

Unfortunately, the potential for sexual harassment and intimidation is a reality around the world. Be prepared. Do your networking and research before you leave. Find out as much as you can about the roles of both women and men in the places you plan to visit.

Avoid wearing provocative, form-fitting clothing.

A woman alone may be considered fair game. Understand this and prepare yourself mentally for any propositions, suggestive comments or catcalls. Then simply ignore them.

In some male-dominated cultures, it's considered incorrect for a woman to travel solo. For these and other potentially challenging destinations, you might want to team up with a companion. Two women travelling together might have an easier time.

In some cultures, making eye contact with a man is a sign that you want his company. Some

women solve this problem by wearing dark glasses.

In the Pacific Islands, a woman's thighs are considered an erotic part of her body and should not be exposed in public.

Be aware that you'll probably be openly stared at. In countries where you look very different

from everybody else, both men and women will make no attempt to hide their curiosity.

Behave confidently. When you're out, try to look as if you know exactly where you're going and what you're doing.

Take your cue from the local women. As a general rule, if they don't sit in cafés alone, you shouldn't either. If they aren't wearing sleeveless dresses, neither should you.

Never accept car rides or hitchhike. Ask the local hotels to recommend reputable taxis and, whenever possible, try to double up with someone you know when travelling by cab.

Crowded trains and buses can be perfect breeding grounds for antisocial behaviour. Some men will use this opportunity to touch

or pinch the female passengers standing close to them. If this happens to you, make a fuss. Point at the offender and chastise him in a loud voice. He'll probably slink away. However, to avoid these types of advances, consider choosing reserved seating.

In countries where it is available, take advantage of the female-

only section in buses, trains and subways. Use this excellent opportunity to communicate with local women and their children.

In India, a female's upper arms are considered sensual areas of the body and therefore must never be exposed in public.

Women rightly tend to be more cautious about going out after sundown.

However, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't go out at all. Simply take precautions. For example, in planning an evening out, arrange in advance to have a taxi take you there and back. When deciding where to eat dinner, choose a restaurant that is close to where you're staying.

Since it's always interesting to experience the sights and rhythms of a place after dark, consider joining a sightseeing group. Check

with the local tourism centre for any appropriate tours or cultural

events that are available. Make sure that the tour bus picks you up and drops you off at your hotel or hostel.

Alternatively, you may appreciate matinee performances, which are

far less expensive and may give you an opportunity to meet others.

If you're not comfortable eating alone in the evening, have your main meal at lunchtime when even the finest restaurants offer their specialties at more reasonable prices.