

Tips for Women Traveling Alone

This brochure has been prepared by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs to provide general information for women who plan to travel abroad alone. There has been an increase in the number of Americans traveling abroad - especially women traveling alone either for business or pleasure.

Each country and culture has their own views of what is appropriate behavior for women. Although you may not agree with these views, it is wise to abide by the local laws and customs to avoid problems. Please become familiar with the laws and customs of the places where you wish to go. Here are two examples of situations you may encounter:

It is illegal in Laos to invite Lao nationals of the opposite sex to one's hotel room.

Foreigners in Saudi Arabia have been arrested in the past for "improper dress."

Women traveling alone can be more vulnerable to problems in certain cultures. Keeping in mind the following information can help make your trip as safe and rewarding as possible.

PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

Passports & Visas: Make sure your passport is still valid or apply for a new one long before you plan to travel. Make sure you have the right travel documents and visas for your destinations. For information on individual countries' entry and exit requirements, refer to our publication Foreign Entry Requirements.

You're Destinations: Make an effort to learn about the locations you plan to visit, their culture, and any problems that might be occurring there.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs constantly updates its published and on-line information to reflect developing situations in each country. <http://travel.state.gov>

Many exciting and exotic destinations may have very conservative views about women. Being a foreigner makes you stand out; a woman traveling alone can be even more of an oddity in some places.

What to leave behind: Leave a detailed itinerary and a copy of your passport's identification page with a friend or relative at home. Include names, addresses and telephone numbers where you will be staying. Leave a copy of your flight and ticket information with them as well.

You may wish to establish certain check in dates when you will either call, e-mail, fax, etc. to let someone know that you are all right. But remember that if you happen to miss a check-in, your loved ones may assume that you are having a problem or are in trouble.

Leave any valuables, extra credit cards and jewelry - even fake jewelry - at home. Thieves often won't know the real from the fake until after they take it, so why risk your personal safety?

Health: Make sure you have adequate health insurance coverage while abroad and that your coverage includes medical evacuations. Your policy might not cover you overseas and you may need to purchase traveler's insurance. See our publication Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad.

If you have any condition that might develop complications- especially if you are pregnant, check with your doctor before you go abroad. If you experience complications, a medical evacuation might still take several precious hours to arrange.

If you take prescription medication, make sure you have enough to last the duration of the trip, including extra medication in case you are delayed. Always carry your prescriptions in their labeled containers as many countries have strict narco-trafficking laws and might be suspicious of pills in unlabeled bottles. Bring your prescription information and the names of their generic equivalents with you just in case.

OFF YOU GO

Safety and Security: Use common sense and be alert and aware of your surroundings. If you are unsure in general about the local situation, feel free to check with the American Citizens Services section of the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for the latest security information.

Don't announce that you are traveling alone! Some guides for women even advise wearing a wedding ring if you're single. If you feel like you're being followed, step into a store or other safe place and wait to see if the person you think is following has passed. Do not be afraid or embarrassed to ask for someone to double check for you to see if all is safe. Display confidence. By looking and acting as if you know where you're going, you may be able to ward off some potential danger.

Ask for directions before you set out. No matter how modest your lodgings are, your hotel concierge or other hotel staff should be able to help. If you find yourself lost, do not be afraid to ask for directions. Generally, the safest people to ask are families or women with children. Getting the right information may save you from ending up in a potentially unsafe area.

Hotels: Choose a hotel where security is good and transportation is readily available and nearby. Check that all the doors and windows in your room have locks and that they work. If you feel uncomfortable, ask hotel security to escort you to and from parking lots or your room at night. Always use your peephole and common sense about letting strangers into your room.

Clothing: There is no doubt that fashion makes a statement. Unfortunately, not everyone will interpret how you dress the same way you would. What you consider casual clothing might be seen as provocative or inappropriate in other cultures. Thieves might choose you over another potential target based on your style of dress or the amount of makeup or jewelry you are wearing. Other might single you out for harassment or even physical violence because they find your clothing offensive, based on their cultural norms. By taking your cues from local women, or at least by dressing conservatively, you could save yourself a great deal of trouble.

There is a wealth of literature available both on the Internet and in books and journals with information and advice for women traveling alone. Take the time to search the web and your local library and/or bookstore.

Consular Affairs regularly updates its [Consular Information Sheets](#), [Public Announcements](#), [Travel Warnings](#) and other information materials. Please check these out on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. This information is also available by phone at 202-647-5225.

[A Safe Trip Abroad](#)
[Medical Inf. for Americans Traveling Abroad](#)
[Tips for Americans Residing Abroad](#)
[Tips for Older Americans](#)
[Tips for Students](#)
[Your Trip Abroad](#)

Tips for Travelers to...

[China](#)
[Mexico](#)
[South Asia](#)
[South and Central America](#)

Tips for Travelers to the...

[Middle East and North Africa](#)
[Caribbean](#)

~ REMINDERS ~

1. Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport!
2. Read the Consular Information Sheets (and Public Announcements or Travel Warnings, if applicable) for countries you plan to visit.
3. Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family and friends at home, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency
4. Make sure you have insurance that will cover your medical needs while you are overseas.
5. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs, especially when it comes to dressing and socializing.
6. Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas and never accept packages from strangers.
7. Do not announce that you are traveling alone!
8. Do not wear conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of cash or unnecessary credit cards.
9. Before leaving your hotel ask for directions.
10. Ensure that the hotel you plan on staying at has good security and easy access to transportation.