

# Generation Jet Set!

**Whether it's a wild girls' holiday, a culture-filled city break, or lying with a good book on a beach, there's nothing quite like getting away from it all.**

But, you may be surprised to learn that today the average adventurer isn't a hedonistic 20-something student, but female and 47 years old. These three women explain why...

*Think travelling is just for 20-somethings armed with a dusty backpack? Think again...*

## 'Travel is better than date night'

**Cathy Smith, 43, lives in Buckinghamshire with her husband, Richard, 42, and their daughter, Rachel, 17.**

While some couples might have romantic meals, or a shared hobby, my husband, Richard, and I have found the perfect way to spend quality time together...

I was just 22 when Richard and I married and, with modest salaries from our jobs at an electrical company, we couldn't afford lots of foreign holidays. Our budget only tightened when Rachel arrived in June 2000.

But, as our daughter reached her teens, I realised how much of the world I had left to see. So, in December 2016, Richard and I made a New Year's Resolution – we'd go away every month of the year.



Cathy and Richard in Barcelona

While we were more financially secure, we didn't have thousands to spend, so we called upon friends who lived abroad, booked last-minute deals, and mixed costlier destinations with stays in the UK. We didn't go to fancy restaurants for romantic date nights, and I barely set foot in a clothes shop all year. We asked Rachel to join us but she declined – apparently going away with your parents isn't good for your street cred!

And so, last year, we saw more of the world than I'd ever seen before. We wandered around art galleries in Barcelona, skied in Bulgaria and partied in Las Vegas!

Going away as a couple has been great for our relationship, too – sharing amazing experiences with Richard has brought us even closer. I can't wait to see where we go next!



Seeing the sights in Las Vegas

## 'I love exploring on my own'

**Heather Cowper, 55, lives in Bristol with her husband, Guy, 57. They have three grown-up children.**

They say once you've caught the travel bug, it never leaves you – and I couldn't agree more. Before I went to university I saved up to fly to far-flung destinations – Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea in my gap year and Kenya as a student.

I'd always planned to see more of the world, but then life got in the way. I married Guy in May 1990, and we had three children. I swapped exotic locations for yearly camping holidays in Europe.

But then, in November 2007, when I was 45, a friend of mine told me she was going to Ecuador and asked if I'd like to come. I didn't even hesitate – I couldn't wait to get back on the unbeaten track.

When I told Guy about the trip, he was supportive – if not a little apprehensive to be left alone with our brood for three weeks! You might think I'd have felt

nervous – after all, I hadn't been travelling without my kids or Guy for a long time – but I couldn't wait to get going.

Paddling along the Amazon in a dug-out canoe and making friends with a rainforest community are moments I'll never forget. Whenever I found an internet cafe, I shared pictures and stories online with friends and family.

Every day I was sent messages and emails asking me about my trip. It was when I got home that I had an idea. Why not start a blog to share my passion for travel?

At first I wrote about family travel – the camping trips to France or beach holidays to Greece with the children. But then travel companies got in touch, offering me trips away to review hotels and resorts.

I hiked through the Alps, visited the Space Centre in Houston and rode rickshaws in India.

Often, I'd go to places with friends or family, but over time I relished the independence and excitement of solo travel – going where you want, when you want. And, with age comes confidence.

## 'Holidaying with friends is better than therapy!'

**Lara Watson, 48, lives in Nuneaton.**

My love for girls' holidays began in Christmas 2004. My fiancé and I had just broken off our engagement and I was lonely.

So, when my friend Kellie called, asking if I'd like to join her with some work colleagues for a long weekend in Benidorm, I immediately said yes.

It was eight months later, on my way to the airport, that I started to

panic. At 34, I'd only ever holidayed with family or my ex. How was a group of 20 – yes, 20 – women going to decide upon what restaurant to eat at? Or what bar to visit? I was terrified the trip would descend into chaos.

And yet, as soon as I met everyone, they were so lovely I immediately felt at ease. Over those four days we chatted, laughed and cried – and I learned that

**'I IMMEDIATELY FELT AT EASE'**

a group of women are better than any therapy session. I left having made lifelong friends.

That weekend marked the beginning of regular trips with my girlfriends. I'm single, and I don't

have children, so I have the freedom – and disposable income – to go away. I've travelled to Dubai, Greece and Portugal with that same group of women – and of course, we still go away to Benidorm every August.

There's a common misconception that girls' holidays are for teenagers. But, as an adult, they're an important part of my life. Those times away with my best friends give me a chance to relax and reset. I plan to still be jetting off when I'm in my 80s!



Lara with friends Angie, Justine and Deb in Benidorm



Heather hiking around Italy's Dolomite mountains

In my 40s, I wasn't afraid to try unusual foods or stumble through conversations in a foreign language.

After eight years of blogging, I was earning enough money through advertising to quit my job in financial services and do it full time.

Across my website and social media channels, I now have around 60,000 followers.

Now, at 55, I've got no intention of slowing down. I'm proof, that you're never too old for an adventure.

**\* Read about Heather's travels at [heatheronhertravels.com](http://heatheronhertravels.com)**

## TRAVELLING TIPS

**\* There's a holiday out there to suit everyone. If it's adventure you're after, try [explore.co.uk](http://explore.co.uk).**

**Or if you'd like to learn or improve a skill, [golearnto.com](http://golearnto.com) has everything from cookery classes in Italy to photography courses in Costa Rica.**

**\* Going it alone? Firms such as [justyou.co.uk](http://justyou.co.uk) specialise in solo travel – ensuring you don't have to pay single supplements for hotel rooms and excursions.**

**\* It's no secret that trips abroad can be costly, so you may need to cut back on other luxuries. Download a budgeting app like Daily Budget Original (free, [itunes.com](http://itunes.com)), to help you save. And if you haven't already, try [airbnb.com](http://airbnb.com), where a room or apartment will often be a lot cheaper than a hotel. ☺**