



*Guest Editor Theresa A., Chicago IL:* I'm a seasoned media pro, frequently travel alone, and always take sensible precautions to protect myself. From my more than 40 years of experience on the road here are some suggestions I tell other women travelers:

1. It's OK to stay in inexpensive hotels, hostels and bed-and-breakfasts that have good reputations. When making plans, check the latest safety info on internet travel sites.
2. When you meet a man for the first time at cafés and social events, never leave alone with the stranger. No matter how smooth his line is, if you're not absolutely sure he's safe, don't go.
3. If strangers are regulars at a club or restaurant you visit, be wary about accepting offers to buy you drinks. The bartender may be an accomplice who can spike the drink. Never drink excessively in an unfamiliar bar or restaurant.
4. Especially at night, if you have a road accident or other car trouble in unfamiliar areas, stay in your locked car and call 911. Never hike or jog alone at night. In some potentially dangerous places, don't jog alone even in daylight.
5. If you want to meet new people on your travels, be cautious. The most likely safe places are

at invited social events, churches, museums and concerts. You can also socialize at 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 senior 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, may be invitations to local men. Heavy make-up, brightly dyed hair, tattoos and body-piercing jewelry are also part of the image that can lead to dangerous situations.

To prevent pickpockets and other street criminals from targeting you, don't dress as an obvious, clueless tourist when in foreign countries. If you take a purse into busy tourist areas, be sure it's tightly strapped and held under an arm.

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 yet. Call the front desk and verify the person 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. Ashore, hire a taxi to get to your ship, hotel or a hospital. Keep healthy by avoiding street vendor food, unfamiliar dishes and drink situations that could cause illness.

9. If driving, and men in an unmarked car attempt to stop you as police, don't stop. Immediately drive to a well-lighted area where there are many people present, or if possible, to a police station. If you suspect danger, use your smartphone to call 911 or local police.

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

As a savvy senior woman traveler, most safety advice is familiar and well-learned by a lifetime of experience. However, it only takes a moment of forget to cause hours of regret.