WHEN PARENTS ARE SINGLE OUT

By Laurie Wilson | Globe correspondent

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ounds crazy, but if you travel without a significant other — unless you have a paid-solo-parent companion who can stay with the kids while you travel — chances are you'll be paying for that adult companion who isn't along for the journey. Tours, cruises and hotels typically add on a single supplement fee that can range anywhere from 50 percent to a prohibitive 100 percent of the rate. The single supplement can be as high as $500 for a solo parent with two children and at least $1,500 for a solo parent with three kids. "We pay an extra 50 percent to 100 percent of the rate," says Amanda Nor- ton to waive the single supplement fee — not just for single parents, but also for solo travelers, says Amanda Nor- ton, senior editor at TripAdvisor's family travel site. Family Vacation Critic (www.familyvacationcritic.com). "The trend has been somewhat slow to catch on, but we definitely think it will continue." Still, she says, supple- ments are the norm throughout the travel industry. There are signs, though, that things are changing. "Over the past year or so, more tour operators have be- gun to waive the single supplement fee — not just for families, but also for solo travelers," says Amanda Nor- ton. "Last year, Intrepid unveiled six small group tours de- signed exclusively for solo parents and their children to travel with other single parent families. These Solo Par- ent Family Vacations were created by Intrepid's family product manager, a single mother, who had noted a sig- nificant increase in single parent bookings on the compa- ny's Family Holidays program (including tours in Thai- land and other far-flung spots). "Since launching the solo- parent range of adventures, we've seen a fair split in bookings from single moms and dads," says Edwards. "The company does not charge a supplement for any of these journeys, and kids 17 and younger pay a 10 percent discount. Rates for the popular six-night Egypt Family Holiday for Solo Parents, for example, begin at $1,255 per adult and $1,211 per child (not including air)."

Trips from $1,395 per person for volunteer- based vacations to $6,095 for more educational and luxu- ry vacations as an African safari and include most in-coun- try activities and meals and services (air not included). The popular Five Star Turtle Initiative in Costa Rica costs $3,295 for adults and $2,895 for children (16 years of age and younger) for three nights in coastal lodging near a local conservancy and four nights at a three-star hotel. Founder Andrew Motivated says family travel booked for- parents with kids aged 8 to 14 years old can be espe- cially popular. "As a single parent, I appreciate waiting, the single room supplement not only for the cut savings, but because it recognizes my reality," says Motivated.

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