SOLO & SMART AFTER 60

23 SAFETY TIPS

for the Older Woman Traveling Solo

Real, practical awareness from a 73-year-old expat living abroad — not fear, not hype, just what keeps me safe and confident every day.

INCLUDES MY #1 UBER SAFETY RULE

The one habit I never skip when I get in a car abroad

— Jackie Robinson

JackieR Life Abroad · Cali, Colombia

Location, Rideshare & Awareness

Tips 1–5 · The foundations of feeling safe

Jackie Robinson — LIFE ABROAD

1

Choose your neighborhood before your city

Safety is neighborhood-specific. You can't judge a whole city by a headline. Pick an area that is walkable, close to restaurants and groceries, and where people are simply around. If a place feels lively and lived-in, you'll feel it the moment you arrive.

2

Look for a 'watched' street

I chose a spot with restaurants and security guards day and night — the kind who'll open your car door when you come and go. Familiar faces and an active street are quiet safety you can count on. Notice who's around before you commit to a home.

3

Make rideshare your default

Skip flagging cars on the street. Use Uber (or DiDi) so the trip, driver, and route are all on record before you ever sit down. It's the single easiest upgrade to your day-to-day safety abroad — and it's how I get everywhere.

4

Match the car, every single time

MY UBER RULE

Before you open the door, confirm three things against the app: the license plate, the car model, and the driver's photo. Sit in the back, share your live trip with someone you trust, and never accept a cheaper 'cash ride' from someone who pulls up. If anything doesn't match — don't get in.

5

Stay present — phone down, head up

Don't walk distracted, staring down at your phone. Awareness is your best protection, and it costs nothing. Look up, notice your surroundings, and let people see that you're paying attention. Confident and aware reads very differently than lost and absorbed.

Instinct, Habits & Blending In

Tips 6–10 · Awareness, instinct & smart habits

6

Don't give 'papaya'

There's a Colombian saying — 'no des papaya' — don't hand someone the opportunity. Keep flashy jewelry, big cash, and your phone discreet in public. The goal isn't fear; it's simply not advertising. Blend in a little and you remove most everyday temptation.

7

Trust the feeling — then act on it

If something doesn't feel right, listen to that voice. Cross the street, step into a shop, end the walk, call a car. You don't owe anyone an explanation for protecting yourself. That instinct has kept women safe for a very long time — honor it.

8

Keep the night small and known

I'm simply not out late wandering alone. If I'm out after dark, I stick to familiar, well-lit places and take a car home. Plenty of life happens in daylight and early evening — you lose almost nothing and gain real peace of mind.

9

Learn a few words that matter

You don't need to be fluent. Learn enough Spanish to ask for help, give your address, and greet a guard or shopkeeper warmly. A friendly 'buenos días' builds the kind of small local relationships that quietly look out for you.

10

Do the research — then decide for yourself

Don't come blindly, and don't dismiss a place because of headlines either. Read, ask people who actually live there, and form your own honest picture. Safety is personal — it depends on your neighborhood, your habits, your awareness, and your lifestyle.

Smart Safety Habits — Online & Off

Tips 11–23 · Your home, your routine, your privacy

11 Keep your home private

Share the city or general neighborhood, but never reveal your exact address, apartment building, floor, or unit number.

12 Choose housing with controlled access

Whenever possible, select a building with 24/7 security guards, a concierge, gated access, or another controlled-entry system.

13 Keep deliveries away from your door

Have food, groceries, and packages delivered to the lobby, security desk, or building entrance instead of directly to your apartment.

14 Film the destination — not your route home

Show attractions, museums, parks, restaurants, and local businesses without recording the path from those places back to your residence.

15 Avoid connecting businesses to your home

You can recommend a favorite café or grocery store without saying it is across the street, downstairs, or two blocks from where you live.

16 Post after you leave

Avoid sharing your location in real time. Upload photos and videos after you have left the restaurant, attraction, event, or neighborhood.

17 Protect your daily routine

Do not regularly announce where you walk, exercise, shop, worship, or drink coffee — or the exact times you are usually there.

18 Check the background before filming
Look for apartment numbers, street signs, mail, key cards, security codes, ride-share screens, medication labels, or personal documents.

19 Be careful with balcony and window views
A beautiful view may reveal your building or location through recognizable landmarks, nearby businesses, or neighboring properties.

20 Do not film security features
Keep door locks, alarm systems, gate codes, keys, entry cards, cameras, and building-access procedures off camera.

21 Reply to comments carefully
Friendly viewers may ask where you live, what building you chose, or where they can find you. Never answer with details that compromise your privacy. Try: "For safety reasons, I don't share my exact location, but I'm happy to recommend the general area."

22 Limit what strangers learn about you
Avoid publicly sharing your full travel schedule, room number, financial information, passport details, emergency contacts, or when your home will be empty.

23 Trust your instincts
Stop filming, leave the area, or ask for help whenever something feels uncomfortable. No photo, video, or social media post is worth risking your safety.

Jackie Robinson
LIFE ABROAD

A FINAL WORD

Live with awareness — not fear.

Safety is critical when traveling or living abroad — but safety does not mean living every day with heightened fear. With smart habits, secure housing, personal boundaries, and awareness of your surroundings, you can protect yourself while still enjoying a full and rewarding life abroad.

LIVE WITH AWARENESS — NOT FEAR.

Plan. Prepare. Thrive.

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