



ASTRID SOLO TRAVEL ADVISOR

Experience a different kind of travel

Astrid Clements has always been naturally curious about the far-flung corners of the globe. When the small business owner was in third grade, she was assigned to research a foreign place. She could explore anywhere in the world. Her choice? Lapland, Finland.

While the Arctic Circle region may not be every 8-year-old's first pick, Clements learned about its Scandinavian history, wintry culture, and natural phenomena, like the midnight sun and the northern lights.

"Even from a young age, I've always been comfortable in the mindset of a different culture," said Clements, who was raised by German grandparents until the age of nine and is bilingual. "When I read about something like Lapland, I had this intuitive desire to understand all of the different types of people in the world."

It should come as no surprise, then, that this childhood aspiration led Clements to attain her master's degree in International Relations from LSU. In addition to her academic studies, decades of subsequent travel have provided the Baton Rouge native with a firsthand perspective on world cultures that she's using to help others do the same. The Astrid Solo Travel Advisor website, astridtravel.com, offers affordable luxury ideas, products, and services for the solo traveler. The online platform includes the AstridTravel Club, the Solo Travel Talk Podcast, the Astrid Solo Travel Blog, and the AstridTravel Marketplace. "It's turned into a business, but it's a passion of mine," said Clements.

While Clements has spent over

forty years exploring dozens of countries, it wasn't until after her retirement in 2005 that solo travel became her focus. She completed two extended solo trips to Russia and China, touring with private guides, befriending locals, and embracing a new perspective on solo travel.

"I think it's such a wonderful educational experience," said Clements. "You can read about other cultures or see them on your TV, but it's nothing like being there. Even if you feel like you're having a bad trip, it's never a waste of time because you're going to learn something."

With some prompting from her peers, Clements realized the wealth of information she could share, the demand for it, and the value her expert perspective presented. Originally titled "Astrid on the Go," her blog, launched in 2016, eventually grew into a curated online resource for solo travelers, offering recommendations, trip planning advice, travel how-to's, guides, and more.

As her blog gained recognition, readers reached out to Clements to inquire how she planned her appealing trip itineraries, or to suggest she offer travel planning services. Clements liked the idea of replicating her one-of-a-kind experiences for others to partake in themselves, but didn't want to become just another vacation planner. Enter her newest initiative: the AstridTravel Club.

Launched last year, the club offers excursions that promote cultural enrichment and immersion, rather than simply sightseeing. Clements crafts each AstridTravel trip itinerary by drawing from her

decades of personal experience and connections to create unique themed programming tailored to the culture of the trip destination. For instance, this April's upcoming trip to Paris emphasizes fashion, fine art, and fine dining, while May's trip to London and the English countryside focuses on castles and gardens.

"I like authentic experiences, and I like to delve into the culture of the place I'm visiting," said Clements. "Solo travel gets you out of your comfort zone, and I wanted to create a consciousness that encouraged that, but focused strictly on affordable luxury."

With the AstridTravel Club, members can experience the benefits of solo travel while not being subjected to planning woes or logistics concerns. They have the opportunity to connect with a small group (six to ten, max) of like-minded travelers and embark on a luxurious, yet affordable, themed trip. While the phrase "affordable luxury" may seem too good to be true, trip costs range from \$2,500 to \$5,950, and each include private luxury accommodations, fine dining, tours led by local experts, VIP services, and an AstridTravel Club representative on site.

Dinner with a Parisian fashion designer, an after-hours private tour of the Opera Garnier, a gourmet dinner cruise on the Seine, and a day trip to Claude Monet's home and gardens in the town of Giverny are just a few of the activities members will experience on the upcoming Paris trip. In London, attendees will spend a day at the prestigious

Chelsea Flower Show, have High Tea in Prince Charles's beloved Cotswold estate, and attend a performance in the famed Covent Garden theater district, among other inclusions on a stacked itinerary."

The annual club membership fee is \$50, and members receive a \$100 discount on one AstridTravel Club trip per year in addition to a custom travel journal, access to an online forum, and exclusive trip customization options. Visit astridtravel.com for more information on the AstridTravel Club, the Astrid Solo Travel Advisor blog and podcast, trip planning guides, resources, and more.

2020 TRIPS:

April 2020 - Paris, France

May 2020 - London, England

July 2020 - Iceland

September 2020 - St. Petersburg, Russia

November 2020 - Dublin, Ireland

December 2020 - Marrakesh, Morocco

