

Solo travel allows you to see the world on your own terms ? with unexpected souvenirs



By Brock Weir

Janice Waugh was bitten by the travel bug at a very early age.

With a life-long passion for seeing the world, however, in 2006 she had to recalibrate her lifestyle.

After her husband died that year, Ms. Waugh entered what she describes as a 'significant period of mourning' which ebbed and flowed for the next two years. But, eventually she decided it was time to get back to her old self, but having to come to grips with the realities of being a 'solo traveller'.

'I picked up the laptop and Google 'solo travel', says Ms. Waugh. 'What was there was very commercial, full of spammy ads, and there was some stuff there that was more about hooking people up, so I wanted to give a voice to this. I have been a writer my entire life, so I just decided to be that voice and sure enough it took off.'

Ms. Waugh brings this voice to the Aurora Public Library next Wednesday, January 21 at 7 p.m. to share the 'Six Things You Absolutely Must Know About Solo Travel.' The author of *The Solo Traveler's Handbook* will share tips on how to awaken one's sense of adventure and reveal your own resilience while discovering yourself and the world at the same time.

In a Choose Your Own Adventure-style talk, attendees of the talk will get to choose which aspects of solo travel Ms. Waugh focuses on and whichever direction they ultimately decide to travel on Wednesday, there will be plenty of information interwoven with personal stories of her own adventures.

'Travel is becoming more and more popular and solo travel in particular is becoming more and more popular,' she says. 'People are not hanging around waiting for friends and family, or partners, and they are going off on their own.'

As the popularity of solo travel has increased, so too has Ms. Waugh's speaking schedule. While she isn't complaining by any stretch of the imagination, she says it is 'interesting' to speculate just why solo travel is on the rise.

'One aspect is the aging population,' she opines. 'There are a lot of women and men who have been left without a partner, whether it is by divorce or by loss. You have those independent people and they also have means. With the younger generation, when you think of Gen X and Gen Y, they have so much confidence about their ability in the world that many don't hesitate to go off by themselves, and sometimes for very long trips.'

?Then there is also the fact of those in between. We are in a world now where more adults are unmarried than married, whether that is because of sequential monogamous relationships or not, but you have these gap periods where people will go off. Then there are people who have experienced older travel, they do connect and have a partner again in life, but they will still travel by themselves on occasion. Demographic shifts in terms of the aging population, more people being unmarried than married, the confidence in that Gen X and Gen Y have been raised on their position in the world all play a big factor and role.?

After Ms. Waugh decided to be a voice for solo travel, she discovered there was truly a niche out there unfilled by online spam and hookup sites, and it is a niche that has since continued to grow. She has seen her blog grow by leaps and bounds with participants coming into the forum from all over the world to say her writings have given them the confidence to go out and see the world on their own, and on their own terms. But, she often hears from people lacking that certain confidence.

?People are nervous,? she says. ?They are nervous about being responsible for things themselves and they are nervous about their safety. That is why I try to allay those fears. The counterbalance of those fears, what people discover and the trend that I get back all the time from people is that by taking this on themselves, being responsible for all the planning and navigating, negotiating deals ? and even how to buy a bus ticket is a negotiation when you're in a foreign country ? by doing these things yourself you get such a surge of confidence.

?It really is life-changing and people carry that home with them. It is one of those unexpected souvenirs.?

Solo Travel: Six Things You Absolutely Must Know takes place next Wednesday, January 21 from 7 ? 8.30 p.m. in the Magna Room of the Aurora Public Library. For more information, contact the Adult Information Desk at 905-727-9494 x275.