

### **Solo and all-female safety travel tips**

*Many women fear that traveling alone or with a group of other women can make them a target. There's no reason women shouldn't travel alone, but there's also no denying that women traveling alone or in pairs do have a few special safety considerations. By following the tips below, you can ensure an enjoyable and safe time when you travel, no matter where you roam (or who you choose to roam with).*

### **Trust yourself and your instincts**

*The first rule of thumb while traveling solo or with another female friend is to trust your instincts. It sounds vague, but if you feel unsafe for any reason, don't dismiss the feeling.*

*If you feel uncomfortable anywhere, at any time, leave. If you're walking on the street and feel unsafe, or if you get the sense you are being followed, duck into a restaurant or hotel and wait until the threat has passed.*

*Even if you're traveling on a budget, know when to spend money on a nice hotel with good security, or take a taxi ride instead of walking. When taking a taxi, select your cab at random and don't use an unlicensed cab. Taxis and other vehicles should have photo licenses clearly displayed and include identifying information for the driver.*

*If you need to spend money to ensure your safety, do it. Your budget should never come ahead of your personal safety. It's just not worth it.*

### **Stay alert**

*When traveling alone or with a friend, stay alert. Continuously scan your surroundings, don't walk with earbuds in or a hood on, walk tall and look people in the eye. Project confidence, even if you don't feel it. Most crimes are crimes of opportunity so carry yourself as though you're paying attention.*

*If you're out on the town, keep your drinking in check. Of course you should enjoy yourself, but know your limits so you don't put yourself in a position where your inhibitions are lowered or your judgment is skewed. And never leave food or drinks unattended.*

### **Keep emergency documents on you**

*Before you arrive at your destination, research the safety services in the city you'll be visiting. Look up the local emergency phone numbers—most countries do not use 911 and have their own emergency numbers, some even vary by city. Identify the closest hospital and emergency room. Also take note of the nearest U.S. Embassy, including its location, contact information and even its Twitter handle (more on that below). Print out the emergency information you've gathered and keep a copy on you at all times.*

*Before you leave your hotel for the first time, grab a business card in the lobby and keep it with you. If you find yourself in a situation where you are flustered, and unable*

*to think clearly, just show the card to your cab driver in order to get safely back to your room.*

*It's also helpful to learn how to yell "help" and "stop" in the local language and carry a safety whistle in a place you can quickly access. If you find yourself in a situation where you need to scream for assistance, you want to make sure you can gain attention quickly.*

**Enroll in STEP Program. Stay up-to-date with travel alerts.**

*Enroll in the Department of State's free [STEP](#) (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program), which alerts US Embassies along your itinerary of your presence in the area.*

*In the event of a terrorist attack or natural disaster, social media is now faster and better than normal media outlets for real-time updates on situations. The U.S. State Department socials also typically keep a running stream of updates of what local authorities are doing (translated and/or reposted) so be sure to add both the local U.S. Embassy as well as the U.S. State Department (@TravelGov) to your Twitter feed.*

**Share your itinerary and have an emergency contact**

*It's difficult to think about, but if the worst does happen, it's imperative to have a plan in place that can be quickly executed. When exploring a new city with a friend, discuss a meeting point outside of the center of town in case you get separated. Make sure you know how to get in touch with your friend's loved ones back home and in turn, that she knows how to get in touch with yours. Just like the other emergency documents listed above, keep your emergency contact information and that of your friend on you at all times.*

*If you're traveling alone, have a point-of-contact back home that you check in with regularly—a parent, sibling or best friend. Discuss the plan of action if you should miss a scheduled check-in: Does your point-of-contact know who to contact if they fear you've disappeared? Do they know your cell phone provider, bank and airline contact information? Do they have necessary permissions to check when you last used your bank card or if you made your flight?*

**Sleep safely**

*Stay in hotels on well-traveled streets in safe areas of the city. The more expensive hotels usually have better security. Ask for rooms on lower-level floors in case of fire or other need to evacuate quickly. Make sure your room has a fire alarm, fire escape and carbon monoxide detector, and that the doors and windows lock securely. Review evacuation or emergency exit plans after occupying your hotel room.*

*Some women also find comfort in traveling with an alarm doorstop. These devices are inexpensive and effective at deterring intruders. Simply wedge the doorstop beneath the door. When pressure is applied to the door the alarm sounds loudly.*

*If you find yourself in a situation where the door to your room doesn't lock or feels insecure, request a new room. If that's not possible and you don't have a wedge*

*doorstop, jam a chair beneath the doorknob. As soon as possible, find a new hotel with adequate security.*

*Finally, be sure of the identity of all visitors before opening the door, no matter what time of day.*

### **If the worst happens, BE PREPARED**

*You should not be the only person in your party who is prepared for a safe trip. If you'll be traveling overseas with a friend, talk to her about worst case scenarios, including what would happen if one of you is injured, seriously ill, or were to go missing.*

*It's a tough conversation to have, but if your friend were injured and hospitalized for a long period of time, what would you do? You will want know your options so you do not have to leave your friend behind, or vice versa.*

*Travel insurance is a must, for covering lost luggage, cancelled flights, and any emergency room / hospital care. But you should also consider adding a medical transport and travel security membership like [Medjet](#).*

*Travel insurance (or credit card travel benefits if you're counting on those) typically will not get you all the way home in the case of a serious illness or injury, only to the "nearest acceptable facility". What "acceptable" means is left up to the travel insurance company, not you, so you may still face sub-par treatment, frustrating language barriers, and the financial risk of capping out on the insurance coverage limits. For complete control over your health, an air medical transport membership (they are surprisingly affordable), can get you all the way home to recover, regardless of whether the hospital you're in is "acceptable," and regardless of cost.*

*Programs like MedjetHorizon, which is what I have, also add a layer of security and crisis response. While it's scary to think about, having someone to call, with 24/7 in-country response capabilities, in the event of a violent crime, natural disaster, disappearance, political threat or act of terrorism, is comforting to everyone and well worth the extra cost. (Disclosure: I am a MedjetHorizon member but have not been paid to endorse the program).*

*It can be stressful and overwhelming to think about what danger could befall you as you travel alone or with a friend. But by forming safe travel habits you can have confidence knowing that you can handle any crisis that may come up, and you can relax and enjoy your adventure.*