



SEARCH

I AM?

X GIRL

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HOME

ENTERTAINMENT

YOUR LOOK

YOUR BODY

SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

LIFE ETC.

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You've spent months planning and saving for the time of your life, but before you embark on your journey, Nicole Madigan reminds us to stay away from unwanted souvenirs.

FILM FEST GOES TROPPO FOR FREE FUN!

http://tinyurl.com/4fwyy4v

23 days ago.

Don't miss photo artist, Tina Fiveash's, exhibition GRACE investigating the intersections of photography & cinema http://tinyurl.com/4hhvq9g

23 days ago.

@AusFashionGuide you're too sweet! love love looove you! 51 days ago in reply to AusFashionGuide

TWITTER.COM



You're on the other side of the world, a million miles away from your normal life, living day-to-day, adventure-to-adventure. And why not? You've spent months planning your escape - it's time to live life, let loose and party hard, without the rules and regulations of home.

Backpacking is often renowned for binge drinking, drug use and bad decisions. Drugs like Ecstasy and Cocaine tend to be cheaper and a lot more accessible overseas, making drug use a tempting prospect for some. And with this party culture, come the inevitable one-night-stands, so it's little wonder backpackers live life on the edge... what happens at the hostel, stays at the hostel, right?

Not necessarily.

Recent statistics show that high numbers of backpackers are taking home some unwanted souvenirs. It seems that carefree attitude is contributing to an increase in unsafe sexual behavior, in turn, causing higher numbers of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

According to Sydney Sexual Health Centre Acting Director Dr Lynne Gray, backpackers are increasingly complacent when it comes to condom use.

"Backpackers report higher incidences of binge drinking as well as a reluctance to use condoms," says Lynne.

Experienced backpacker Kenny\* from the Gold Coast, says that when you're affected by drugs or alcohol and an opportunity presents itself, common sense often goes out the window.



DAILY JUICE



Nicole Kidman & Keith Urban have a little Faith

It's a girl!



The Golden Globes: Best and Worst Dressed

Who got it right, and who got it oh so wrong.



Funny man Ricky Gervais' Gay Scientist Joke at the Globes

Check out what was said here.



Lindsay Lohan free for Thanksgiving

It seems LiLo is a free woman ... well for 15 hours anyway.



Lily Allen loses baby

Lily Allen has suffered her second miscarriage in three years.

TOP STORIES



10 Reasons To Have More Sex

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Angelina Jolie's Supposed Old Drug Dealer Talks About Her Heroin & Cocaine Habit

Watch the video of her high as a kite.



Dress Ups & Make Believe

Time to play!

"It is surprising how many girls don't even ask if you have protection and are happy to just get down to business," Kenny says.

As a result, backpackers are taking home, and leaving behind, some unpleasant reminders of their sexual prowess.

Lynne says the high number of heterosexual backpackers coming to the clinic with new sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, is directly linked to the backpacking culture.

A fact backed up by research conducted by Slide premium condoms, which shows STIs like Chlamydia have quadrupled in the past decade for those aged under 29.

"Most backpackers are aged in their 20s," says Slide brand manager David Madigan.

"And three quarters of all reported STIs in Australia are from people aged between 15 and 29, so backpackers clearly make up a large part of this demographic."

In response to this trend, sexual health groups, local councils and backpacker associations and hostels are joining forces to promote better sexual health practices among young international travelers.

Sydney's Safe in the Sack project pushes messages like, "I came for a trip of a lifetime, now I'm leaving with a lifetime infection."

Queensland Health has also launched its "Sex, Drugs and Backpackers" initiative.

Slide will be offering free condoms to backpacker hostels in line with other initiatives designed to increase their usage.

"Our mission is to make condoms fashionable again," says David.

"We all know sex is fun, we just want to make sure people do it safely."

So what is it about traveling the world that makes backpackers put their health at risk?

"I think people do think about STIs, but it is usually the next day," says Kenny.

Backpackers can call the Sexual Health Infoline on 1800 451 624 or visit [www.slidecondoms.com](http://www.slidecondoms.com) for more information on sexual health.

\*Kenny did not wish to disclose his full name.

Check out Nicole's blog:

[www.nicolemadiganeverest.blogspot.com](http://www.nicolemadiganeverest.blogspot.com)  
[www.nicolemadigan.webs.com](http://www.nicolemadigan.webs.com)

**Nicole Madigan**

Thanks Jack. The research is quite shocking and surprised me - with STI rates for young people on the rise in a big way. It appears the younger generation has become complacent about safe sex practices, which I believe is partly due to the fact that no one wants to talk about it.

2009-11-26

**XandY**

Hi Jack, thanks for your feedback! We're very passionate about this issue and will be rolling out a series of stories reminding us all of the importance of practicing safe sex.

2009-11-25

**Jack Clapton**  
★★★★★

Good to see some one has the courage to (re-start) conversation on this topic! Well done Nicole and Xandy. For a while there - quite a while ago, though I notice there was a healthy discussion in the media about STDs/HIV etc. However this seems to have stopped - why? Does the younger generation fully

understand the risks associated with unprotected sex?  
I suspect not.

2009-11-25

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