

The cost of solo travel

<http://money.ca.msn.com/banking/bankrate/the-cost-of-solo-travel>

By Melanie Chambers

Folks who travel alone often pay based on double occupancy. But there are ways to reduce, if not eliminate, the dreaded single supplement.

The lone traveller hasn't always had the best reputation. "Unfortunately, the 'swinging singles' or 'loser single' stigma hasn't entirely disappeared," says Diane Redfern, founder of Connecting: Solo Travel Network, or CSTN, an online singles travel community.

To add insult to injury, those who prefer to travel alone often pay what is known as a single supplement. Most travel amenities, such as your hotel, tour and cruise, are priced based on double occupancy; therefore, if you travel alone, you're still stuck paying for two, or a portion of a second rate.

It doesn't seem fair when you consider that one-third of adults travel solo, according to CSTN.

But here's the good news: Companies are getting wise to the trend as many are now offering more rates geared toward singles. The CSTN website alone includes a directory of 250 companies with solo-friendly rates. "When a company waives the single, that is the news I pass around," says Redfern.

What's more, according to travellers and experts, there are ways to reduce, if not eliminate, paying a single supplement.

Who is the single traveller? Traditionally it was young people, mostly university and college age, that travelled alone, but that isn't the case today.

There are several circumstances contributing to the rise of single travellers, says Redfern. "Their relatives and friends can't afford to go with them or perhaps it's a matter of schedules not working," she says. Add this to a growing divorce rate, or people simply wanting a break from their spouse, and it's no wonder that the single travel trend is growing.

Who charges the most? Cruises are notorious for charging solo travellers the couple rate. "Cruise ships are often for people with money," says Cheryl Watson, a travel agent for Executive Travel based in London, Ont. "It's not typically for people in their 20s and 30s."

If you decide to cruise alone, the single supplement can be as high as 200 per cent. However, this is changing.

Cruise companies, such as Norwegian Cruise Line, have recently launched ships that include 100 cabins with single beds; these single cabins only charge a single rate. And ships sailing in the Caribbean offer reduced rates for single travellers on a consistent basis, says Watson.

To find out the latest cruise deals, websites such as Cruise Critic [www.cruisecritic.com] post frequent updates.