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### Over the hills and far away...



The Hindu  
Malini Gowrishankar. Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.



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Passion 'n' profession Malini Gowrishankar. Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.

*F5 Escapes organises trips for women that promises to refresh and rejuvenate them that is because there is so much to discover within our own country.*

Malini Gowrishankar is the brain behind F5 Escapes, a travel start up company that focuses on all-women travel in India. “That’s because there is so much to discover within our own country,” says Malini, whose career “spans multiple industries”. She “was a hard-core techie, then did voiceovers for animation films in Tamil and English, a lot of jingles, and wrote poetry.”

Malini says that she was always inclined towards studies. “I was called a nerd and even though my family encouraged me to learn music and got me to participate in various reality shows as a teenager, my heart was just not in it.”

“My passion was travel. I would either be travelling alone or with family. If I was not doing either, I would be busy planning trips for friends and relatives. Then the brain wave struck. I decided to start the F5 Escapes.”

Why F5? “That is the refresh button on every keyboard. My travel package is focussed on refreshing women.” “I was looking for something easy on the pocket and something that women could do during a short holiday like say even a day or two. It started off informally. I was travelling alone to Sikkim and announced on FB that any lady interested could join me. Three girls joined in and we had a blast there. We provide experiential tours. On one of our trips to Jog Falls, we planned a picnic lunch, visited paddy fields shared lunch with the farmers and also got into the fields to plant paddy.”

Malini says that she is adventurous and takes off on her own. “I have backpacked in Europe and been to 11 different countries and 17 different Indian states so far.”

“The idea behind F5 is that it has to be an impact venture besides being a commercial one. I want to revolutionise the way women travel in India. Women here do not take time off for travel. Even in Bangalore they are inhibited. All it takes is a little common sense for a woman to travel smartly. Like never land up in a new place after sunset, make sure your hotel has arranged some pick up for you and that you well aware of the place. No one can promise anybody safety but if you make women feel safe and encourage them to travel it is an achievement,” she adds. “F5 organises one to 10-day trips. We focus only on Indian destinations besides organising family outings.”

F5 or Malini can be contacted on malinig@f5escapes.com or [www.f5escapes.com](http://www.f5escapes.com)

**This column features those who choose to veer off the beaten track.**

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