

## **Read what one of our members from Northern Ireland has to say about 5W.**

"If you are interested in solo travelling, this is the organisation for you.

It can be lonely travelling on your own, especially if you see something fantastic and want to turn round and say "hey look at that" but there is no one there, have you ever sat in a lonely restaurant hiding behind a book? Well if you join 5W those days are over, you could be sitting in my kitchen having dinner beside the Aga, or looking at fantastic scenery with a friend

5W is a great friendship organisation. When you join, many doors will be open to you, it is not just about staying with members, although that is a big part, but some members are unable to accommodate you due to their domestic arrangements, but they will be able to meet and greet you, show you round, guide you to safe and economical places to stay. Those who can accommodate you will bring you into their family and friends, either show you around or guide you as to where you should go, and how to get there.

When you join you will receive a list of members all with a profile, so you decide where you want to go, then look it up in the list (arranged in country and area) get in contact with members and ask if you can stay. Most members who have no room for visitors will say in their profile that they are day hostesses only, but the rest will be used to such requests. When you read the profiles you will find women of similar age and interests. It is normal to stay not more than 3 nights, unless the hostess suggests it, so plan for 2 or 3 nights then if you feel it is not working you will leave without acrimony, however, as is usually the case, you are having such a good time you will be sorry to go. Most times it works out OK.

Let me tell you about my first venture into staying with a member. In 1999 I had been a member for a few years but was a bit shy re asking to stay, but that year I decided to go to Australia with my daughter, also at that time a member, so I looked for someone my age with a family around my daughter's age, 32 at the time. I emailed and posted requests to a few members in Adelaide and Brisbane, I got a lovely reply from a member in Brisbane and eventually stayed with her. We have become very good friends and since then have travelled together, in France, Italy, Scandinavia and the UK and Ireland. We have been on canal cruises in England, France and Sweden. And also met up at "Gatherings", more of that below. So tentative steps can lead to who knows where!

As well as individual travelling in 5W, we have Gatherings. This is where a member will plan an event, price it and circulate the details in the quarterly Newsletter, anyone interested will get in touch and if enough members reply the event will go ahead, I have never heard of a Gathering being undersubscribed! I have been to Gatherings in Belgium, New Zealand and Sweden, I have hosted Gatherings in The Republic of Ireland in Shannon and last year in Belfast.

Lesser events are "get togethers" these are more spontaneous, if you came to visit me in Northern Ireland I would try to arrange that you get to meet other members here and also from the Republic. Get-togethers can range from coffee or lunch to a weekend away. I have been to them in Scotland, Sunshine Coast Australia and Kent.

I hope I have inspired you to join or organisation, but remember we are a group of women who travel, so don't be surprised, or put off, if some one replies and is unable to host you, they may be travelling. Most members will reply to your request, but if they don't they may be unable to access the Internet if they are in transit.

I hope you join, you don't know what you are missing. “