

SPECIAL REPORT

100+ SAFETY TIPS FOR WOMEN TRAVELERS (AND FOR "WISE GUYS" TOO)

"Chance Favors the Prepared Mind!" – Louis Pasteur



**Tips Accumulated & Edited
by**

100⁺ Safety Tips for Women Travelers
(and for "wise-guys" too)

100+ Travel Safety Tips for Women Travelers *(and for “wise guys” too)*

BEFORE YOU GO

What to Take

Safety begins with what you pack. To avoid being a target, dress conservatively. Don't wear expensive-looking jewelry. A flashy wardrobe or looking too casual can mark you as a tourist. As much as possible, avoid the appearance of affluence.

Always try to travel light. You can move more quickly and will be more likely to have a free hand if you travel light. You will also be less tired and less likely to set your luggage down, leaving it unattended.

Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip and plan a place or places to conceal them. Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe. When you must carry them on your person, you may wish to conceal them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets that are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair and any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage.

NOTE: To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country first.

Use travelers checks and one or two major credit cards instead of cash.

Pack an extra set of passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport information page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen.

Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality. If possible, lock your luggage with today's locks accessible to inspectors.

NOTE: Some people do not like to have their address and phone number on the outside of their luggage. You can always use the address of your employment.

Consider getting a telephone calling card. It is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas location(s). Access numbers to U.S. operators are published in many international newspapers. Find out your access number before you go.

What to Leave Behind

Don't bring anything you would hate to lose.

Leave at home:

- ✍ Valuable or expensive-looking jewelry
- ✍ Irreplaceable family objects
- ✍ All unnecessary credit cards
- ✍ Social Security card, library cards and comparable items you may routinely carry in your wallet.

Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency.

A Few Things to Take AND Leave Behind

1. Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license and the credit cards that you plan to take with you. Leave one photocopy of this data with family or friends at home; pack the other in a place separate from where you carry your valuables.
2. Leave a copy of the serial numbers of your travelers' checks with a friend or relative at home. Carry your copy with you in a separate place and, as you cash the checks, cross them off the list.

General Suggestions & Reminders

Dress down when you travel. Avoid wearing jewelry - even jewelry that is cheap but looks expensive. Why take a chance drawing attention to you if you don't have to?

Carry a small clutch when all you need to carry is \$\$ or credit cards and identification.

Wear a money belt. It is common for thieves to use razor blades to cut purse straps, grab the purse, and get away in a thick sea of bodies. If a money belt doesn't turn you on, carry your purse in front of you or hold firmly in your hands.

Approach Strangers with Children. If you must ask for directions,

approach women with children or families. Remain on guard. Some crooks use children as shields.

A basic safety prevention technique for all people is to always be very aware of your surroundings. That means not only what is in FRONT of you, but also on your sides and BEHIND you. I look around often and if I see anything questionable I move away, let him/them pass and look closely at the person, if there's some invasion of my space. That way they know I am gauging them and can identify them also, if a worst scenario happened. The "bad" guys go for the easiest prey.



Plan your travel to arrive at your destination or home before dark.

Carry along wet naps or a tube of disinfectant lotion to wash your hands.



Take a friend along, when possible.

Carry five one-dollar bills with you in a pocket easily accessible.

This will prevent you from becoming stressed should someone approach you for a handout. You will be ready for this "confrontation" and you can quickly move on having given the person a dollar. (This preparation and forethought will save you much frustration and anxiety in these uncomfortable situations. Keep this money loose in your pocket – not in your purse.

Carry a cell phone including adding the phone number of the local police department of the intended area. When dialing 911 you may not be familiar with the area and won't be able to give meaningful instructions. Call the local police.

Notify the U.S. embassy, depending on where you are traveling. Inform them where and when you'll be there. Do this before leaving home.

Women should always carry a fully charged cell phone with them throughout their trip.

This might mean purchasing a second charger to leave in your suitcase. It makes good sense to purchase a second AC Charger and leave it in your travel luggage.

Driving Tips

Put luggage and packages in the trunk of your car. This prevents you from advertising to the world that you're a "traveling" shopper.

Lock all the doors in your vehicle always. This practice also pertains to very short trips away from your car. It takes seconds for an intruder to enter your unlocked car to retrieve a laptop or purse.

Check the back seat before getting into the car. Although a bit inconvenient, this is best done from the passenger's side of the car. It is also a good practice when possible to exit the vehicle positioning the driver's seat in a forward, leaning position. This provides a sign from a distance if the seat has been tampered with.

Use "Valet Parking" in big cities. This cost a few more dollars but your company will readily reimburse this fee as it helps to insure both your safety and peace of mind on a business trip.

Approach your parked vehicle in a zig -zag route. This will provide several viewing points and you will be able to see if someone is hiding behind a tire waiting for you. Sounding a bit paranoid? I don't think so. There are over 35,000 instances each year of shoppers being assaulted outside their parked cars in Mall Parking Lots.

Hotel Tips

Do not use the door hanger to order breakfast for early am delivery. This provides passersby ample opportunity to determine if there is only one person in the room signifying that you are traveling by yourself.

Look for the exits when you enter a crowded place you are unfamiliar with. You never know when you may have to get out in a hurry!

Ask for another room if the hotel representative tells you aloud what your room number is. As a courtesy and safety precaution, most good hotels now provide something written and point to the room number when you check-in. Ask for two keys even if you are traveling alone. (1) This indicates that you are not alone and (2) This provides you with a backup key in case you lose one.

Always request a room with NO adjoining door to another room.

Make certain your lock is secure if you have an adjoining door. Place a chair or luggage rack in front of it, better yet, carry a small rubber door stopper in your luggage.

Always ask for a room near an elevator and if not, then a ground floor room close to lobby. (Some women do not like being on the ground floor. If this is the only option, ask to be as close to the lobby as possible.

✍ **Stay at hotels instead of motels when possible.**

✍ **Carry a can of mace and know how to use it.**

✍ **Ask the hotel to call a cab for you.**

Ask for Strategic Hotel Location.

When making hotel reservations, ensure that the hotel has interior corridors where you can enter your room from these corridors. This prevents strangers from approaching your room from the parking lot.

Request a room on the second or higher floor. It is more difficult for someone to enter your room thru any exterior door/window if you are on an upper floor.

Do not assume that a "Hilton" or "Sheraton" is in a safe area. And even if a hotel is in a "safe" area, assume that it is not. (Don't be paranoid – be alert.)

Restaurant or Public Area Tips
Refrain from going to a bar and drinking alone. I realize that you are a grown woman and feel comfortable fending for yourself. I also understand that hotel bars provide TV's and musical entertainment. Alcohol in and of itself can spell unwelcome news for both men and women when frequented by themselves. Here is some good advice: If you are traveling alone, socialize with people you know, or stay in your room and catch up on the news or discover The Discovery Channel.

ROOM RULES

Request one near the elevators and away from any renovation work. Have your key out when you leave the elevator.

You want to be far from emergency exits (which someone might pry open to avoid using the elevators), and on an upper floor away from catwalks and terraces.

The door should have double locks--one of which is a dead bolt--and a peephole. Bring along a security doorstop for extra protection.

The "Please make up this room" sign tells everyone you're not there. Call housekeeping instead.

Conversely, the "do not disturb" sign can make the room seem occupied (especially handy if you leave expensive items inside).

Put expensive clothing on hangers under other garments. Robbers usually "shop" what they can see.

Lock valuables in the front-desk safe.

If your bag is stolen from the hotel, recruit management to search for it. Most hotel robberies are committed by the staff, and many properties, especially overseas, don't allow employees to leave with packages; thieves take the money and dump the rest.

Stand near the elevator buttons with your back to the wall; if threatened, push all the buttons at once with your back.

CHOOSING A HOTEL

Smaller is smarter: you want the staff to be familiar with guests and with you. The smaller the lobby, the more noticeable the loiterers.

Aim for a well-trafficked street (neighborhood restaurants and late -night stores mean traffic; corporate offices mean darkness). Affluent residential areas tend to have more reliable transportation and fewer threatening street people.

If you're still concerned about the area, ask a female employee --not one in reservations--whether she walks around at night. (Call the restaurant, for instance.)

A reception and concierge desk near the entrance, and/or the elevators, is more likely to deter non-guest undesirables.

There should be privacy for guests

checking in: no one should be able to overhear a name, room number, or other personal information.

Room numbers should be written on the key envelope, not mentioned aloud or inscribed on the key--this way, anyone finding your key won't have access to your room.

Look for a parking lot that is well lit and secure. Find out if there's valet parking . . . and if it will be available when you need it. Use it, even it costs a little bit more.

Does the hotel gym have an attendant? Being alone and semi-dressed in the basement is not good for your health.

The hotel should have sufficient staff to walk you to your room late at night. Inquire when you book and you'll get an idea of how woman-friendly the hotel is.

45 TIPS FOR TRIPS --- FOR ALL WOMEN (Everybody)

Here are the most common mistakes women make that could result in them getting kidnapped, attacked, and/or raped: I KNOW. This will never happen to you. With that in mind, please keep reading.

- 1. Getting into the attacker's car when he pulls a gun and orders you to get into his vehicle.** Most attackers don't want to shoot you ... they want you to get into the car so that they can drive you to a deserted place and torture you. Don't comply. Run screaming. It is MUCH more likely than not that he will just move on to an easier target
- 2. Pulling over when a man drives alongside of you pointing at your car pretending something is wrong.** If this happens, drive to the nearest well-lit and populated gas station and look the car over yourself (or ask an attendant). Never pull over. Believe it or not, many women have fallen for this for fear of their car spontaneously exploding in the middle of the road. Not likely.
- 3. Not locking your doors while driving.** I have read several cases where the attacker simply walks up to a woman's car while she's at a traffic light and jumps in with his gun or knife drawn.
- 4. Opening your front door when you have not positively identified who is there.** If you don't have a peep hole, get one. There are countless cases where the attacker gains access to his victims simply by knocking on their door. Don't let an attacker get into your home. He then has a private, relatively soundproof place to attack you.
- 5. Not being alert in parking lots.** If you go to the grocery store at night, don't be shy about asking for an escort to your car. Too many women are abducted from parking lots or even raped in the parking lot.
- 6. Look in your back seat before entering your car.** Cars provide endless hiding places for attackers, both inside them and in between them.
- 7. Be aware of your surroundings** by looking to the left and right and behind you with your head up all the time. You may appear paranoid and look funny to others, but an attacker will think twice about approaching someone who appears so aware of what's going on.
- 8. Trusting a clean cut, honest looking strangers.** Sex offenders do not look like monsters. They often look like they could be your friendly grocer, bank teller, waiter, neighbor, clergy, doctor, etc. They are every age between 15 and 90. Only a small minority look scary.
- 9. Do not talk on your cell phone while walking to and from your car.** You are preoccupied and make a good target. Always walk with purpose and be aware of your surroundings. Look strong and confident.
- 10. Or, purposely call someone on your cell phone while walking to your car.** so that if the unexpected occurs, you are already connected with a source for help. **(This is the opposite advice from # 9)**

11. **Lock the car and keep the keys with you when purchasing gas.** (In some places, you must go to a booth or inside to pay for the gas and usually our keys and purse etc. are all in the car with the car unlocked.)
12. **Unload your car at the hotel front door vs. in the parking lot.** Most hotels will allow you to leave your car there while you check-in and take everything to your room. Why take any chances by driving to some remote corner of the hotel parking lot and lugging your stuff cross country?
13. **Walk to your car with your keys in your hand.** Always be aware of your surroundings. Do this day or night.
14. **Schedule reserved transportation whenever possible.** Never hail a cab from the street.
15. **Do not carry luggage tags with personal name and contact information where they can be readily seen.** Instead, put your company address and phone number on luggage tags. Since most luggage tags are removable, you can print personal information should be printed on the back.
16. **Park close to the elevator.** Know where the security person hangs out. (I am thinking of large parking lots like in Vegas.)
17. **Never enter an elevator with a man alone.** Most people don't always follow this advice, but if you have the slightest sense of a negative intuition, don't get in the elevator or exit before the door closes. Why gamble if you don't have to?
18. **Never stop at a rest stop or truck stop alone.** You are safer at gas station where there are lots of people -- especially at night.
19. **When ordering room service stand at the door when it is delivered with the door open.** Do not walk back into the room and shut the door. Have the waiter walk to the door and step outside while you sign the bill.
20. **Do not take the stairs alone unless it is an emergency.**
21. **If you have a drink at an event, do not leave it unattended.** If you do, rather than risk taking a sip from that glass, order a new one. Paranoid? Think about the times you have read about instances in your newspaper where a guy slips a Mickey into a female's drink.
22. **Be discreet when ordering in hotel restaurants or poolside.** Providing your name and room number out loud can open you up to all sorts of uncomfortable situations, not to mention others buying drinks on your room #.
23. **Don't be hesitant to ask security to walk you to your vehicle.** Walking to your car, waiting for a cab, can be unsafe at late hours.
24. **Avoid staying on ground level.** It's the easiest place for intruders to break in.
25. **Never leave your patio or balcony door open/unlocked.**
26. **Yell FIRE when confronted with a potential problem.** Some people avoid helping strangers thinking it is none of their business. **FIRE** is all our business.
27. **Drive directly to a well-lit parking lot and call 911** if you suspect you are being followed. Stay in your car until the police arrive.

28. **Call the area police department when you are being stopped for a traffic violation and confirm the validity of the stopping officer.**
29. **Try to stay below the 7th floor in a hotel.** Most Fire Departments only have ladder trucks with ladders that extend to 110 feet.
30. **Always take a business card of the hotel upon check-in.** This way if you should get lost or need assistance you will have hotel information to provide taxi or call.
31. **Bright Idea:** Check into a hotel as Mr. and Mrs. Ask for two keys to give people who might be listening the impression that you are not alone. (See Tip #21)
32. **Never park next to two large cars (vans, SUVs, Trucks) or vehicles with tinted windows.** This creates a "obstruction" so you can't see what is going on. Tinted windows allow for people to wait in the car to reach out and pull you back into the vehicle.
33. **Travel during daylight hours as much as possible.**
34. **When stopped at a traffic light, be sure to see the tread marks on the tires of the car in front of you.** This will give you enough distance and time to avoid a car-jacking.
35. **Choose well-traveled roads and highways for long drives.** They may have more access to gas, water, sanitary facilities and law enforcement when needed.
36. **Check hotel windows and doors immediately for properly working locks.**
37. **Check hotel room for properly working services: electric, phone, plumbing.**
38. **When someone knocks at the door, use peep hole and check for name and ID.**
39. **Ask who's there prior to opening the door.**
40. **Slide under a car if being threatened with rape.** Try to vomit, or urinate or tell attackers you are HIV positive and on your period.
41. **Look under/around your car before you approach it to make sure no one is hiding below the eye level, waiting to pounce.** Getting into the car is a vulnerable moment. Move in fast, shut the door and drive away.
42. **Elevators:** If you don't like the occupants or get weird vibes, don't get on the elevator, especially if it is one man alone and late at night. So, what if it looks stupid or is inconvenient? Don't care; you may have prevented unwanted encounter.
43. **FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION.** If you feel the hair on the back of your neck rise (or whatever the expression), or you get bad "feelings," listen to those feelings and act on them. Don't call yourself silly. It's your life you are protecting. You may never know what disaster you (may have) avoided, but by following your intuition, it will become even stronger and serve you well.
44. **Hotels:** Lots of security cautions apply to a lone female traveler. Basic one: Make sure you double lock all doors and check any shared doors between rooms. Also check any windows that open onto balconies. Avoid lower floors where people can easily access your room by back windows and doors. When you leave the room, keep your TV on, so it confuses someone as to if you are present or not.
45. **Always travel with a charged cell phone.** If your car fails, you have a better chance of getting help. If you detest cell phones, carry a cheap plan one for emergencies only.

STREET SMARTS

Study a map before going out; once on the street, use a pocket-size guidebook to avoid looking like a tourist. Your hotel's concierge or a female employee can mark any dangerous areas on your map.

Dress down. Avoid jewelry--even a chain that's fake gold can be ripped off your neck. Do consider wearing a wedding ring.

Loop a money belt around your belt loops so that if someone cuts it, it won't fall from your waist.

Be wary when getting off a bus or train, or riding stairs and escalators; that's when pickpockets tend to strike.

Carry just one credit card and photocopies of important documents. Divide money for small and larger purchases so you don't have to expose a wad of bills. (When sharing with friends, keep a kitty for common expenses to make digging for cash in public places unnecessary.) Become familiar with foreign currency. Have gratuities ready for porters and doormen.

Use prepaid phone cards instead of carrying your card number.

Ask the concierge to make any restaurant reservations, and have him or her say, "Please take care of our guest, she's coming alone and will need a taxi home."

Should a car start to follow you, immediately turn and walk the opposite way.

If you must ask for directions, approach families or women with children. To be extra safe, say, "Where is the --? I'm meeting my husband there."

On sidewalks, keep your handbag and other valuables away from the street side (and on escalators, away from the opposite ramp).

If attacked, run, fight, and yell as loud as possible.

TRANSPORTATION SAVVY

Use covered luggage tags. Instead of your home address, write that of your office.

Lock all suitcases, if not flying. If you make a lot of purchases on your trip, and your bag becomes full, secure the bag with strong tape.

In public rest rooms, use the corner stall. On overnight flights, keep an eye on your valuables. A clever idea is to put your valuables in a security waist pack (versus leaving it in your stowed carry on) and wear it while sleeping. When you go to the lavatory, take your purse/valuables with you.

Talk to female passengers and flight attendants on the plane about the safety of your destination.

In a busy area, if you deposit your belongings on your car's passenger seat, lock the door before walking around to the driver's side.

Don't exit a taxi until you're sure you've arrived at your destination. Pay while still in the car so that you can be sure you've gotten the proper change.

Stay close to your valuables when passing through airport security. Make sure you take all your belongings.

If you place your carry-on bag on the floor when sitting in a restaurant or other public area, put your foot through the strap; don't leave it loose.

Tear your name and address off magazines before leaving them on the plane. Why announce to the world that you're away?

So, you won't get lost when leaving a tricky airport, hire a taxi to lead your rental car to the expressway. Don't use an unmarked taxi; if necessary; take public transportation to a city center, or reserve a meet and greet transfer.

WORTHWHILE PRECAUTIONS

Word on the Street

1. Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home. Be especially cautious in or avoid areas where you are likely to be victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, market places, festivals and marginal areas of cities.
2. Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets. Try not to travel alone at night. Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.
3. Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.
4. Avoid scam artists. Beware of strangers who approach you, offering bargains or to be your guide.
5. Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will: jostle you, ask you for directions or the time, point to something spilled on your clothing, or distract you by creating a disturbance.
6. A child or even a woman carrying a baby can be a pickpocket. Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.
7. Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.
8. Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority. Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.
9. Learn a few phrases in the local language so you can signal your need for help, the police, or a doctor. Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
10. If you are confronted, don't fight back. Give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced, but you can't.

Safety in Your Hotel

Keep your hotel door locked always. Meet visitors in the lobby.

Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.

Let someone know when you expect to return if you are out late at night.

If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.

Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire. Be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located. Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit. This could be a lifesaver if you must crawl through a smoke-filled corridor.

Safety on Public Transportation

If a country has a pattern of tourists being targeted by criminals on public transport, that information is mentioned in the Consular Information Sheets under the "Crime Information" section.

Taxis. Only take taxis clearly identified with official license markings. Beware of unmarked cars.

Trains. Well-organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourist routes is a problem in some countries. It is more common at night and especially on overnight trains.

If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away. This can happen in the corridor of the train or on the platform or station.

Do not accept food or drink from strangers. Criminals have been known to drug food or drink offered to passengers. Criminals may also spray sleeping gas in train compartments. Where possible, lock your compartment. If it cannot be locked securely, take turns sleeping in shifts with your traveling companions. If that is not possible, stay awake. If you must sleep unprotected, tie down your luggage, strap your valuables to you and sleep on top of them as much as possible.

Do not be afraid to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way. Extra police are often assigned to ride trains on routes where crime is a genuine problem.

Buses. The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes. For example, tourists have been drugged and robbed while sleeping on buses or in bus stations. In some countries, whole busloads of passengers have been held up and robbed by gangs of bandits.

Safety Behind the Wheel

When you rent a car, don't go for the exotic; choose a type commonly available locally.

Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed. Make certain it is in good repair. If available, choose a car with universal door locks and power windows, features that give the driver better control of access to the car. An air conditioner, when available, is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars.

Keep car doors locked always. Wear seat

belts. As much as possible, avoid driving

at night.

Don't leave valuables in the car. If you must carry things with you, keep them out of sight locked in the trunk.

Don't park your car on the street overnight. If the hotel or municipality does not have a parking garage or other secure area, select a well-lit area.

Never pick up hitchhikers. Don't get out of the car if there are suspicious looking individuals nearby. Drive away.