

WHEN PARENTS ARE SINGLED OUT

BY LAURIE WILSON | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Sounds crazy, but if you travel without a significant other— as a solo traveler or single parent — chances are you'll be paying for that adult companion who isn't along for the journey.

Tours, cruises, and some all-inclusive resorts typically tack on a significant supplement fee if you don't have a plus-one — a surcharge that can be as much as 100 percent of the rate. And, this applies to single parents, as well as one parent traveling with the kids without the other parent, or even a doting aunt who travels with a young niece.

Why? Most hotel rooms and cruise ship staterooms are built under the assumption that at least two adults will occupy them, so the supplement is tacked on to compensate for losses incurred. And, many tour operators base their prices on double occupancy, too.

There are signs, though, that things are changing. "Over the past year or so, more tour operators have begun to waive the single supplement fee — not just for families, but also for solo travelers," says Amanda Norcross, senior editor at TripAdvisor's family travel site Family Vacation Critic (www.familyvacationcritic.com). "The trend has been somewhat slow to catch on, but we absolutely think it will continue." Still, she says, supplements are the norm throughout the travel industry.

Here are some cool solo parent getaway ideas that don't include a single supplement.

Velas Resorts

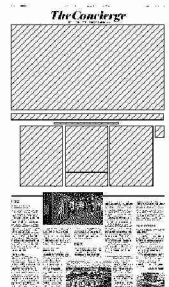
This all-inclusive resort chain with several properties throughout Mexico now waives the single supplement fee for single parents year-round (it used to do so only until mid-December). Amenities and services include things like a dedicated baby concierge, mini mariachi classes, Spanish lessons and a Teen Lounge. Rates vary depending on the resort; book the single parent promotion at the [Velas Vallarta](#) in Puerto Vallarta, for example, and the cost is \$167 for the adult and \$72 for a child/\$95 per teen, per night. Rates apply for up to two children staying in the same suite as the parent, and there is a three-night minimum. www.velasresorts.com

Intrepid Travel

Specializing in small group adventure escapes in 120 countries, this travel company is bent on accommodating the growing number of solo travelers, including families, says Michael Edwards, managing director for Europe and North America.

"It's hard to ignore the growing trend in single-parent travel, especially in direct relation to the large growth in solo-parent households in North America," says Edwards.

Last year, Intrepid unveiled six small-group tours designed exclusively for solo parents and their children to



travel with other single parent families. These Solo Parent Family Vacations were created by Intrepid's family product manager, a single mother, who had noted a significant increase in single parent bookings on the company's Family Holidays program (including tours in Thailand and other far-flung spots). "Since launching the single-parent range of adventures, we've seen a fair split in bookings from single moms and dads," says Edwards.

The company does not charge a single supplement for any of these journeys, and kids 17 and younger get a 10 percent discount. Rates for the popular eight-day Egypt Family Holiday for Solo Parents, for example, begin at \$1,345 per adult and \$1,211 per child (not including air). www.intrepidtravel.com

Discover Corps

If a single parent is traveling with a child on a tour with Discover and they are sharing a room together, they are not required to pay a single supplement fee and, on average, a child's price is 14 percent less than an adult.

Trips range from \$1,995 per person for volunteer-heavy vacations to \$4,995 for more educational and luxury vacays like an African safari and include most in-country activities and meals and services (air not included). The popular Sea Turtle Initiative in Costa Rica costs \$3,295 for adults and \$2,895 for children (16 years of age and younger) for three nights in coastal lodging near a local conservancy and four nights at a three-star hotel.

Founder Andrew Motiwalla says family travel bookings for parents with kids ages 8 to 14 years old are especially popular. "As a single parent, I appreciate waiving the single room supplement not only for the cost savings, but because it recognizes my reality," says Motiwalla. www.discovercorps.com

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