

WOMEN TRAVELING SOLO RESOURCE HANDOUT 2009

Why Travel Solo?

First of all, let us stress that people travel solo all the time—in fact, plenty of people prefer to travel solo. Sometimes you may be traveling alone because no one is available to go with you. Others may want this time to discover themselves and the world. Whatever the reason, you're the lucky one – you have made time in your busy schedule to explore things that others may never see, and you may even return with an entirely new perspective on life!

Why should we travel by ourselves? First and foremost, traveling solo provides an amazing opportunity for **empowerment and self-discovery**. You will learn about yourself, and you will better understand your reactions to the world around you. **Traveling alone produces an amazing sense of accomplishment, and you will become less intimidated by new challenges and new and different people.** It's a chance to escape your day-to-day routine, to face new experiences each day, and you learn to handle them yourself.

Traveling Solo Has Some Great Advantages

- The greatest of which is **flexibility**. No compromises, no voting – this is your trip. You are free to spontaneously do what you want and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves.
- **You will never have to ask for a day of rest.** When traveling in groups, small or large, there always seems to be a need to keep moving so that everyone gets to do what they want to do. But getting a bus or train every other day will wear you out before long. From time to time, especially on long trips, you may need a vacation from your vacation. When you're on your own you can spend an entire day relaxing in a park or sitting at the beach! You will not inconvenience anyone else by falling off schedule. It's your vacation!
- **You will never have to compromise your travel itinerary!** You have a pretty good idea of what you want to see and do before you begin to travel, but so do all other travelers. When traveling on your own, you will never need to worry that your itinerary conflicts with someone else's. You are free to do what you want when *you* want to – you choose your own destinations and modes of transportation. If you receive a last minute travel tip from another traveler (which happens frequently), you can rearrange your schedule without clearing it with a travel partner.
- **You will also have greater budget control.** You make the decisions for yourself as to how you spend your money. You will never be caught in awkward situations where your travel partner(s) want to pay for something you'd rather not.
- **You actually meet more people.** You're not part of a "package" and are more approachable. People are just as curious about you as you are about the world.
 - I. **You meet more locals when traveling solo.** Since you're traveling, we'll assume that you want to get to know new cultures and people. Traveling solo increases your interaction with locals – people will approach you and want to help you enjoy your stay. They'll often go out of their way to "take care" of you – trying to feed you, make sure you get off on the right bus stop, etc. Also, in some countries, women – especially older women and "moms" – are treated with more respect and reverence than they experience back at home in the U. S.

2. **You meet more fellow travelers.** Keep your eyes open on planes, trains, buses, and small restaurants and cafes for others who are also traveling alone. And of course there are all the people you'll meet in hostels and other accommodations. Not only will your fellow travelers be fascinating people to talk to, but they can also be a great source of travel information that you can't find in any guidebook. Plus, if you can stay in touch with some of them, you'll have great "tour guides" when you have a chance to visit their home country on future trips.
 3. **Speaking of travel partners, traveling solo makes it easier to meet and travel with others for short periods of time.** No matter where you're going, you're bound to meet interesting people on the road. Just because you start your trip alone, doesn't mean you always have to travel alone.
- **You learn travel skills more quickly** when you travel on your own. Especially for women, not having someone else to lean on can actually be a good thing. You may actually find yourself taking on the role of "group leader" when you do travel with people you meet along the way for a few days.

Concerns about Traveling Alone

One of the most important aspects of traveling alone is being informed of safety and health issues. Your government should issue travel warnings which list the potential dangers associated with traveling to countries with a history of hostility to your home country or of civil unrest. For Americans, the US State Department regularly updates travel advisories and travel warnings. You can also contact your Embassy or Consulate to inform them that you are in the country. For health information, the Center for Disease Control can also be a good resource.

Safety:

- **Practice "street smart" behavior.** Listen to your intuition and use common sense. These simple safety rules are the most important.
- **Be aware of the customs and the cultural do's and don'ts for the countries you are visiting. Respect the fact that behavior and practices in the host country may differ from those of your home country.** As a result, you may experience what is known as "culture shock." The sights, the customs and attitudes of the places you visit can be very different from your home country. Take the time to try to see and experience things the way the locals do – otherwise you could become stressed out and end up viewing cultural "differences" as "obstacles," thereby not enjoying your trip and potentially putting your safety at risk.
- **While most "cultural taboo rules-of-thumb" apply to all travelers, also be aware of those which are specific to women.** Most travel guides now include a section for female travelers. They will give you the heads-up on the norms for local dress and behavior. Keep in mind that many tourist sites, particularly religious ones, will deny entrance to those who are "underdressed." Also, be sensitive to the fact that in some cultures, men are just as uncomfortable with you as you are with them.
- **Don't make yourself a target.** Not looking lost and confused when you are lost and confused is a big part of this. Walk with a sense of purpose, or at least look like you are. Be alert, but don't act paranoid. If you need to stop, take a break and pull out your map or guidebook to get your bearing, that's fine – just find a place to do it other than a busy sidewalk. Don't let anyone rush you into anything – always take your time to get bearings in a new city, decide on accommodations, etc. Also, avoid areas and situations in which you will be alone and unable to seek help, such as dark alleys, empty train compartments, and isolated areas or bus/trains stations at night.
- **Discourage pickpockets in tourist areas and on public transportation by wearing a money belt or carrying your backpack in front of you.** Consider leaving eye-catching jewelry or accessories at home. Keep your important documents, such as your passport, with you at all times, and carry

valuables with you in your daypack. Be especially mindful of your stuff when riding public transportation during rush hour.

- **Keep your stuff secure.** Keep the luggage locks on even when carrying your pack. We recommend combination locks instead of key locks. When leaving your main bag behind, secure it in a hostel locker with your own combination “Master Lock.” If you use a train or bus station locker, remember that you won’t be able to leave your items in there indefinitely, and that even these lockers might not be 100% secure, so you should take your valuables with you in your daypack. Most of all, you shouldn’t bring unnecessary valuables anyway, so carrying the truly important things with you shouldn’t be burdensome.
- **Consider safety when making travel arrangements.** Some overnight trains can be questionable for all travelers, and especially for solo travelers. Your guidebook may mention these “less safe” overnight trains, or ask around the hostel – news like that travels fast. In many cases, the cabins in “sleeper cars” can be locked for safety. You may also consider traveling overnight in the “chair cars,” where you will be surrounded by other people. Stay informed and remember that overnight train travel is usually safe and convenient.
- **Arrive at your destination at a reasonable hour.** Do not make travel arrangements that will land you in a new country, with no local currency, late at night and with no place to stay. Remember that public transportation, especially in smaller towns or off-season, may not run after 8 or 9pm. Also be aware of the country’s weekly religious day or national holidays when banks are closed and public transportation may not run.
- **Make sure that you are informed of dangerous areas** and consider modifying your evening’s plan to include places that are located close to where you will be staying that night. You can ask the front desk at the hostel or hotel to suggest entertaining, but safe nightlife. Instead of going out at night, you can join (or even initiate) nighttime activities at the hostel or you can gather with other people to tell stories at dinner. If you instead prefer to go out at night, make sure that you have someone with you. If you prefer to head out on your own, consider letting someone know where you’re going and when you plan to return. This is another benefit of making an effort to meet others. It can be dangerous if no one knows where you are or that you’re gone. This applies not only to going out at night, but any time you travel very far off the beaten path. You should have no problem finding plenty of other hostellers that are eager to explore the sights at night, whether it is dance clubs, pubs or evening musical concerts.
- **If you should find yourself in a situation of harassment,** we suggest a few ways to exit the situation. **Be firm and never be embarrassed.** This is the key in order to say “no” and make it stick. Opt for creating a scene rather than resorting to physical force, which may have unexpected consequences depending on the country or culture. **Make your harasser as well as those around you know that the situation you are in is not acceptable to you and that you may need help.** If you are in a foreign country and are wary of your safety, make a point to learn that word for “police” in that country’s language and use it loudly if the need arises. Your guidebook may provide this information, or you can ask locals or the hostel staff. Also consider taking a little time before your trip to practice yelling at the top of your lungs – a drastic but very effective safety skill.
- **There are many ways to get help if you need it.** Look to other travelers, hostels, your embassy, local hospitals and local police. Addresses and contact information for these places can usually be found in your guidebook.
- **Traveler’s tales can be extremely helpful, but they can be exaggerated too!** Many tales are exaggerated for the effect or are not actually from first-hand sources. You can listen to them, process them carefully and store them away for possible future reference, but don’t let them, alone, guide your travels. Buying into urban myths or opinions of places that are the opinions of other people (“that city/hostel/etc was awful/dangerous”) and not going can detract from your trip. What they don’t tell you (or may not have thought about) is that they hadn’t slept in 3 days, were hung over, were having a bad day or the hostel might have been short staffed one day 6 months ago, etc. Things that might have

happened to someone one time, but are unlikely to really happen most of the time, like rumors, shouldn't be passed along and should be taken with a grain of salt in any event. The ever-prevalent "being gassed on a train" falls into this category, too. **Most uncomfortable or dangerous situations can be avoided**, so it's not necessary to wander around in fear.

Health:

- **There are both general and specific health issues for women.** Traveling, especially on a budget, can make eating a balanced diet very difficult. **Eating and sleeping well gives you the necessary energy for a successful and busy trip.** You cannot survive on baguettes and cheese alone. If for no other reason, you should stop to enjoy a local meal for the experience.
- **Be aware of the food and water conditions in the countries that you visit.** Water in some cities and countries may not be suitable for drinking or brushing your teeth. In many cases, you may have to resort to buying sealed bottled water to avoid getting ill. Fruit and vegetables in some countries may also be contaminated. Ask hostel staff, locals, or consult your guidebook to find out what food you should avoid. Washing your hands often with soap (that you may need to pack) may also help you avoid getting sick.
- **Get in shape before you go.** Practice walking everywhere and taking the stairs whenever possible. You don't want to start your trip exhausted and sore. And, be sure whatever shoes you bring are well broken-in before you go.
- **Well before you leave, check into the possible vaccines that you are required or strongly recommended in the countries that you will visit.** Your guidebook will often list these vaccinations, or you may contact the Embassy or Consulate of the country/countries where you will be traveling. Some, like malaria, need to be started a month in advance. Tetanus shots should always be current.
- **If you need to bring prescription medications, always carry them in their original packaging.** Also you may want to bring everyday things like Sudafed, Tylenol and Motrin as it can be hard to find over-the-counter medicines in some countries. You're more likely to catch a cold or get bad cramps than to come down with an exotic disease. Make sure the generic name is on the packaging to avoid possible confusion during border crossings.
- **Drugs and alcohol:** Besides the fact that drugs and alcohol lower inhibitions and may cause you to make unwise decisions, drugs are usually strictly prohibited. In a handful of places, the same can go for alcohol. Only a few countries waver on the drug policy – your guidebook will specify if the countries that you plan to visit fit into this category. Alcohol policies vary greatly from country to country, as do age limits for legal consumption. When in doubt, ask! You can prevent a potentially serious situation. Also, some drugs that are legal in the U.S. may not be in other countries, so check first. **Never agree to carry a package for someone across a country's border, even if it is a person that you have met and befriended.** This is especially true if you do not know what the package contains or the person who asks you to transport it. **Jail sentences and fines in many countries are extreme for drug trafficking.** Local, not American, laws apply here – the Embassy or Consulate cannot usually help if you are caught with drugs in another country.
- **Finally, it's definitely a good idea to consider feminine hygiene issues that will arise while you're on the road.** Pack an adequate supply of tampons or pads so that you don't have to deal with finding the right brand or type overseas. Also, some overseas brands may not be as sterile or of the same quality as ones found in the U.S. Find alternative travel storage for them so that you don't have to carry a large box – Ziploc bags are good.

Refill your birth control prescriptions for the number of months that you will be traveling, and consider time zone shifts when you use this as birth control.

- Talk to your doctor about bringing antibiotics for Urinary Tract Infections, particularly if you are susceptible. You may want to bring along an over-the-counter remedy for yeast infections, which are common when traveling. Also consider medication for cramps.
- Bring your own condoms. In many countries, they may be difficult/impossible to find or of inferior quality.

Skills for Solo Travel

We want to talk about some solo traveling skills – ways that you can make the most of the fact that you’re doing it all on your own without feeling lonely while you do it. This is your trip. Empower yourself and take time for self-discovery.

Eating Alone:

- Eating alone can be a good time to write in your travel journal, to catch up on post card writing, to decide where your next destination will be, or to do some quiet reading. If you’re going to stay in one city for a while, consider picking a favorite restaurant and getting to know the proprietor. You will have a familiar place where you like the food and feel comfortable, and you are likely to meet locals.
- Instead of eating out, you could also cook your own meals at the hostel and share travel stories with other travelers (not to mention any leftover spaghetti you might have).
- If the weather is nice, pick up picnic foods from markets and grocery stores and find a good spot at the park or plaza to enjoy your meal, unwind and people watch.

Killing Time on the Lo-oooooog Bus Ride:

- Pleasure reading is a great part of vacation. Bring a good long book or two – not only will you have a chance to read that novel you’ve always been meaning to, but books can also be a great topic of conversation. Trade them with other travelers once you’ve finished. Some hostels will also have a “library” where you can trade books. With a little pre-trip research, you may be able to find a book about your destination or by a local author.

Keeping a Journal:

- **Write is down – you’ll be glad you did!** Keep a journal about what you did, but more importantly, how you felt at each point in your trip. You will appreciate it later, and you will see just how much you’ve changed just through the expression of emotions in your journal. You will also want to revisit your trip on occasion, and you will be surprised at how quickly and easily even the most seemingly unforgettable events can slip away from your memory. A week on the road is often fuller than a week at home, and it’s hard to remember all the details in a different context.

Taking Photos:

- Photography is a great way to “see” a country and remember your trip when you get home. Be sure to know what you can and cannot photograph or, in other words, what’s appropriate and what’s not. In terms of what kind of camera to bring, unless you’re really serious about photography, you’ll probably want to stick with a quality compact camera and leave the larger, heavier and more expensive camera at home. A practical advantage to overcome is that you never go home with enough photos of yourself in the places you visit. Make an extra effort to find trustworthy people to take your picture. When you hook up with a temporary travel partner, make a pact to take candid photos that you mail to each other later.

Keeping Your Eyes Open and Getting Involved:

- **You can learn an amazing amount of information about a country, and its culture and people by simply observing and (sometimes participating in) daily events and routines.** Play with kids on the street. Complimenting and playing with kids is a great way to meet local women. Get a pedicure at a beauty parlor can also be another great (and often inexpensive) way to meet local women while simultaneously pampering yourself. Make an attempt to speak or learn the local language, even if it is only a few words.

Learn a traditional dance that the locals do. Watch an artist paint caricatures or other tourists. Observe an artisan make his specialty.

- **Wake up early.** Consider checking out the “morning-life” in addition to the “nightlife.” The morning can be full of activity and ritual as you watch locals set up markets, open cafes and perform daily tasks. In addition, the lack of foreign tourists during early hours can give these cultural experiences an extra degree of richness.

Staying Connected:

- Call or email home to hear a familiar voice. Internet access is increasingly available and not too expensive considering you can communicate with several people in a half hour or hour. If you haven’t already done so, set up a free account with an internet based email provider like Hotmail or Yahoo to use while traveling. Talking to someone from home can also help reenergize you for the next part of your trip. Pre-paid phone cards purchased overseas can often be the cheapest way to go. Sharing a little about your adventures makes you feel proud of the worthwhile experience you’re having.
- **Leaving an itinerary at home** – even if it is only tentative – is important for anyone who travels solo. Have someone who you can check in with occasionally as plans change. This is about safety and responsibility – as well as freedom.

Itinerary Planning: Establishing Temporary Home Base Cities. Taking day trips can have many advantages...

- **Familiarity.** Hostel or hotel staff will more readily recognize you and you will get to know them. You will also feel more comfortable returning to a familiar place and a familiar setting after a long day of travel and exploration. If you know the dates you’ll be at the hostel, then you can try having mail sent to you there – just be sure that your arrival date is on the envelope.
- **Finding accommodations and carrying your luggage will not be an issue.** You avoid the hassle of moving to another city, struggling to find accommodations and having to carry your luggage in the process. Booking the next night’s accommodations will require a simple trip to the hotel or hostel lobby.
- **You can explore smaller and lesser-known towns.** Day trips are free of luggage and stress, and they give you the opportunity to experience more quaint and remote areas of a country. There is a lot to be seen outside the big city! And, at the end of the day, you can return to your home base.

Entertainment:

- **Entertainment, especially nightlife, is not always easy for women traveling alone.** Luckily, there are many sources of information on what to see and do. The local tourism office or information center can provide information on a variety of entertainment options, such as local events, concerts, festivals and walking tours. While walking tours can seem “touristy,” they can also provide a good way to both get oriented and to meet other solo travelers. Be sure to check out local newspapers and magazines. Local universities and libraries may also post material about a variety of cultural happenings. And, of course, one of the best ways to find out about local entertainment and attractions is to just ask around. Locals, hostel staff and other travelers can give you the kinds of information about “hot spots” and recommendations that no guidebook can.

Keeping a Sense of Humor:

- **Even the best-laid travel plans can (and at some point usually do) go awry.** On any given trip, you might get lost, rained on, misplace something, break something, encounter a higher admission fee, find that there’s no record of your reservation, sit next to someone who snores – the list goes on and on. This happens to everybody. So, it’s not so bad really. Besides, the best travel stories happen when things don’t go according to plan. The important thing is to not let a temporary inconvenience or frustration get the best of you. Positive attitudes foster positive trips and the opposite is true for negative attitudes. If you find yourself getting too stressed out by inconveniences, consider taking a day or two off to rest.

Practice Makes Perfect:

- **If you haven’t done much or any solo travel, consider taking a couple of domestic weekend trips by yourself.** Pack as if you were traveling overseas, walk or use public transportation everywhere you go,

and put your travel skills to the test. You'll learn a lot and gain a lot of confidence. If you stay at North American hostels, you might even make friends with people from the countries you plan on traveling to.

Hostels and the Solo Traveler

What can you expect at a Hostelling International Hostel?

- You can expect to meet travelers of all ages from many nations. Age restrictions exist only in some hostels in southern Germany.
- Hostels are inexpensive, ranging from \$15-\$40 per night. (Slightly more for non-members.)
- Hostels provide dormitory-style accommodations with several facilities for men and women. Some hostels (but not all) may also have a limited number of rooms for families and/or couples.
- You will need to rent linens or bring a hostel sleep sheet – sleeping bags are not allowed. You should also bring your own towels if you don't want to rent them. Hostels provide common rooms for travelers to relax, unwind and socialize with other travelers.
- Hostels provide kitchens complete with cooking utensils so that you can save money by preparing your own meals – just be sure to clean up after yourself. This is also another great way to meet other hostellers.
- Hostels will usually accept reservations. While they are not required, they can sometimes be a good idea. Many people reserve a bed for the first night they arrive from the U.S. You can book online at www.hihostels.com up to six months in advance of your visit.
- Hostelling International hostels are denoted by the blue triangle with the hut and tree logo.
- Hostelling International maintains quality standards for all hostels in the network. You can think of our logo as the AAA rating for a hostel.

How do hostels fit into all of this? Hostels can make traveling alone easier, more affordable and more enjoyable. During the day you are free to do whatever you choose while in the mornings and at night you are surrounded by other travelers who are just as excited as you are to be there. You can also look to hostellers that have spent a few days in the city for advice or for their suggestions of favorite places to visit.

Everyone shares a common interest in travel at hostels, so it should be easy to find travel partners.

Ask to be placed in a room with other solo women travelers – you may be surprised at how many there are. You also have a great chance of meeting other hostellers simply by participating in activities that the hostel may be sponsoring. Hostels are a great place to meet other English-speaking travelers if you're having a tough time with the local language.

Overcome shyness. Start up conversations, keeping in mind that almost everyone is also looking to meet new people. Talk with people in the hostel's common area or in the hostel kitchen. They want to share their stories and to hear what you have done and seen. Some travelers carry a few photos from home or past travels with them. Not only can these provide another way of staying "connected," but they can serve as conversation pieces with other travelers. What may seem like a photo of ordinary things to you can seem quite exotic to people from other countries, and vice versa.

Additional Advice from Women Travelers

You are now almost ready to hit the road, Jack(ie)! Here are just a few more safety tips and other words of advice gathered from websites, books and word of mouth from like-minded female travelers. While it is important to be smart and aware of your surroundings, it is also equally important not to let fear ruin your enjoyment. If in doubt about what to do in a situation, ask another woman or woman traveler if possible.

- If you are in a public area or on public transport and feel unsafe, go sit with a crowd of women. Often times they will be very interested in you and try to communicate. In India and other places, trains have compartments for women only.
- If you are staying in a hotel and are alone, you may not want to stay on the ground floor if the room has windows or a patio. Try to be on the second or third floor and not too much higher. Ask to change

rooms if you don't feel comfortable. It is a good idea to take the elevator instead of using stairs, but obviously don't get on with someone you don't trust. Don't feel you need to answer the door if someone you don't know knocks. Many hotel clerks are learning tricks such as not to say your room number out loud at the front desk and placing solo women close to the elevators. They will also register you under your first initial and last name if you request. One good thing to bring is a cheap rubber doorstop that will stop the door from being opened. Staying in hostels with one or more women in the same room may be a really good choice because you won't have to deal with many of these security issues. Not only do you feel safer, you may find instant dinner companions and hear some good advice.

- Try to buy items from women shopkeepers and market stall owners. This may bring the money one step closer to being used for food. That is not to say that men stall owners don't feed their families, but giving the money directly to a woman may give her more leverage.
- If you are going to use a guide (as in a person, not a book), see if you can find a female one. You'll feel more secure and you should be able to learn more about the lives of women in the area.
- If you rent a car, don't be victim of "bump and run." That is when a car hits you and then when you stop, the people from the other car try to hijack your car. Use valet parking at night if possible. If you are pulled over by police in a foreign country, try to stop in a place where there are lots of people around like a busy intersection.
- If you are uncomfortable around men in a public place avoid eye contact. Men who want to harass are often more bold in a group because they are trying to show off, so try to avoid groups if possible.
- If are going to visit people along the way, try to plan to visit them in the middle of you journey, when you may really be ready for a familiar face.
- You don't need to bring feminine products if you are going to Europe, but if you are going somewhere less developed you may want to take those items. If you are prone to illnesses or female infections bring treatment along. Label drugs or supplements carefully or, better yet, keep them in the original bottle.
- Consider bringing toilet paper if you are going to be in the wilderness or an underdeveloped country.
- If you do get in a bad situation, do not feel stupid attracting attention to yourself by making noise. That may be the smartest thing you can do. Also, you can cough, spit, pick your nose or anything else that would really turn someone off.
- Wear very little jewelry. Jewelry may brand you as being wealthy, or if you're wearing lots that you bought along the way, men may take that as a sign that you are a "hippie" and looking for company. You may want to have a cheap wedding band along if you think you may be hassled. If you are carrying birth control into a conservative country, it may be a really good idea to have that ring on.
- Also, if you are taking birth control pills make sure to adjust for the time difference. You wouldn't want to come home with that extra souvenir.
- Read or write if you don't want to be bothered. While some people may ignore that you are doing something, at least you can tell unwelcome people that you are busy.
- Take a good look at a map before you leave your hostel or hotel. Ask a clerk for directions if you are not sure of where you are going, especially if it is at night.
- If there aren't hostels where you are going, you may want to check if the city has women's residences or YWCAs.
- Look into taking a group trip at some point in the trip if you are taking a long journey. It will give you a chance to meet people and have less safety and transportation concerns for a while. You can sometimes

find tours when you are on the road and they may be cheaper. For instance, it is much cheaper to plan a trip to the Galapagos if you are in Ecuador than if you are in Los Angeles.

- Make regular contact with people at home. If your itinerary changes, let them know. Decide how often you are going to call and email and try to stick to that schedule.
- Make sure that your credit cards will be good for your entire journey. If you have a problem or are sick at some point, you may want to check into a place with more amenities than usual and may have to pay for it with a credit card.
- Consider buying pre-paid phone cards rather than using a phone credit card from home.
- When traveling by bus, try to get your gear stored underneath. Then sit on that side of the bus so you can make sure no one else unloads it.
- Don't expect the same service from the police abroad as you get at home. If you need help, you may need to find an American Consulate.
- If you are walking in a rural place and feel threatened by a dog, pick up a stone. Many dogs know that is a universal sign to run away immediately.
- If you are going to go on a date with someone you meet traveling, go to a public place or invite others along. You can go somewhere private on later dates.
- Bring along books about woman traveling or about women who live in that area. Trade them with people you meet along the way. Learn as much as you can and share it with others. Write down things to share with your friends back home.

PACKING TIPS FOR SOLO WOMEN TRAVELERS

Packing Tips:

- When packing, don't think, "Will I use this?" Think, "Will I use this enough to justify lugging it around everywhere I go?" When in doubt, leave it out!
- Don't take anything you can't afford to lose.
- Veteran backpacker Rick Steves offers the following rule of thumb: When packing, lay out everything you think you need. Then take half the stuff and twice the cash.
- Travel isn't all glamour. Sometimes it can be quite dull, so bring a deck of cards, something to read, or something else to help kill time.
- Bring clothing that is multi-purpose and can be mixed and matched and used over and over again.
- Be prepared to dress appropriately. Some holy places may require women to have their heads or shoulders covered or won't allow women to wear shorts or t-shirts.
- Select quick drying, drip-dry materials (e.g., not jeans) and remember that dark clothes hide dirt better.
- Pack in advance and carry your pack for extended periods of time before you go. It will inspire you to eliminate the excess. Better to find out now rather than later!

- You can't plan for everything, and you can always borrow or buy what you might have forgotten.
- OB tampons take up very little space; bring some as well as latex condoms for traveling to developing nations

Luggage or Travel Pack?

We recommend a travel backpack, especially one that goes from hand-carried luggage and back again for three reasons:

- 1) *It leaves your hands free.*
- 2) *It weighs less and is more comfortable.*
- 3) *The compartments keep you organized.*

For more packing tips, including criteria for choosing luggage or a backpack, visit

<http://www.hiusa.org/resources/packing.shtml>

Sample Packing List (pack light!)

Clothes (adjust for season and climate)

- 1 pair of walking shoes
- 1 pair of waterproof sandals
- 3-5 pairs of socks
- 3-5 sets of underwear
- 1 wool sweater/fleece
- 1 water & wind resistant jacket
- 2 pairs of pants, belt 1 pair of walking shorts
- 1 skirt
- 2 t-shirts (or short sleeve shirts)
- 1 long-sleeve shirt
- 1 swimsuit or running shorts
- 1 hat or Scarf (for sun)

Medicine & Toiletries

- Prescription medicines with doctor's note
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Soap/shampoo (shampoo doubles as laundry detergent when hand-washing your clothes)
- Towel
- Comb or brush
- Deodorant
- Basic first aid kit
- Feminine Products - OB tampons and condoms

Disclaimer: Though you should always pack light, if you'll be camping and/or traveling to more remote locations, you'll probably need to add to our basic list.

- Shaving cream/razor
- Sunscreen
- Contact lens solution (if necessary)
- Small mirror
- Spare contact lenses
- Ear plugs/eye shade
- Hand sanitizer, such as Purell
- Sink plug/stopper – for hand-washing clothes

Miscellaneous

- Moneybelt
- Combination padlock and luggage locks
- Camera and film or extra digital card; don't forget charger and data transfer cables
- Small flashlight
- Watch with alarm function
- Batteries Travel journal/small notebook
- Playing cards
- Sunglasses
- Water bottle
- Soap – **On-The-Go Soap Sheets from Two's Company** are great!
- Hostel sheet/sleeping sack

RESOURCES

Guide Books and Help in Trip Planning

- *Go Girl: The Black Woman's Guide to Travel and Adventure* by Elaine Lee, paperback, 1997.
- *Going Like Lynn: A Series of Liberating Travel Primers for Women* (guide books on large cities like Paris and NY) paperback, by Lynn Portnoy.
- *Woman Travel: First Hand Accounts from More than 60 Countries* Rough Guide, by Natania Jansz, Miranda Davies, Emma Drew, and Lori McDougall, paperback.

- *Gutsy Women: More Travel Tips and Wisdom for the Road*, by Mary Beth Bond, paperback, Travelers' Tales Guides, 2nd edition.
- "A Journey of One's Own: Uncommon Advice for the Independent Woman Traveler" by Thalia Zepatos
- "Safety and Security for Women Who Travel" by Sheila Swan & Peter Laufer
- "Roads Less Traveled: Dispatches from the Ends of The Earth" by Catherine Watson
- "Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in Sixty Countries" by Terri Morrison, Wayne A. Conaway, and George A. Borden, PhD
- "Dos and Taboos Around the World for Women in Business" by Roger E. Axtell (also has authored other good cultural sensitivity books)
- "Multicultural Manners : New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society" by Norine Dresser
- "Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters With Cultural Difference" by Craig Storti

Traveling with Children

- Gutsy Mamas: Travel Tips and Wisdom for Mothers on the Road by Marybeth Bond. Travelers' Tales Guides, paperback.
- Travel with Children by Lonely Planet, paperback, 4th edition.

Travelogues and Interesting Literature

- A Woman's Asia edited by Marybeth Bond, Travelers' Guides
- A Woman's Europe edited by Marybeth Bond, Travelers' Guides
- A Woman's Passion for Travel: True Stories of World Wanderlust by Marybeth Bond & Pamela Michael, Travelers' Tales Guides
- A Woman's Path edited by Lucy McCauley, Amy G. Carlson, and Jennifer Leo, Travelers' Guides
- A Woman's World by Marybeth Bond, paperback, Travelers' Tales Guides. 1999.
- A Woman Alone: Travel Tales from Around the Globe by Faith Conlon (Editor) et al, paperback.
- Gifts of the Wild: A Woman's Book of Adventure by Faith Conlon, Ingrid Emerick, Jennie Goode, Clare Conrad, Travelers' Tales Guides
- Safety and Security for Women who Travel Alone by Sheila Swan and Peter Laufer, Travelers' Tales Guides, 2nd edition.
- Salan.Com's Wanerlust: Real-Life Tales of Adventure and Romance by Donald W. George and Pico Lyer
- Solo: On Her Own Adventure by Susan Fox Rodgers
- Tales of a Female Nomad: Living Large in the World by Rira Goldman Gelman
- Travel Tips for the Sophisticated Woman: Over 1000 Tips on Museums, Shopping, Dining, Chocolate, Looking Great & More while traveling in Europe and North America by Laura Vestanen
- Traveling Solo by Eleanor Berman, paperback, Globe Pequot Press, 2001
- Wild Writing Women: Stories of World Travel by Lisa Alpine, Jacqueline Butler, Lauren Cuthbert, Lynn Ferrin, and Carla King
- Without Reservations: The Travels of an Independent Woman by Alice Steinbach
- Women in the Material World by Faith D'Aluisio, Peter Menzel and Naomi Wolf, hardback, also wrote Material World: A Global Family Portrait
- Women in the Wild by Lucy McCauley, Travelers' Tales Guides
- *Tales of a Female Nomad* - Rita Golden Gelman
- *Roads Less Traveled* - Catherine Watson
- *A Journey of One's Own: Uncommon Advice for the Independent Woman Traveler* – Thalia Zepatos
- *The Rough Guide Women Travel* - Miranda Davies, Natania Jansz (Editors)
- *The Best Women's Travel Writing 2006 : True Stories from Around the World* - Lucy McCauley
- *Solo: On Her Own Adventure* - Susan Fox Rogers
- *The Unsavvy Traveler: Women's Comic Tales of Catastrophe* - Rosemary Caperton

Magazines

- local, if possible! Brush up on the language, blend in, read about local events, learn regional vocabulary!
- National Geographic for inspiration! Outdoor Magazine, Conde Nast Traveler,
- http://dir.yahoo.com/Recreation/Travel/News_and_Media/Magazines/ ← great list!

Helpful Websites

Specifically for women:

<http://www.destineducation.ca>
<http://www.journeywoman.com/travel101/>
<http://www.iexplore.com>
<http://www.adventurewomen.com/>
<http://www.adventuredivas.com/default.view>
<http://www.gonomad.com/womens/womensTravel.html>
www.roadandtravel.com
www.thetravelingwoman.com
www.womanstravelclub.com
www.women-traveling.com

For travel:

www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.html Centers for Disease Control
www.embassy.org/embassies/ Embassies and Consulates
www.iamat.org International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers
<http://www.nts.gov> National Transportation Safety Board
www.ds-osac.org Overseas Security Advisory Council
www.towd.com Tourism Offices Worldwide Directory
www.cdc.gov/travel/ Travel Health Information
http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html U.S. State Department Travel Warnings & Consular Information Sheets
www.who.int World Health Organization
www.worldtravelwatch.com World Travel Watch
www.bookcrossing.com – A way to liberate and track books by releasing them into the world as nomads.

Internet Travel Advice Sites

- <http://thorntree.lonleyplanet.com>
- <http://www.virtualtourist.com>
- <http://travelerstaes.com/>
- <http://www.timeout.com>
- www.journeywoman.com
- <http://www.rolfpotts.com/> (“Vagabonding”)
- Visit <http://www.hiusa.org/resources/travellinks.shtml> for more travel links!

Local council of Hostelling International

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