

It takes me a while to warm up when I'm visiting a new city by myself. I usually spend the better half of my days wandering around trying to decide which coffee shop to go to only to end up at Starbucks. And not because I need a certain kind of latte but because I want to feel comfortable for five minutes before venturing out into the unfamiliar streets for more aimless wander (okay, and WiFi). On top of that, I'm faced with the hard fact that I'm far too dependent on the people around me to make decisions. I can never decide where to eat in a new place, even when the internet gives me a list of highly rated places. It will suddenly be four o'clock in the afternoon, and I haven't eaten a thing.

It takes practice. The more you do it, the more comfortable you become. Here, five things I've done in the past to make my lonesome travels a little less lonesome.

Stay in a hostel

I love a nice mixed dorm. You never know what you'll find: strangers making out on the bottom bunk, a girl whipping out her Ouija board, a man hibernating like a bear in the winter. You might make friends and you might not. But, I like the idea of walking into a room full of opportunity, rather than walking into a private room with a stocked mini-fridge and a bottle of wine for one. Solo travelers tend to congregate in hostels around the world, so it's an excellent place to start. Hostels will also host pub crawls and community events. [The Czech Inn](#) in Prague has a blackboard in the main lobby with nightly activities like karaoke and beer tasting. Man, I can't think of anything I'd rather do than sing my heart out in front of a room full of strangers.

Couchsurfing app

[Couchsurfing](#) originated as an internet-based hospitality network, offering their users travel-free accommodation. The platform uses reviews to create a safe and trustworthy network of travelers and hosts. If you are starting to warm up your solo-travel muscles and you aren't ready to stay at a stranger's house, not to worry, you can still use their platform to meet people. Couchsurfing Hangouts is a way to meet people nearby who are looking to visit historical sites, see a live show, or grab a coffee. I recently met a young woman named Nova in Berlin, Germany through Couchsurfing Hangouts. We tried to go to Ben Howard's show, but we missed the train three times and eventually cut our losses. She laughed so hard every time we missed the train. We went to an English comedy show instead. We met three kids

there who were also traveling solo. We exchanged stories and drank beer and ate falafel wraps until three in the morning.



The Last Stand Comedy Night in Berlin, Germany

Rick Steve's Audio Europe

Sometimes you're traveling alone because you want to be alone. Group walking tours and crowded museums do not motivate me. People in large quantities make me nervous. I was telling this to a friend of

mine when she said the most acclaimed phrase of our lifetime: *there's an app for that*. I downloaded the [Rick Steve's Audio Europe app](#) and was pleased to find he had a town walk audio for my trip to Salzburg in Austria. He's a dorky guy with some old-school jokes, but he knows what he's talking about. I loved wandering through the summer streets of Salzburg, with the earbuds nestled in my ears, listening to my very own personal tour guide give me the lay of the land.



Exploring Salzburg, Austria

Beer tasting

Whether I'm taking advantage of the beer tasting at my hostel in Prague, [trailing behind a local](#) in Antwerp, or taking a [brewery tour](#) of the Hofbräuhaus in Munich, there's nothing that loosens me up more than a cold beer. Europe is saturated with destinations for beer lovers, and you can always count on a crowd that's lively and open to conversation. I've never been stressed with a beer in my hand! Well,

except for one time in high school when I threw a Halloween party in my basement without telling my mom. I digress.

Sit in a cafe

I got this little gem of advice from a column in Vogue a few years ago. When all is lost, sit in a cafe for five hours without using your phone, plugging in your earphones, or opening a laptop. I know. Sounds impossible. You might think people are looking at you weird at first for holding a book and not a handheld computer. But, it's just curiosity. They're wondering what life is like reading print. They might be so curious that they come up and talk to you (people don't feel as badly interrupting your novel as they do your text message). Boom! You have a new friend.