



For more on Kathy's travels with Olivia, check out her blogs on [curvemag.com](http://curvemag.com).



From solo to social: Singles can eat, drink and make merry with Olivia



# AT HOME ON THE HIGH SEAS

One solo lesbian finds that when it comes to cruising for company, it's plain sailing with Olivia.  
**By Kathy Belge**



**F**or years, going on an Olivia cruise was on my bucket list. It seemed like something every lesbian should do in her lifetime—like shaving her head, getting a tattoo and following Ani DiFranco around for a summer. It just didn't feel like my lesbian card would be fully punched until I set sail with the ladies of Olivia. So, when I got invited to join them on their Caribbean Halloween Cruise in 2009, I about jumped out of my board shorts.

I would be traveling alone and as the sail date got nearer, I started to get nervous thinking about walking onto a ship full of lesbians all by myself. I am a pretty outgoing person, but I also know what it's like to feel lonely in a crowd of people.

Well, the women of Olivia know that too, and for 20 years they've perfected the art of lesbian travel, including traveling for singles and solos. I now think traveling solo is probably the best way to travel with Olivia.

I've been on a total of four Olivia vacations, but that first one I took by myself holds a special place in my heart. It was with a little bit of fear and lesbian bravado that I made my way to the pre-sail social hour in my hotel the night before my first cruise. Like walking into a lesbian bar all alone, it took some courage to venture down into the hotel lobby packed with dykes who all seemed to know one another. And as it turns out, a lot of them had met either on other cruises or on the Olivia message boards in the months previous.



I got my Corona and looked around for a friendly face. I was standing there, trying to look cool, but feeling awkward, when a woman from across the room pointed at me and gestured for me to come over. I looked over my shoulder to make sure she was talking to me. Because I didn't know what else to do, I made my way through the crowd to her group of friends.

She told me she recognized me as a writer for this magazine and then introduced me to her friends. I'm usually bad with names, but lucky for me these three women were all named Barb. I planted myself on the couch between two of them and from that moment on, I never felt alone again. The Barbs invited me to join them for dinner, on excursions and to sit with them during the shows. I would later find out that this is just the Olivia way. I honestly can't think of a place where I've met friendlier women.

But leaving nothing to chance, Olivia has a very well-planned solos program. Ignorantly, on my first trip, I didn't take advantage of it. One of the coordinators kept asking me if I was traveling alone, but since I wasn't single, I didn't think the solo group was meant for me. It's true that a large percent of the solo travelers are single (at least when they start out on the trip) but it's open and welcoming to anyone traveling alone, regardless of relationship status.

On my next trip, I decided to take full advantage of the solos program.

The coordinators greeted me the moment I walked onto the ship with a solo dog tag and the week's agenda. At the first meet and greet, 300 women showed up. Some were clearly on a "find a girlfriend mission," but most were just glad to be in a sunny climate, surrounded by lesbians and looking to make friends and meet interesting people. We played some "get to know you" games, which did feel a little like speed dating. "Where did you say you were from again?" "Oh, I met you five minutes ago, sorry." I can't seem to remember anyone's name. Am I a bad lesbian?

Gina, the solos coordinator tells me some of her tricks for remembering names. Beverly has brown hair. B for brown. B for Beverly. Joan owns a boat. Boat—Joan—the middle two letters are the same. Oh, forget it! Why can't we wear nametags all week?

The solo travelers have events all throughout the week, social hours, pool games and parties. Surprisingly, there seems to be little stigma associated with the solo tag. I've even heard of coupled travelers offering to buy them.

I think meal times are probably the most intimidating for anyone traveling alone. Who wants to be that person who sits at dinner all by herself, surrounded by tables of laughing women? Fortunately, Olivia has a special seating area both at dinner and for the nightly shows for solos. And in each port, solos can partake in excursions specifically for them. My favorite was in the jungles of Belize, floating on a tube on a river and through a cave.

I hung out with the solos when I wanted to, and it was nice to know I could always meet up with them when I felt alone, but overall, I found all of the women of Olivia to be more than just friendly and welcoming, I've actually made some good friends who I still stay in touch with and visit.

There are many ways to vacation and see places like Cancun, Alaska or Hawaii, but a big part of traveling is the people you meet. And I can think of no nicer a group than the women of Olivia. ([olivia.com](http://olivia.com))■

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*20 years of lesbian travel*

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