



The unexpected joy of a SOLO ESCAPE

The airy rooms at Apollo Studios (below) are super calming



Claire Fox sets off for a quiet week alone in Corfu, and discovers something delightfully different

Life with a young family and a full-time job can be hectic, so when I was offered the opportunity to take a week's 'me moon' to Corfu, I couldn't pack fast enough (if 'honeymoons' are for couples, this is the 2026 alternative for holidaying on your own). A whole week to lie on a beach, read a book and not have to answer to anyone – to my frazzled brain, it sounded perfect.

The specialist tour operator, Friendship Travel, had booked out a small apartment block near Ipsos beach on the east of the island. Each of the 12 rooms were reserved for people holidaying alone – which sounded like a great way to make solo travellers feel more comfortable. However, in my haste to accept, I hadn't paid proper attention to the name of the company – Friendship

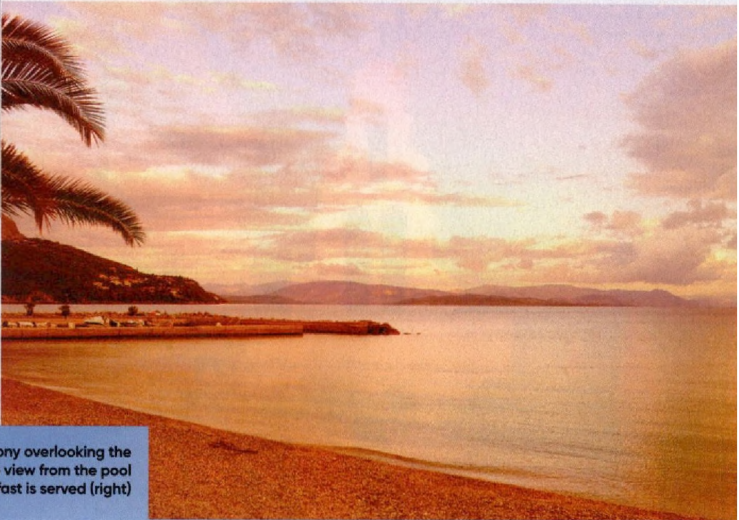


Love travel



Enjoy sunsets alone or with newfound friends

'Many of the guests were seasoned solo travellers'



Relax on a balcony overlooking the pool (below); the view from the pool house where breakfast is served (right)



Breakfast was served from the pool house each morning, while dinner – included on four nights – was at a beachside restaurant about a 10-minute walk away.

I headed out that first evening with some trepidation, but was relieved to find my fellow travellers friendly and fun. Our experienced rep, Emma, was brilliant at bringing the group together and putting everyone at ease.

Many of the other guests were seasoned solo travellers, some meeting up after previous trips together. One had been holidaying with Friendship Travels for 20 years. Far from sounding lonely – these were smart and funny folk, with families and friends at home.

Ranging in age from their 50s to their 70s, they swapped stories about gardening and art, sailing and campervanning – and I came home with

– and as the holiday approached, I realised that guests had breakfast and dinner together most days, and that group activities were also encouraged.

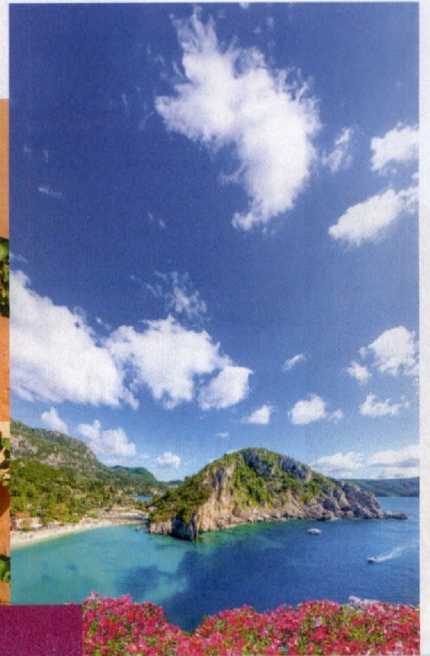
I saw my week of silence disappearing into a week of awkward small talk and arrived in Corfu feeling nervous that I'd made a mistake.

Our home for the week, Apollo Studios, was a pretty blue-and-white block in the foothills of Mount Pantokrator.

My studio room was simple and functional, with a small kitchen and outdoor area (although if you want the best view, go top floor). All rooms look towards the pool, where

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The 13th-century Paleokastritsa Monastery is on the island's stunning west coast



to a recipe for homemade elderflower champagne that I cannot wait to try.

The real highlight, though, came as we walked back to the apartments that night. Clouds of fireflies stopped us in our tracks. Their flickering lights stretched ahead of us on either side of the path, at times spilling into the road so that we walked right through them. It was a magical moment made even more special for having people to share it with.

Making memories

From then on, any fears of forced conversation disappeared and I began to look forward to the shared breakfasts and dinners. While I found plenty of time to myself, if my holiday had been just that, I would have missed out on so much.

It was thanks to one of the guests that I discovered how easy the local buses were to navigate, leading me to find my favourite beach – a pretty cove in Gouvia Bay. Another guest

introduced me to a beautiful walk in the hills behind our apartments, passing allotments and vineyards and joining the Corfu Trail. We ended up in the village of Spartilas, on the slopes of Mount Pantokrator, where



Bougainvillea adds colour and charm all over the Greek island

CLAIRE'S TIPS

- CHOOSE A TRUSTED OPERATOR – experienced hosts can make all the difference in helping you feel comfortable and at ease.
- DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK – check age ranges and group dynamics before you book if that matters to you.
- EXPECT FIRST-DAY NERVES – they pass quickly.
- GO FOR IT – I asked my fellow guests for advice: 'Just do it,' they said. 'It's a chance to meet great new friends in a safe environment. And you can join in as little or as much as you want.'

took in the incredible views together.

I also joined one of the excursions – a half-day trip to the stunning 13th-century Paleokastritsa Monastery on the island's west coast and Corfu Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A group

of us headed back to the Old Town another day to spend more time wandering the pretty, narrow streets, picking up olive wood souvenirs for family and friends and lunching together in one of the squares.

It's fair to say I got lucky with my group – we still chat on WhatsApp now – but I think there's something about the mix of ages, backgrounds and shared experience that would make for a good group dynamic more often than not anyway.

By the end of the week, I realised my mind had stopped whirring with all the things I had to do at home. I'd found exactly the rest I was craving – and made some unexpected new friends along the way.

BOOK IT A seven-night stay with Friendship Travel at Apollo Studios, Corfu, starts from £795, including flights, transfers, breakfasts and four evening meals;