

The Nights of Stories

I started blogging some four years back, and the first thing I wrote was about '[Safety Tips for Solo Women](#).' The irony was that I had never traveled by myself when I curated that blog. So was that some random advice? Of course not! I did full-fledged research before picking up the pen, and the tips are still worth going through, even in 2022 and in the future.

At this point, I feel I have always been destined to walk on streets of new cities, befriend strangers, live in the stories of people I may never meet again other than social media, and rest in some pretty Airbnb. And all by myself. Perhaps that is the reason I did so much research.

They say there is nothing such as wasted learning. You will always find relevance in it, just like Steve Jobs introduced creativity in the technology business in the form of Apple's typography. The inspiration you could derive from his biography. The inspiration to do something unconventional, something that your heart desires.

While you follow your heart, you fill your life with experiences- the experiences that sew nights of stories. One street at a time.

Do we have a set rule defined for it? No. I don't think so! If everyone starts following a set of rules, life will become nothing more than a Mathematics question- no matter who is doing the calculation- two and two will always be a four and never a four point seven.

You see, life is never definitive; perhaps it is never meant to be. Life allows you to make mistakes, take a road that is not defined anywhere, choose a career path that needs no degree, experiment with colors, and paint your canvas the way you want. Eventually, you are not coming up with a monotonous story. You will always have your version of the time and space. That will define who you are for the rest of your life.

Solo trips are just like that. I can say that after a dozen solo trips and staying by myself in all the big and small cities of India, I am sure trips are not something you go by the book. Each of these voyages comes with its own experiences that build nights of stories.

So here is yet another blog on solo trips that is nothing like those 'N Tips for Solo Traveler'.

When you will walk on the streets of a new city, an unknown one - talk to strangers, be cautious but talk. You will discover a new perspective on life that is different than yours but not wrong. And that is the lens you need at times to get over the promotion that you didn't get or the boy you did not marry.

Use google maps and whatever technology you can- to keep yourself safe, but dare to lose the direction. Either you will find a brand new landscape that is not on your list of 'places to see,' or you will discover yourself. When you are surrounded by unknown eyes who have never known you- you get a chance to be yourself- unbounded by the rules of your surname or workplace identity. At this moment, you forget your failures and breathe your own story in its purest form.

While you do so, have a meal at a local place. Keeping yourself away from the cuisine of the land is a crime. Every dish tells a story of the place - its history, its evolution, and even about its inhabitants. For example- Everyone relishes a nice bowl of daal baati churma in Rajasthan, but only a few will be able to define the taste of Panchkuta. And interestingly story of Panchkuta takes you to the time when Rajasthan was suffering from drought, and the starving residents of the state had to rely on wild berries. Surprisingly, the chili used in the dish traveled to India from Mexico in the 16th century.

And when you exchange these stories with other people you get a chance to live their experience of life, which is rarely possible in a hotel room. A five-star cosy hotel is always comforting, but life seldom watches a new skyline in the comfort zone. When you stay in a hostel and chill on their roof with people from different places, you live their thought processes and stay in their stories. These are the times when you realize a night is enough to fall in love, and not all love is meant to last for a lifetime. It is in the moment.

For me, these solo trips taught me to stay humble; not everything I chase is what I deserve, and rightly so. Because the universe is way beyond my imagination, and it has its own way of presenting our moments. Just like when I lost my way in Goa, I strolled at a beach with no humans around. Later, I found myself at Candolim, but the experience was serene. On the dinner table of [haamroghar](#) (Mirik), I was fortunate to become part of the Nepali new year celebration and relish some pahadi food. And at the same time, the head of the family dedicated which food contributed to immunity development. Not to miss, at the edge of Konkan, I learned we could survive the worst; the storm passes, but some of it stays in the form of scars, which is a badge of honor.

(This column was written while I was sitting at a window of a quaint Portugal mansion turned into Cafe.)

