

# FAQ

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### SOLO TRAVEL QUESTIONS

#### DO I HAVE TO BE SINGLE TO BE A SOLO TRAVELLER?

Mostly single travellers join us but we also know that travellers with partners sometimes like to travel solo, for any number of reasons. Our trips are all about the spirit of 'going solo'.

Everyone who comes on an Encounter Travel holiday is excited about the adventure ahead, leaving behind their everyday life and being open to the experiences travel can bring.

When you book one of our holidays you have the comfort of knowing that fellow travellers have also booked solo. However, if you are single and have a friend who'd like to come along too, feel free to book together. Whether you book alone or with a friend, you'll feel you're a part of the group as everyone explores new places and destinations together.

If you are a couple (dating or married) looking to join us, then unfortunately our solos' groups aren't for you, but we'd love you to tell your solo traveller friends about us.

#### ARE ENCOUNTER TRAVEL'S HOLIDAYS ABOUT DATING?

We know some people hear 'singles holidays' and think 'dating'... but that's

not what we're about. That's not to say that it's not possible to meet your match while on the holiday ... but if that's your main goal, an Encounter Travel holiday probably isn't the right place to find it.

#### IS THE MIX OF WOMEN AND MEN ON THIS HOLIDAY EVEN?

The style of each holiday seems the biggest influence on the ratio of women to men. Current travel industry trends show that more women are choosing to travel solo, and overall, we see this in our bookings too.

Our resort-style singles holidays and cruise groups, which are all about relaxing, dining and socialising, more often have a closer balance of men and women.

Our leisure tours usually would have more women than men join us, but everyone now and again, this is flipped and we've had some tours with more men than women.

We don't make a commitment to a gender balance. Our guests tell us that the destination and the opportunity to travel with a social bunch of solo travellers are the biggest draw cards, rather than a focus on the gender balance of a trip.

#### CAN I SHARE & SAVE?

Pondering the idea to share a room? If you don't mind sharing, (and you're a

### About Us

*At Encounter Travel we offer holiday groups for solo travellers. All trips are age-matched so there's more chance you'll share your journey with like-minded travellers.*

*Visiting destinations across Australia and around the globe, choose from short escapes to adventure trips and leisurely touring.*



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good 'sharer'), we'll do our best to match you with a same-sex buddy, and you'll both save.

However, most of our travellers take their own room. But, if you are willing to share, we find that on most trips there's at least a few travellers wanting to share.

### About Sharing

For our roommate matching service, we highlight the SHARE & SAVE option on the pricing page of our website so you can see the saving, when you do choose to share.

We want to make sure that when you share, you get a great night's sleep - so when you book to share, we ask for honesty about your sleep habits: snoring, using CPAP machines for sleep apnoea, insomnia, or other things that might disturb a roommate - it means you're not a suitable roommate for any of these reasons, and unfortunately we can't offer you the roommate option. If everyone's honest, we can make sure everyone gets a good night's sleep! The consequence of not being honest can lead to awkwardness between 'roomies' or worse. It's important to know that we can't always secure an additional room for 'roomies' that don't get along, and if we can there are additional costs for this option.

We can't guarantee we'll be able to match you with roommate, although in most cases we can. We do know it can make a difference for some travellers, and that without a roommate available they may not be able to travel at all. We don't want you to miss out! If we can't find you a 'roomie' by the time the group is finalised, we'll get in touch to talk about your options including, on most tours, a reduced rate for your own room. If this isn't suitable, you can choose to opt out of the holiday and we'll provide a refund of your holiday deposit (so long as it's within the terms of the holiday at the time of your booking).

### HOW DO I KNOW A 'SOLO TRAVELLER' TOUR WILL BE FOR ME?

If you're keen to visit the destination and you fit the age group of the holiday then the trip is for you.

Most trips have a welcome meet-up with

the group on the first night, so you'll get to know your travel companions in a relaxed and easy environment. The only time we don't arrange a welcome meetup on the first night is if flights arrive in late and the timing doesn't suit.

The majority of our bookings are from 'solo travellers', who are people booking and coming on their own. Sometimes, we have solo traveller friends join us too.

## GENERAL TOURING QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE?

We believe less is more with small group touring - less queues, less waiting, a more boutique experience, and more chance of getting to know your fellow travellers. And better still, more personal interaction with your local tour guide. Because of our small groups, we have more freedom of choice of where our travellers stay and dine, with the option of selecting boutique and local experiences. These smaller group experiences aren't possible for the large coach tours that are restricted to the big hotels and venues because of their big group size. A small group means a more local insight to each destination - and, you're not just 'another number'. We know from our traveller feedback that once you've toured in a small group, there's no going back to big group coach touring.

### GROUP SIZE BY TRAVEL STYLE

#### 'Discovery'

##### IN AUSTRALIA

As a guide our discovery tours in Australia depart with around 12 to 16 people. Our maximum group size is usually set up to 22 travellers, and for some tours, it's less.

##### INTERNATIONAL TOURS

Our international tour group sizes vary depending on the destination, and can range from 12 to 28 travellers. More often, maximum group sizes are set between 14 to 22 travellers.

##### European & North American tours

Most group size maximums are not more than 22 travellers.

## TOP 5 REASONS TO JOIN US

1. Age-matched holiday groups
2. Travel with like-minded solo travellers
3. Small groups
4. Early bird savings with many tours
5. Roommate matching option

### Asia, and Developing Nations

More often are 12-18 travellers.

The information about the group size and what to expect is provided for each tour on our website.

#### 'Get Going'

Our active trips 'Get Going', for solos who like walking and adventuring in the great outdoors, are more intimate. Group sizes vary but as a guide, usually no more than 14 or 16 travellers. A group of 5 to 10 is more common.

#### 'Relax'

Our Relax holidays are resort-style trips. We usually have groups anywhere between 18 to 35 people, but the group size could be less or more.

Our years of travel experience have helped Encounter Travel hit the sweet spot of singles holidays - the best number of people, mixes of age, gender and style of trip.

Rest assured, we'll help you find the right solo trip for you. We match tours and trips based on personal preferences and age. In every group size, our solo travellers usually find like-minded people and have a lot of fun.

### IS THERE FREE TIME ON TOURS?

On our 'Discovery' tours, there's planned group activities and also down time, creating the time for the freedom to make your own discoveries.

However, with our 'Get Going' active tours you may be in remote areas so mostly it's a group experience through the day. In the evening, you'll come together for dinner but you'll find there's time when you can retreat to your 'own space'.

### IS THERE A GROUP LEADER?

We have a wide variety of travel styles but



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there's always a group leader or otherwise local guides for our tours.

A group leader means the trip is escorted from the start to the end in each destination. On some of the tours with very small group sizes, local guides are used in each destination, and the group is not fully escorted. For clarity, your tour escort joins you on arrival, and not from Australia.

With our resort packages a group coordinator from Encounter Travel is there to host the group. For our small group walking trips an experienced outdoor walking guide/s leads the group.

### 'SOLOS ONLY' VS 'SOLOS MIX'

#### 'SOLOS ONLY' HOLIDAYS

'Solos Only' are the majority of our groups that we offer, and are exclusively for solo travellers. These groups are age-matched. From our traveller feedback, we know that our age-matched holidays are one of the main reasons that solo travellers choose to join us. They've got a proven track record since we first started in 2006.

We offer a mix of age-groups; 40 years and over, 45 years and over, 55 years and over, 30 to 49 years, and 40 to 59 years, being some of the regular age ranges. The age group 45 years & over is our most featured.

#### A Few Touring Pointers for 'Solos Only'

- The best is already included; no endless list of optional tours
- All touring (land based tours) include a group leader
- We take a 'less is more' approach for most of our tours, featuring 2 or 3 night stays at many destinations for an easy going pace.
- As a solo traveller, it's a lot more fun to share a meal together - if you wanted to dine alone, you probably wouldn't have just taken off on your own. Our itineraries feature the ideal balance of group dining.
- We have a thoughtful balance between planned group sightseeing and dining, and then the freedom to make your own discoveries or take some quiet time.

#### 'SOLOS MIX' HOLIDAYS

These are the trips we hand pick from other tour operators. We only select them if they have smaller groups, and have a travel style that is a good fit with the way we believe is the best way to tour; a more leisurely pace and free time, with local dining experiences included. We avoid the big coach tours. The maximums for this group will be between 20 to 28 travellers, but more commonly tours depart with 18 to 24 passengers.

### ACCOMMODATION

#### LEISURE TOURS

The 'Discovery' tours are our leisure tours. As a guide, for 'discovery' touring hotels are anywhere between 3 - 5 star rated hotels.

We request all rooms as 'non-smoking', even if you advise us that you are a smoker. Ultimately the request is subject to availability and the hotel's discretion.

A lot of time goes into our hotel selection. Sometimes a 3 star hotel can be more favourable than a 4 star for any or a number of reasons; like the location and the character of the hotel. There are many 3 star hotels we select for their charm and character that reflect the local region and travellers are impressed by the standard, although not a 4 star rating.

#### WHAT CAN I EXPECT WITH MY HOTEL ROOM?

##### 'DISCOVERY' TOURS

As a general guide for our 'discovery' tours, expect a private ensuite bathroom with a shower, toilet, towels and soap, and in many cases bathroom amenities show as shampoos. As we mostly use 3 star hotels and above, expect a daily room service, and some premium hotels provide a 'turn-down' service.

##### Double Room for Sole Use:

For our 'solos only' tours we always contract our hotels to have the same room standard whether occupied by one traveller or two travellers sharing.

The background to this is that in Europe, hotels often have 'single rooms' for single travellers, that are a lesser size than the standard rooms they use for two people. The price of the room is less than a room for two people. But, it's not

something we're used to in Australia, and for this reason we arrange all our rooms to be the same category room type, whether used by one person or two.

Note: we request double beds for all rooms for sole use but hotels will not guarantee availability. It's not common but you may find you get a double room for sole use but with two beds.

- Safety Deposit Box: some hotels will have safety deposit boxes in the room, and some will just provide a safety deposit box service at reception (more common with 3 star hotels).
- Fridges: not all hotel rooms provide a fridge, or a mini-bar. This varies from hotel to hotel. If you require refrigeration for medical reasons, please check with us before you book.
- Hair Dryers: usually hair dryers will be available in the room or at least available from reception.
- Tea and coffee facilities: there is not one standard for providing tea and/or coffee facilities in hotel rooms across the world. In Australia this is more common. In the United States of America, more often it's a coffee machine but without tea making facilities, and in some countries, neither are provided.
- Bottled water: complimentary bottled water in rooms is regular in destinations where drinking tap water is not safe or not recommended, and then it's generally only provided for free in quality hotels.
- Wi-Fi: it's becoming more and more common for hotels to provide Wi-Fi in hotel rooms and in common spaces of the hotel, and increasingly it's more common to offer free Wi-Fi. Keep in mind, that some destinations are remote and for this reason there are places of stay on some itineraries with no internet or Wi-Fi access whatsoever. Or, if it's available it's a charged service.

### WALKING OR ADVENTURE TRIPS

Our 'Get Going' trips are our walking and adventure trips and accommodation

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varies. For each trip, we detail what to expect and provide the information on our website. It may be a private home or homes, local lodgings or inns, permanent tented camp sites, camping with permanent bathroom facilities, or even bushing camping. On some trips it may only be shared bathroom facilities. Some or even all of these places of stay may not use hotel star ratings.

### CRUISING

If joining us for ocean or river cruising the general standard is mostly 4 stars or higher. It varies from ship to ship so please check the individual information for each of the cruises. There may be some offers where the standard is less than 4 star. Sometimes a tour may include an overnight cruise or a few nights, and the ship or boat standard may be less than a 4 star standard.

The cabin inclusions for 4 star ships and above are similar to that of 4 star hotels but may vary. If you have particular needs please check with us or the ship's website.

### DINING

#### WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

We always list the meals included for each holiday on the 'inclusions' list. Then, on the itinerary, we state the days the meals are included.

Most itineraries include daily breakfast. The exception can be touring in United States of America where breakfast at hotels as an inclusion is less common.

#### WHAT TYPE OF BREAKFAST IS INCLUDED?

Breakfast is almost, always included and you take breakfast at your leisure (and it's not a group arrangement). However, more likely than not, you'll meet up with our group members at breakfast also.

The type of breakfast varies by hotel and destinations. At some hotels it's a buffet breakfast, others it's an American breakfast or at some, a continental breakfast. An American Breakfast is a simple a la carte menu with choices of breakfast that may included eggs, sliced bread or toast, pancakes with syrup, cereals, coffee or tea, and a juice.

- In Asia, a hot and cold buffet for

3 star and above is common, and usually with Asian and some Western breakfast options.

- In Europe, some hotels limit breakfast to a continental style offer (cereals, toast and beverages), or otherwise an American Breakfast.
- In The Americas, either an American breakfast or buffet is likely or in some cases the hotels in North America don't offer breakfast.

#### MEALS ON OUR 'SOLOS ONLY' & 'SOLOS MIX' TOURS

We know that dining while travelling should be a social time when the group can share stories about their travels, experience the local cuisine, and of course the chance to avoid dining alone - one of the main benefits of joining a group when you're a solo traveller.

#### 'Solos Only' Tours

We believe the dining experience when you travel plays an important part of your travel experience, and include a number of dinners and/or lunches. We seek out highlight experiences - either they showcase the local cuisine, and/or include entertainment, and/or are considered a top ranking restaurant for the destination. For relaxed evenings, especially after a longer day out or on the road, we may include dining at your hotel.

#### 'Solos Mix' Tours

Breakfast is usually included. Whether other dining is included varies between trips.

#### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MEALS AREN'T INCLUDED?

One of the best things about joining tours with other solo travellers, is that other travellers in the group are also hoping to find a dinner or lunch buddy, and you can seek out options together.

Although many of our itineraries include a good number of meals together with your group, we also know that solo travellers love to have the chance to seek out their own experiences or local recommendations, and it's why most of our itineraries will have some evenings free that you can enjoy at your leisure. Or, maybe you feel like some 'quiet time' and happy to have an in-house hotel

meal or room service on your own.

Your tour guide is always a great source for local tips of where to eat. If you're a 'foodie, you may even like to use resources like Trip Advisor to plan ahead and experience something special on one of the evenings when a group dinner isn't included.

#### A MEAL 'ON THE GO'

Sometimes, due to an early start or a longer day on the road, it may be necessary to have a boxed meal. It's not often but when it's necessary your tour guide arranges this with the hotel before you head off early (when the hotel restaurant is not yet open.)

### WHERE IT BEGAN

*Encounter Travel was founded on a simple idea; that solo travellers could join travel groups with like minded travellers – no longer on the fringe of groups made up of couples.*

*Back in 2006, we stepped in to fill the void for solo travellers. Founder, Justine Waddington has solo traveller experiences over more than twenty years and to date has visited 58 countries across the globe.*

*Since humble beginnings of a one woman show, it wasn't too long before our travel team grew. Based in our Sydney city office, our travel team is made up of senior travel consultants, our groups department managing the in's and out's of your travel plans, office support staff and lead by the company founder, Justine Waddington.*

*We bring the colour of travel to solo travellers - witnessing friendships blossoms, seeing new doors open, and listen to the stories of our intrepid solo travellers encountering unimaginable discoveries.*