

Dubai's Talking About...

Paulomi Bhatt

THE FOUNDER OF 'THE WORLD AT HER FEET' TELLS US WHY IT IS EXHILARATING FOR WOMEN TO TRAVEL WITHOUT THEIR FAMILIES



PAULOMI'S TOP RECOMMENDED DESTINATIONS

- Iceland for the glaciers and Northern Lights
- China for the sheer efficiency and culture
 - Rajasthan for its raw beauty
 - Paris for the chivalrous men



Having worked in the hospitality industry as well as publishing, Paulomi Bhatt always loved meeting people from different walks of life. But while she herself thrived on adventure and travelling, she noticed not many women were able to pack their bags and head out to their dream hotspots. That's when she decided to start a travel group exclusively for women. In the last three or four years, The World at Her Feet has taken groups of women to exotic destinations where they not only enrich themselves with knowledge of a new place, but also form life-long bonds with fellow travellers. 2016 has some more exciting plans if you wish to travel. The affable Paulomi tells us more about the journey...

How and why did you start The World at Her Feet?

Women love to travel but unfortunately not all have the luxury of companions and are uncomfortable at the thought of travelling

alone. After chatting with friends and acquaintances, I discovered the common thread was their love for travelling. Single, married, divorced or widowed, all of them wanted to travel a lot more than they could. This was attributed to the spouse workload, some didn't know how to plan a solo trip and some thought choosing tour "packages" by agents sounded too clinical. So, in order to support such women The World At Her Feet was born.

How challenging was it to start a travel service only targeted at women?

We are a women's travel group, not a travel agent or tour operator. This automatically takes off the pressure. There are no targets to meet or deadlines or pressures of intense operation. We are a leisure group for women, by women and aimed at creating lifelong travel experiences.

This idea was conceptualised out of my own passion; I wanted to create an

opportunity for those who couldn't travel alone. There are many women who enjoy the experience but are limited to the family holidays because they don't like solo travelling; we managed to bring something that caters to this demographic. The attitude and response has been great and we can't wait for the 2016 trips to take off.

What has been the most challenging tour you have organised so far?

Three trips come to mind. During our trip to Bali, one of the women slipped on a wet floor and split her lip. It was late and pouring, but the hotel managed to get a doctor amidst heavy rain. When the doctor arrived, we discovered that the lady's lip had to be stitched immediately; he didn't come with a nurse so we all had to take up the role and assist the doctor; from holding torches for sufficient light to passing him tools to "operate" on her.

Another challenge was during our way back from a China trip. The coach to the



The group at one of their trips

airport broke down and as the clock was ticking, the ladies were a bit worried we wouldn't make the flight. However, the ground team was so efficient that they got in touch with the operators and managed to get a replacement coach to bring us to the airport on time.

On the day of departure on a trip in Iceland, we were told that Iceland Air was on strike, which meant passengers traveling out for connecting flights were left stranded. The partners came together and managed to organise and sort out other flights at no additional costs. Circumstances come up during these trips but our partners always go all out to save the day and this is why we are very particular when selecting our worldwide partners.

What are the destinations you are promoting currently?

2016 is already buzzing with new destinations. Our debut trip is to the

SOLO TRAVEL TIPS FOR WOMEN

- When travelling solo, opt for women-safe destinations to give you a safety net within the destination.
- Do your research and work out your itinerary ahead to allow you to enjoy the best of the destination.
- When packing, less is really more; essential pieces that can be paired with a pair of jeans or skirt are essential, comfortable shoes and depending on the weather, some warm clothes.



WORDS: LEKHA MENON; PICTURES: SUPPLIED

Philippines departing in February. We are going to Zanzibar in March, Egypt in April, and Iceland during the summer. Come September we will be heading to Japan, another bucket list destination. Women can book in advance for any of these trips.

What special services do you offer to women compared to a regular travel agency?

The World at Her Feet is all about our women travellers. We ensure that everything is geared towards them and in addition to comfort and safety, our itinerary is planned to ensure that nothing is rushed but rather a relaxed tour with unique places to see. We incorporate activities including spa treatments, cooking classes and in some cases, a charity element like a visit to a local orphanage in addition to the typical sight-seeing and shopping tours. Once the destinations are selected, we brainstorm with our respective partners on itineraries and design them to offer the key landmarks and off-beaten paths. Our programs leave enough room for 'ME' time for the ladies to just chill and relax at the hotel. Our aim is to offer a relaxed travel experience.

What are the most common demands or queries that women have when it comes to touring?

Comfort and safety are the key factors, otherwise everyone's expectation is just to have a good time, explore a destination, make new friends and enjoy yet another travel experience.

Travel can be exhilarating and inspiring. Can you, from your experience, give us three reasons why women should travel alone?

A sense of freedom is on top of my list, an opportunity to create lifetime friendships with other travellers and travelling with like-minded women brings a different perspective to the entire experience.

Where did you last travel to?

My last trip was to Denmark; I visited the Little Mermaid, Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum and the Guinness World of Records. My favourite hotspot continues to be China and I recently also fell in love with Iceland.

Can you share a couple of your favourite travel memories?

Every trip is unique in its own way. Some of my favourite memories are from visiting the coal mine in Austria and visiting the actual residence of the Von Trapp family which has been converted into a hotel; climbing the Great Wall Of China; savouring Khachapuri – the bread from Georgia; tasting the fresh water of Iceland (there is literally nothing like it elsewhere in the world!). The water is straight from the glaciers and absolutely amazing. 🇮🇸



THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW YEAR
ENGULFS THE STUDIOS



Gym Freak

RJ Meghana makes sure she gets in regular workouts as part of City1016 Healthy You Health Me Healthy UAE



On a Ride

A food tour on cycles as part of Love it Recommend It with RJ Malavika and Sid.



Food Times

RJ Malavika and Sid also went on a food tour as part of Love It Recommend It.



Studio Visit

BITS Pilani students drop into the City1016 studio for a chat.