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Travelling alone

I WRITE this column before embarking upon my first ever solo trip abroad. My destination is Seville in Spain. I won't lie, the destination was a little inspired by the movie *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, but I generally love Spain; the culture, people, tapas, paella, weather, sangria and everything else.

There are many reasons I decided to travel alone. My old travel buddies are married with kids, other people have trips planned already and some are not financially able to go. So I decided to travel alone. Other friends who have travelled alone told me that it will be the best thing I ever do and I am rather excited.

So I booked it! Seville for five days. I decided on a short trip to start with because I wasn't sure how I'm going to do and I'd be really apprehensive about travelling for months at a time alone. So I thought five days is the perfect amount of time. In Seville there is lots to do; history, culture and I've heard it's really safe to travel alone, especially for women.

I booked it a few months ago and am now ready to travel. The nervousness has kicked in right about now as I write this. I think it is mostly the evenings I'm nervous about. If you're with other people, you can easily just walk about, stay at the beach, go to a bar or hit a club. But being alone abroad sounds daunting. So I have been given advice by friends to book things to do alone. Join a Meetup group (there is actually a bhangra fitness group in Seville), wine or tapas tasting and evening walking tours. In Spanish culture people generally eat late, so I'm sure if I go to a restaurant alone, I'll be fine. One piece of advice a male friend gave me was, even if you don't feel like doing anything, don't just sit in your room and read. Go to a coffee shop or bar/restaurant and read there.

I think when you have been through breakups or a tough time in general, it's really important to take some time out for yourself. Find yourself, enjoy your own company and enjoy new experiences. I really hope this trip does that for me and that I return a new woman. So here's to new experiences, new cultures and maybe new love.

Stay tuned for the second part of this column, which I will share when I have returned from my trip.

Here is a quote by Albert Einstein to inspire you to book your solo trip: "The woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before."

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HOW DIPTI TAIT BA

by ASIAD NAZIR

WHEN Dipti Tait relocated from a west London suburb to the idyllic Cotswolds countryside, it sounded like a blissful move. Her husband's job would be less stressful, their two small children would get better schooling opportunities and there would be expansive green spaces. But something deep inside wasn't right and the huge change caused her internal grief, which spread like a sickness inside her body.

Things got worse when her mother who was over a hundred miles away was diagnosed with a terminal illness. This put a huge strain on Dipti's marriage and her secure family unit suddenly started to crumble, but she kept her struggle hidden inside. She hit rock bottom when her mother passed away and the marriage of 15 years fell apart. Having already lost her father 12 years before, her mental health was in a vulnerable state. "I felt like I was drowning in deep grief-related anxiety and fear. My mental health began to deteriorate rapidly.

I became withdrawn, didn't have a job, didn't want to socialise and my mind be-

