "Travel is not a fashion show," adds Phyllis Stoller, a longtime solo traveler and president of the Women's Travel Club, which organizes package tours for women. Carry only what's necessary for your day's outing in a front or inside pocket or in a shoulder bag that fits securely under your arm. Or try out one of the wide array of devices available now in travel catalogs, including money belts that zip on the inside, document holsters that fit beneath a jacket, slips that have zippered hems.

Experts say the best travel bargain is not cheap airfare or a cut-rate hotel room but rather a good guidebook with up-to-date street maps and tips about local ripoffs that target tourists. Plot your day's itinerary in advance, so you know where you're going and how to get there. Don't assume you're safe because you're in a crowd; the bustle and confusion surrounding ticket lines at tourist sites simplify a thief's job. Finally, pace yourself. Travelers tend to relax their vigilance when they're exhausted.

Through all the ups and downs of your journey, it's important to maintain a spirit of adventure—though not everyone will be able to match Bernice Price's **pluck**. Several years ago, the Rome apartment she was staying in was burglarized. She wanted to move out but became engaged in a battle with the landlord before she was able to obtain a partial refund of the rent she'd prepaid. Rather than let the **mishap** ruin her stay, she **savored** the drama it provided. "It was exciting because I had to face so many issues," she says. "It was like an Italian tragicomedy." Two years ago in London, she came down with the flu and was referred to a local physician, who

turned out to be a **homeopathic** practitioner. Some Americans might have been aghast. Not Bernice. She underwent treatment, which was effective if unorthodox, and relishes recounting the tale: “It was fascinating. It really added to the trip.”

Experts advise **wistful**, would-be wanderers to build up their travel muscles by degrees. Start out by having a meal alone at a local restaurant. Then try a day trip to another town or city, visiting the sights and eating lunch and dinner there. After that, take a group tour to a more distant destination, and arrange to spend a few days at the end traveling alone. The next time you get the travel bug, you may feel ready to skip the tour entirely and head off on your own.

Single seniors who long to travel but want to share the expenses and experiences should consider joining the Travel Companion Exchange. This highly regarded service uses in-depth personal profiles to match up like-minded travelers within its active database of 2,500 members. But if you’re a single who treasures your unmarried state, beware. TCE is so skilled at creating compatible pairings that at least 800 of its 16,000 clients since 1982 have become permanent partners. Neither Sherry Winder, 60, a divorced ice-skating teacher from Arlington, Va., nor David Cook, 64, a divorced computer programmer from Colorado Springs, Colo., had any desire to remarry. Both stated in their TCE profiles that they were willing to share a room with a member of the opposite sex but sought platonic relationships only—separate beds, please. Alas, the two were wed Sept. 1, after traveling together to Yellowstone, the Netherlands and London.

(1,632 words; suggested reading time: 15 minutes)

Note(s)

The article is available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,998332-3,00.html>.

Glossary

hectic	adj.	very busy
ramble	n.	an aimless walk
lavish	adj.	plentiful; abundant
deterrent	n.	something immaterial that interferes with or delays action or progress
supplement	n.	textual matter that is added onto a publication
scofflaw	n.	one who habitually ignores the law and does not answer court summonses
waive	v.	forego
purveyor	n.	a person or firm that supplies goods or services
proprietor	n.	(law) someone who owns (is legal possessor of) a business

conciierge	<i>n.</i>	caretaker of apartments or a hotel who lives on the premises and oversees people entering and leaving and handles mail and acts as a janitor or porter
overture	<i>n.</i>	proposal
frisson	<i>n.</i>	(French) sudden feeling or thrill, esp. of excitement or fear
predation	<i>n.</i>	an act of plundering and pillaging and marauding
pluck	<i>n.</i>	courage ; bravery
mishap	<i>n.</i>	an unpredictable outcome that is unfortunate
savor	<i>v.</i>	get enjoyment from
homeopathic	<i>adj.</i>	of or relating to the practice of homeopathy
wistful	<i>adj.</i>	full of longing or unfulfilled desire

A. Focus on Main Idea

Main idea: _____

B. Focus on Reading Comprehension

Choose the best answer from the four alternatives for the following questions or statements.

- Many older adults actually like traveling alone if _____ is removed.
A. poverty B. diseases C. fear D. loneliness
- The greatest obstacle to traveling solo is largely due to _____ according to the text.
A. the guaranteed share B. the single supplement
C. accommodations D. outright dangers
- Which precaution is **NOT** mentioned before traveling solo according to the text?
A. To pack the recommended vaccines. B. To eat yoghurt every day before the trip.
C. To buy medical insurance. D. To seek health advisors' help.
- Which remark does **NOT** indicate the benefits of traveling solo?
A. "It ... makes me feel like I'm a citizen of the world. "
B. "It will lift your spirits to write it. "
C. "I had a profound awareness of being completely removed from Western civilization. "
D. "... without the comments or presence of a companion to dilute the experience. "
- What suggestions are given in order to guard against pickpockets?
A. To have fanny packs. B. To wear white athletic shoes.
C. Don't carry anything invaluable. D. Don't wear silver.
- What does "con men" mean according to the text?

- A. People who you have confidence in.
 - B. People who you have responsibilities for.
 - C. People who support you.
 - D. People who trick you.
7. The best travel bargain is _____ according to the text.
- A. cheap airfare
 - B. cut-rate hotel room
 - C. a good guidebook with up-to-date street maps and tips about local ripoffs
 - D. a roommate-matching service for unaccompanied travelers willing to occupy a double room
8. Through the ups and downs of your journey, it is important to maintain _____.
- A. self-consciousness
 - B. pluck
 - C. a spirit of adventure
 - D. a powerful sensation

III Post-reading

A. Topics for Discussion

1. What preparations should be made in order to travel solo?
2. If you want to travel solo, do your parents agree? Try to compare the two attitudes to traveling solo between the Chinese and the Western people.

B. Focus on Structure and Meaning

Paraphrase the following sentences.

1. But even "Noah's rule", as it is called, has its scofflaws. (Para. 4)
- _____
- _____
2. Fanny packs may be handy, and white athletic shoes may be what you wear at home, but single-travel expert Wingler says both are like neon signs announcing your tourist status. (Para. 10)
- _____
- _____
3. The bustle and confusion surrounding ticket lines at tourist sites simplify a thief's job. (Para. 12)
- _____
- _____

into daily life, not manufactured for some **cheesy** ethnic show at a beach resort. But because of these bountiful customs, Bali teems with taboos that can trip up even veteran expatriates. By contrast, Phuket's real estate market is simpler to negotiate with several top international property agencies open for business. Buying a **condominium** is so straightforward that an increasing number of people—particularly from Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East—are purchasing for investment purposes. Yet all that ease, along with better roads and telecommunications, comes at prices that are roughly 40% higher than those in Bali. And for potential buyers who are concerned about cultural authenticity, Phuket **underwhelms**. Much of the island's vacation-property development follows an **anodyne** architectural style that could just as easily be in southern California or the Costa del Sol. Phuket may be in Thailand, but large swaths of it don't feel very Thai.

My husband and I chose Bali because we like things a little messy. We're both journalists who enjoy chatting with the shaman, exploring bumpy back-country lanes and trying spicy stews at the open-air restaurant a few rice paddies away from our land. But I recognize that not everyone finds charming the idea of a spirit tax—a contribution to the village partly based on how many spirits reside on your land, and a calculation, mind you, that can only be made by the village elders. Indeed, if you're looking for a stress-free condominium with access to yacht **marinas** and golf courses, Phuket is the right choice—as long as you have the cash to afford it. “There's a strange situation in Phuket,” says Risinee Sarikaputra, head of research for property consultant Colliers International in Thailand. “You have low-end residential units that are bought by Thais, and you have luxury units that are bought by foreigners. But there's no real middle-class level. It's either low or high.”

Asia's premier island escapes did not always profit from their coastal charms. Phuket came into its **heyday** in the 19th century when Chinese tin miners exploited its mineral-rich hills. Later, fortunes were made in rubber trees. The island's main city was originally inland from the Andaman Sea to distance itself from possible devastation by tsunamis or typhoons. So, too, in Bali, where the rich cultural legacy of the Hindu Majapahit culture drew **bohemian** Western visitors in the 1930s who were mystified as to why most Balinese turned their backs on the lovely beaches, even **forsaking** fish from their normal diets. (The answer was, in part, because the coasts are considered the domain of demons.)

In the 1970s, though, Bali and Phuket were **inundated** by foreigners searching for unspoiled **hideaways**. Tourism soon dominated other industries, with hotels and nightclubs lining once empty beaches. By the 1990s, as overworked Hong Kong investment bankers and Europeans priced out of the Mediterranean real estate market began looking for getaway-home alternatives, the residential property markets in Bali and Phuket began to **sizzle**. On the Indonesian island, vacation homes mostly take the form of individually constructed villas or those built by smaller developers. The houses, usually designed in a Bali modern style that is now an architectural touchstone for tropical hotels worldwide, are often rented out most of the year to offset building and maintenance costs. Although the Bali model allows for personal creativity, it also means that owners must hire full-time

staff to tend to their paying guests, who fork out an average of \$ 200 a night for a two-bedroom villa. In Phuket, however, the vacation market is dominated by condominiums or villa complexes managed by luxury hoteliers. Such management services come at a premium—these properties cost about 30% more than similar nonbranded villas—but you don't have to worry about whether the gardener is feuding with the cook.

* House Rules

Buying property in both places isn't quite as simple as purchasing a house back home. Mortgages are rare. Currency fluctuations make buying at the right time all the trickier. And, most importantly, in both Thailand and Indonesia, foreigners cannot own land. Expatriates have two choices. They can either lease land on a long-term basis, which means the value tends to depreciate as the years pass. Or they can set up legal structures in which a local person or company owns the land but usage rights are held by the foreigner. Although tens of thousands of expatriates have negotiated such deals, they can be at a disadvantage should a dispute occur with the local owner. And in Thailand, government officials over the past two years have hinted that they may begin scrutinizing the legality of shell companies set up by foreigners.

Thailand does offer one other option. Unlike in Indonesia, foreigners can own condominiums outright, which explains why apartment complexes are popular in Phuket. Nonetheless, the real lure of Phuket is a villa of your own, preferably with a private infinity pool and ocean view. From 2006 to 2007, at least 2,300 high-end residential units were launched in Phuket, and roughly 970 more came up for sale in the first half of this year, according to Colliers International. Prices have skyrocketed, with new buyers from India, South Korea and even Central Asia driving up demand. At the Trisara residential complex, for instance, a sea-view, fully furnished two-bedroom villa managed by the boutique hotel of the same name goes for upward of \$ 4 million for a 120-year lease. A first phase of 18 villas perched over a secluded bay has already sold out, with one three-bedroom property having changed hands four times, its sale price more than tripling to \$ 10 million earlier this year. "It's amazing to see these prices," says sales manager Sukanya Chuaywang, "but they keep selling."

Does the real estate meltdown in other parts of the world **presage** a price correction in paradise? Surely, as hedge-fund managers find themselves without fat end-of-year bonuses because of the recent market madness, they'll shy away from acquiring luxury second homes. Gallmann of Exotiq Real Estate acknowledges that the financial crisis will dent demand, particularly in Bali where the real estate volume is higher than in Phuket. But he isn't too worried. "Look, I've been involved with Bali for 20 years and through that time we've gone through more than you can imagine, from the Asian financial crisis and a political revolution to SARS, bird flu and two bombings," he says. "But in all that time, property prices have never dropped."

* Down to Earth

For me, my current concerns are less global and more spiritual. The former owner of our land, a rice farmer, feels guilty because he failed to erect an on-site shrine to a local goddess. He thinks we should build it to ease his soul and promote village harmony. After all, locals have heard the spirits on our land wailing when they use a nearby water source. Then, in an offhand remark, our

shaman tells us about a Frenchman who had built a villa nearby. Wija was called in to bless the land and chat with the spirits about their wishes. He gave advice to the foreigner but apparently none of the spirit-appeasement tactics were followed. After the house was built, a slew of mysterious things occurred. First there was a fire, Wija recounts, then a burglary. The foreigner has since sold his villa and left Bali. Wija smiles. “It is best to keep the spirits happy,” he says. We can’t agree more—but we still don’t know how much happiness it will cost us.

(1,896 words; suggested reading time: 17 minutes)

Note(s)

The article is available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1850972-2,00.html>.

Glossary

shaman	<i>n.</i>	one acting as a medium between the visible and spirit worlds
commune	<i>v.</i>	communicate intimately with
devout	<i>adj.</i>	devoted to religion or to religious duties or exercises
denizen	<i>n.</i>	a person who inhabits a particular place
demigod	<i>n.</i>	(in classical mythology) being who is partly divine and partly human, esp. the offspring of a god or goddess and a human
bougainvillea	<i>n.</i>	any of several South American ornamental woody vines of the genus <i>Bougainvillea</i> having brilliant red or purple flower bracts; widely grown in warm regions
frangipani	<i>n.</i>	any of various tropical American deciduous shrubs or trees of the genus <i>Plumeria</i> having milky sap and showy fragrant funnel-shaped variously colored flowers
locale	<i>n.</i>	scene of events, operations, etc.
trump	<i>v.</i>	get the better of
tsunami	<i>n.</i>	huge destructive wave (esp. one caused by an earthquake)
jitter	<i>n.</i>	instability
coup	<i>n.</i>	a sudden and decisive change of government illegally or by force
aficionado	<i>n.</i>	(Spanish) a fan
balmy	<i>adj.</i>	(of air) gentle and pleasantly warm
espresso	<i>n.</i>	strong black coffee brewed by forcing hot water under pressure through finely ground coffee beans
croissant	<i>n.</i>	very rich flaky crescent-shaped roll

7. () In both Thailand and Indonesia, foreigners cannot own land.
8. () Gallmann of Exotiq Real Estate acknowledges that the financial crisis will dent the house market demand, which reveals that he is very worried about property prices.

III Post-reading

A. Topics for Discussion

1. What is your comment on the practice of the resident spirits mentioned in the text?
2. How to tap natural scenic places in a harmonious way?

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B. Focus on Structure and Meaning

Paraphrase the following sentences.

1. In the parallel spirit world of this devout Hindu island, our peaceful stretch of riverbank was actually a bustling spirit town, far bigger than the nearby human village. (Para. 1)

2. But is there only one heaven on earth? (Para. 4)

3. Nevertheless, the business of vacation villas isn't a zero-sum game, largely because the members of the international jet set who dig Phuket are a breed apart from the culture vultures who flock to the Indonesian island. (Para. 4)

4. Such management services come at a premium—these properties cost about 30% more than similar nonbranded villas—but you don't have to worry about whether the gardener is feuding with the cook. (Para. 8)

5. We can't agree more—but we still don't know how much happiness it will cost us. (Para. 12)
