



After 41 Years Together, Traveling Without My Spouse

A destination wedding led me back to Europe, with some joys and a few sorrows

By [Leida Snow](#) | January 7, 2026 | [Grief and Loss](#)

It isn't as though I've never travelled alone. In what I laughingly refer to as my checkered past, I had a nightclub act that took me north to Canada and south to Mexico and [Suriname](#). Then there were the years I attended various conferences for a trade organization. When I broadcasted or published as a first night Broadway theater critic, I also covered regional productions. But I was always working. I never travelled alone on vacation or as a tourist.



Leida Snow, middle, with the bride and groom at the tea ceremony. | Credit: Courtesy of Leida Snow

When I married Lou, we took small and large trips together. His being there, somehow, made everything possible. We drove to the outlet stores where he watched me shop. We traipsed to the Berkshires to see plays I would review. We went to England, Italy, Japan, China, Israel and — many times — back to [Paris](#). Lou loved the City of Light. For a while, we'd combine Paris with other destinations: Prague or Budapest and Paris, Normandy and Paris. Then one day Lou said, "Let's just go to Paris."

**When I married Lou,
we took small and
large trips together.**

So we did: Luxuriating in [La Ville Lumière](#), taking long walks, finding hidden parks, with an occasional museum stop or performance, savoring ridiculously expensive

**His being there,
somehow, made
everything possible.**

dinners and discovering inexpensive bistros and the best chocolate.

Lou died September 18, 2023, and my world fell apart. I thought we'd prepared for the end when we heard

his diagnosis and the prognosis of [cancer with unknown primary](#) (CUP), but I wasn't ready. I guess there's never the right time to lose someone you love.

No Hurry to 'Get Away'

Over the last two years, I've flown to Washington to spend time with cousins who got me through my first big holiday without Lou. I made it to Boston for a visit with my niece. But when friends would ask where I planned to "get away," I was dumbfounded. I can't conceive of just traveling. Where? Why? If I can't share the experience with Lou, what is the point?

One particular invitation got my automatic reaction: I don't like destination weddings — other people deciding where you should spend a fortune to be with a group not of your choosing. But this invitation was different. I care deeply for the [cousins](#) and their son who was getting married. So, putting my reservations aside, I said yes.

Recommended

Adapting to Widowed Life: What's Next for Me?

Searching for what's next and discovering the 'now'

The location beckoned as well. I was intrigued to go back to Barcelona, where Lou and I had been a decade ago. My brother-in-law had put us in touch with a colleague, Quim, who helped make our stay special. Now Quim was enthusiastic about meeting up. That clinched Barcelona, and I decided

to stop in Paris on my way home. A colleague from my ABC Network Radio days lives there. I also planned to revisit some of Lou and my favorite places.

If you're traveling with someone, you can leave your stuff while you navigate through the crowds.

I didn't think too much about the going-alone-ness of the trip, or how, over our more than 41 years together, I could confidently face any situation because I was with Lou. When Lou and I planned our trip to Paris in 2022, we splurged and got tix for Business Class because, at 6'4," regular plane seats were excruciating for him. What a joy to savor a fine

meal in the Air France private lounge. While no airport experience is without its challenges, there was luxury and special treatment.

My solo trip in 2025 was different. Turns out there are now tiers to the lounges. My splurge Business Class ticket got me to a cafeteria-style food court with mediocre refreshments. Getting to the snacks was a challenge. If you're traveling with someone, you can leave your stuff while you navigate through the crowds. I was alone, and I don't check luggage, so I had to wheel my carry-on and haul my large over-the-shoulder bag while trying to figure out how to manage something to eat and drink. No on-board meal, no matter how good, would make up for the demoralizing experience.

Most Popular

1. Documentary Faces the Reality of Lewy Body Dementia | **Health**
2. 6 Must-Have Nutrients For Brain Health | **Food and Nutrition**
3. 3 Foods That Help Regulate Blood Sugar | **Health**

4. How To Support Your Prostate Health | **Health**

Air France doesn't fly directly to Barcelona, so I flew their partner Delta for the first leg of the trip. I did experience an actual Air France lounge, though, flying from Charles de Gaulle airport to New York. No improvement. With the now tiered lounges, if you are guided to the *wrong* one, it's mediocrity all the way.

Barcelona is a wonder: the city, the culture, the people, the food. The food! I did meet up with Quim who guided me to local restaurants and sites I would have missed. When on my own, I felt the alone-ness when I got lost, but eventually I found my way back to the hotel.

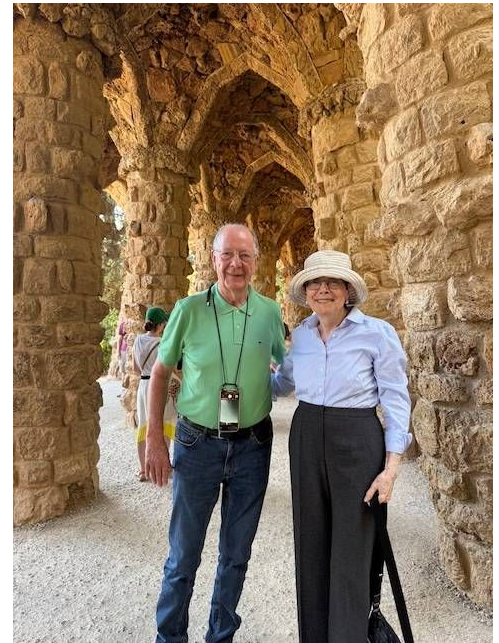
The Chinese Tea Ceremony

The wedding itself was an all-day and all-night spectacular. The bride's parents came from Maryland, but many of her family travelled from China for the big event. She is elegant and warm, and the groom clearly adores her.

But the high point for me was the Traditional Chinese Tea Ceremony the night before the wedding day.

I was flattered to be included in this smaller gathering where the bride and groom were dressed in traditional garb and the table overflowed with dried and fresh fruits, candies, nuts and tea. I watched mesmerized as honored guests were invited to the indicated sofa. The wedding couple then knelt before them, thanking them. In return, those in the seat responded.

The bride's parents were invited to the sofa. Then the groom's parents, and a few others. Then...what? They asked *me* to take the special seat. I was



Leida Snow with her guide, Quim | Credit: Courtesy of Leida Snow

dumbfounded and overcome. As the beautiful bride knelt before me with her loving groom, my cousin, I began to weep at the extraordinary honor of sharing in their joy. "*Lou would have LOVED this!*" My thoughts went out to the room. "*Lou would SO have loved this!*" The couple took turns saying thoughtful things to me, and I hope I made some sense as I wished them happiness and good fortune through my tears.

I began to weep at the extraordinary honor of sharing in their joy. "*Lou would have LOVED this!*"

Barcelona was hot, but it was cold and raining hard when my plane touched down in Paris. Good friends from New York were ending their stay the day after I arrived, so we arranged to share dinner together before I even checked in properly. The plane was delayed, but the restaurant held the table for us.

An Unexpected Crashing Door

At the hotel, I couldn't find an outlet for electronics. It was quite late since this was long after dinner. As a woman alone I was nervous calling for help, but I did. The translation app on my iPhone got a workout, the manager appeared, and the solution was found. The outlets were on the back of the TV!

When I *really* felt alone was waking in the middle of the night to a loud crash. One of the closet doors had become unmoored and had fallen, covering the small entryway. I had to move it in order to get to the door. It was ridiculously heavy. Once again, I turned to the translation app to get help from the hotel.

I have fond memories of

My final memory of Paris is of a chocolate shop. I was set to leave for the airport, and had some coins left. I knew that banks at home would

wandering in Barcelona and sharing a spectacular wedding with some new friends, and I will always treasure the Tea Ceremony.

change Euro notes for dollars but wouldn't deal with the change. At a nearby *chocolaterie*, I told the shopkeeper that, if possible, I would like to spend the [monnaie](#). He was so generous. "Of course, Madame," he said clearly, so that I could follow his French. "This would cover two or three truffles. Show me what you would like." He packed the few pieces as though they were a valuable sale.

I have fond memories of wandering in Barcelona and sharing a spectacular wedding with some new friends, and I will always treasure the Tea Ceremony. In Paris, I met up with my ABC colleague, went to several of the restaurants and bistros I'd shared with Lou, and to places that were special for us.

Where would I go next? For this trip, most of the overworked folks at the airports were helpful and friendly. If I could parachute from here to there, I might make plans, but if you add the delays and the overwhelming 'too muchness' of navigating the huge terminals, the memories are so awful that — at least for now — I'm not making any travel plans. Friends who share their airport experiences echo these feelings.

For me, there's also still the heartache of missing Lou. It's hard to even imagine going back to Paris or going anywhere as a tourist. My heart still asks *Why? Without Lou, what for?*

On the other hand, there is a small purse in my file drawer that holds some Euro notes from my trip. I notice I have not cashed them in.

Leida Snow is an award-winning journalist and communications coach. Follow her @LeidaSnow [Read More](#)

Editors Recommendations

It's Solo Travel Over Travel With Friends for Me



Scene: Un Restaurant à Paris



Widowed, But Traveling Again



STORIES FROM AROUND THE WEB



Meeting the needs and unleashing the potential of older Americans through media

[About Us](#)[Newsletters](#)[Sponsorship](#)[Submissions](#)[Advocates for Aging](#)[Contact Us](#)

A nonprofit journalism website produced by:



©2026 Next Avenue