



Q: I'm a 52-year-old woman, newly-retired Navy. I spent 30 years crammed in with hundreds of others, and now want to travel alone. Friends and family say it's too dangerous these days, and I should always go with a companion or on a group trip. What do you think? *MJMcK, San Francisco CA*

A: A quick answer is that you should heed friends and family about potential travel problems. However, after a successful service career and continuing good health, you may want to try a safe lone traveler idea at least once. Here are some ideas:

Choose a trip where you're not exposed to danger. Consider a singles-only cruise. While aboard, security is tight and you can wander anywhere on the ship day or night. You can schedule dining and onboard activities with compatible singles, or do it all independently. Join a group, such as a military retiree association, on an escorted tour to an interesting destination. Consider the Grand Canyon, Machu Pichu or the Great Wall of China. While you'll be expected to meet daily schedules, you'll also have considerable freedom to relax, dine and talk with people of similar interests.

If you're into the great outdoors, such as trail biking, horseback riding and backpacking, check out dude ranch experiences. While mostly with guides, there will be freedom to wander. If traveling during winter, seek out warm-weather ranches in Florida, South Texas, Hawaii, Arizona, New Mexico and Southern California.