

Every year, thousands of women go abroad alone, having fulfilling and career-boosting experiences in exciting, exotic locations. Here at *MyWorldAbroad*, we've learned that the women who succeed abroad are excellent observers, they're highly adaptable, and they face all gender-specific challenges with an open mind and lots of confidence.

With knowledge and street smarts, and by traveling with the intention of immersing yourself in your host culture, you'll return home informed and empowered at the end of your trip. The following article offers a variety of tips for staying safe, healthy and happy, no matter where you choose to travel.

Research, research, research!

Pre-departure research is one of the key components to being successful abroad. Before you go, take the time to investigate the role of women and any gender-related issues in your destination country. The Western ideal of gender equality isn't upheld worldwide, and getting informed is a great way of preparing yourself. Remember: the ideal travel destination is one that pushes your limits and challenges you to adapt!

Adapting to a New Attitude

When you travel to a far-off region, consider that you're exploring all the unique elements of your host culture – including prevailing gender norms. If you travel to a region where the female experience differs greatly from the North American one, aim to observe the local women and integrate yourself into their world. Watch how they dress, speak and behave. Make friends with them and learn as much as you can about their experiences and perspectives.

Be prepared to accept the things you can't change, and understand that you're on a journey of cross-cultural discovery. You're not there to change the system – you're there to experience it.

Avoiding Harassment

Every journey abroad is a life changing and hugely enriching experience. By keeping the following safety tips in the back of your mind, you'll avoid any unnecessary incidents and be able to focus completely on your cross-cultural adventure:

- **Drink in moderation and avoid doing drugs abroad:** You're sure to do a bit of partying abroad, but try to stay clear-headed and alert.
- **Stick with people you know:** When you meet someone new, give the relationship some time before you go out alone with that person.
- **Dress appropriately:** If you're unsure of how to dress, modesty is the best option.
- **Don't leave drinks or food unattended:** It's an unfortunate truth that date-rape drugs are common worldwide, and can come in a variety of forms.
- **Try not to flaunt single status:** Single women often find that wearing a wedding ring abroad cuts down on harassment.
- **Watch local women:** Wherever you are, keep an eye on the local women. How are they behaving? What is their style of dress? Follow their lead!

Avoiding Other Criminal Activity

There's no need to be afraid when traveling to a new region! Having a safe and positive experience abroad is simply a matter of staying alert and using your good judgment. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- **Avoid speaking loudly in English:** In many areas, speaking English is associated with having money or valuables.
- **Avoid walking alone:** If you must walk alone, use well-traveled streets or choose to walk in the middle of the road rather than on the sidewalk. Avoid walking in isolated areas, and walking after dark.

- **Avoid looking lost:** Always know where you're going. Don't use your iPhone or a map in the street.
- **Watch your valuables:** Only carry valuables when necessary and use a money belt. Keep valuables packed safely in your hotel room.
- **Don't share information:** Inform family and a few friends of your exact itinerary, but don't share this type of information publicly online, or with strangers.
- **Ensure hotel windows and doors are secure:** Avoid renting ground-floor rooms and try not to leave the windows open. You can bring portable alarms and door stoppers.
- **If harassed, be assertive:** Don't be afraid to ask for help! If you want to remove yourself from a situation, go into a store or office building. Shout if you need to. If you are mugged, hand over your possessions willingly. Nothing is more important than your personal and physical safety.

Transportation

When you're abroad, you'll be seeing the sights and engaging with the local population. Getting from one place to another will require you to use transportation. Here are some tips for doing so safely:

- **Taxis:** In many of the world's metropolises, taxis are the best and most affordable way to get around, but may not always be the safest choice. Avoid hailing a cab and instead use taxi apps like EasyTaxi. Don't be afraid to turn down a taxi driver, and always make sure the meter is on.
- **Cars:** Keep car doors locked and windows up. In some countries, thieves will reach into an open car window and grab your purse, or necklace. Stay alert when driving.
- **Public transport:** Crowded buses and trains can be prime spaces for harassment or theft. Sit next to a woman if possible. In some major cities you will even find women-only areas in public transport vehicles.

Women's Health Issues

In all likelihood, you won't be in need of any medical treatment while you're abroad. Nonetheless, it's good to know what women's health facilities and treatment options are available in your host country, just in case. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- **Seek out country-specific information before leaving:** Contact organizations and clinics that specialize in women's health and request current material on the status of health care in the countries where you will be traveling.
- **Take care of yourself:** If you need medical treatment abroad, be selective and ensure that the hygienic standards are acceptable. Talk in detail with your family doctor before leaving. If possible, avoid trying to self-diagnose or self-treat any issues while you're abroad.
- **Take contraceptives with you:** Many countries now manufacture their own condoms and birth control pills, but the quality can be below standard. Bring a supply with you when you go.
- **Be smart:** Developing countries tend to have higher incidences of HIV. Protect yourself from infection by ensuring that new needles are used if you get an injection, and that you practice safe sex, including the use of condoms.

A Last Word

Currently, there are North American solo female travelers based in every region of the world. These strong, independent women are expanding their cross-cultural knowledge, developing invaluable skills and building life-long friendships. If you're a young woman considering heading abroad, we highly recommend that you take the plunge!

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