

A good friend, a very competent media professional, frequently travels alone on business and vacation. The experienced lady always takes sensible precautions to protect herself. Here's her list of suggestions and warnings for senior women traveling alone.



1. If traveling with others, in groups and on a budget, it is OK to stay in inexpensive hotels, hostels and bed-and-breakfasts if you know they have good safety reputations. The internet is full of recommendations about hostels, inns and b&b places all over the world.
2. When you meet men for the first time at cafes and social events, never leave the premises alone with a stranger. No matter how smooth his line is, resist it totally. If you decide to make a date for later, be sure to check all the facts you can find about him. Better still, if you're not absolutely sure he's safe, forget Mr. Goodbar.
3. If a stranger is a regular at a club or restaurant you visit, be wary about accepting his offer to buy you a drink. The bartender may be an accomplice who can spike your drink. Never drink excessively in a strange bar or restaurant.
4. If you have an accident or other car trouble, stay with your car and call 911, but don't hitch-hike alone. Never hike or jog alone at night, neither in the city or on country roads. In some notorious places, don't jog alone even in daylight.
5. If you want companionship on your travels, use your discretion about where to find it. The most likely safe places are at invited social events, churches, museums and music concerts. You can also socialize when you're attending business meetings and conventions. If aboard ship, there are usually many special activities for singles to meet and mingle. Travel agencies and the internet have listings of singles-only cruises, entertainment and excursions.

6. Dress and use make-up modestly. In some countries, even slightly attractive dresses, especially those showing lots of skin, are considered invitations to men to consider you a prostitute. Heavy make-up, brightly dyed hair, tattoos and body-piercing jewelry are also part of the image that can lead to dangerous situations. Also, don't dress as an obvious, clueless tourist when in foreign countries.

7. Never let anyone into your hotel room or cruise cabin if you don't already know the person. If it's an employee at the door, get his/her name but don't open it. Call the front desk and verify the person's validity before you allow him/her in.

8. Don't sleep or nap anywhere other than in your locked hotel room, cabin or supervised pool area. If you're extra tired, fall ill from drinking or eating, call the ship's nurse or, if ashore, hire a marked cab to take you to your ship, hotel or a hospital. Try to keep healthy by avoiding activities, street vendor food, exotic unfamiliar dishes and drink situations that could cause illness.

9. If you're driving, and people in an unmarked car attempt to stop you by identifying themselves as police, don't stop, but drive to a well-lighted area where there are many people present. If you suspect danger and have a cell phone with you, call 911, or the number of local police to report this or any other potential emergency.

10. If you're taken to a police station for any reason, cooperate, but demand immediate contact with your attorney, embassy or consular office before you say anything which could incriminate you.

If you're a senior woman who must travel alone, we wish you success, enjoyment, good health and total safety throughout your trip.