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Dilshad Master-Kumar.

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The first all-women travel mixer saw stories of guts and determination with a touch of humour

It could be termed as a heterogeneous gathering comprising people from different walks of life. There was a mother who took her son off from school for a month to head to the Caribbean, a corporate employee who fought carcinoma cancer to undertake a adventurous trip at 45 to Mt. Everest base camp, a naturalist who gave up the comforts of the civilisation to move to the jungles and a trekker who headed for Antarctica along with 72 others. Yet there was a common thread that bound them -- they were the new breed of women

travellers, who had come together for a day-long event of India's first all-women travel mixer. Held at the India Habitat Centre, the event was organised by Kunzum Cafe in association with Chef at Large Pvt. Ltd, India's largest online food platform and witnessed an impressive turnout.

“This forum acts as a resource, and what’s better than having individuals who are in themselves institutions of knowledge,” said Sid Khullar, Managing Editor, Chef at Large Pvt. Ltd, setting the tone

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for the proceedings.

Malini Gowrishankar, who travelled to Caribbean with her 10-year-old son, feels that it is time women come out of their cushioned cocoons and give themselves their due. The founder of F5 Escapes, which undertakes all-women fixed departure tours with customised itinerary and travel consulting services, said, “F5 signifies the refresh button. Women must tap it. The best things in life are not material, they are memories. We are genuinely trying to work from the grass-roots level; in terms of clean toilets, general awareness, sanitation and hygiene. We are trying to make India a better place to travel.”

Dilshad Master-Kumar, Director, Operations and Business Development at Mercury Himalayan Explorations Ltd, exhorted those present to stop being a workhorse. “Office is meant for an eight-hour day schedule. Forget the pressure. Re-wire yourself. Read a new book. Update your phone's OS every two years. Just do something new. Our cerebral cortex neurons need constant nourishment.” Having fought cancer, she discovered her adventure streak at 45 and credited the new-found calmness to travelling and trekking.

Touching upon the security aspect, one of the biggest concern of women travellers, Philippa Kaye, Curator of Experiences, Creative Travel remarked, “Women coming from overseas, fear that they cannot travel solo but in a group. Whereas, I see a lot of Indian women travellers who are confident and willing to travel alone. In the 18 years that I have travelled in India, my experience has never been bad.”

Ratna Singh, Director, Elephas Guides & Camps who served as a naturalist with the Taj Safaris for 10 years opined, “I train wildlife guides. I bring the knowledge to keep a light footprint in terms of how not to impact the environment.” Ratna who typically works in wilderness areas of Uttarakhand, and Chitwan National Park in Nepal advised women travellers to be particular in terms of sensible clothing, footwear and to carry cash instead of plastic money.

Travel requires not just planning but also mental strength on the part of the traveller and for this good food, constant hydration and a constant check on metabolism are important. Highlighting these aspects, Supriya Singh, who trekked in Antarctica, said: “Three of the most important things that I learnt during my expedition were to: drink water, protect one’s head from cold and not to hold your pee. The simplest reason why people have headaches is dehydration. These are some of the simple things we tend to ignore. We need to conserve energy at all times.”

Many speakers recalled funny and hilarious anecdotes from their travel experience providing a light touch to the proceedings like that of Alisha Anand an RJ who narrated her experience of jumping in a pool party to making new friends in a ping pong show in Phuket.

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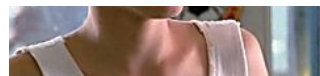
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