

GOING SOLO

For women, travelling alone can be an enriching experience, but let **NADYA NG** give you a few tips on how to do it safely



ENG KONG

TRANSPORTATION

- **DRINK** lots of **water** when you are on the plane. Air at high altitude dries the skin and makes oily parts of the face oilier, said Mr Philip Ho, general manager, Zuji Singapore.
- In places such as India, Africa and the Middle Eastern countries, consider taking **private transport**. Ms Ivy Tan, Chan Brothers' marketing communications director, said: "Their public transport can be very crowded. It is almost impossible to identify who has touched you in the wrong places."
- Try to sit **next to other women** in buses and trains. In cities such as Cairo, the metro has women-only carriages.

ACCOMMODATION

- Look for hotels with enhanced security features, such as rooms that have doors equipped with **double locks** or places where **key cards** are needed to gain access to guestroom levels.
- Avoid taking ground-level rooms or those with easy access from the outside, such as from a balcony. Book a room that is **near a lift** and away from exits.
- When you leave your room, do not hang the "clean room" sign on the door. Use the "**privacy please**" sign instead to give the impression that your room is occupied, advised Mr Ho.

SELF-DEFENCE

Fighting fist-to-fist with a man is not wise as men are generally stronger than women, said Master Jackie Ng, director of U-Elites' Martial Fitness, which offers a women's unarmed combat course. "Instead, **focus on the attacker's facial features** as these are the most vulnerable parts of a body," he advised.

- So, attack the eyes, nose, throat, ears, temples, back and top of his head, and his groin.
- Your **body parts are ready weapons**. Use your head to hit his ears and nose; fingers to jab his eyes; and palms to slap his ears and nose to make him tear.
- According to Master Ng, **a woman's elbow** is her most powerful weapon. So make sure you aim it at the attacker's temples, eyes, nose, ribs and sides of the neck.
- But he said self-defence skills are used to defend, not to fight. Once the attacker is rendered helpless temporarily, **run to get help**. "We strongly discourage females from using handphones as a weapon. Use it to call for help instead," Master Ng added.

HEALTH

- See an experienced travel medicine doctor for recommended **vaccines and medications** before you leave.
- Dr Lim Poh Lian, head, Travellers' Health & Vaccination Clinic at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, said: "Health problems such as **yeast vaginitis** occur more commonly in warm, humid climates. Also, certain medications such as doxycycline – occasionally used for malaria prevention – can predispose a woman to yeast infections. If you are prone to this, ask your doctor for antifungal medication or ointment." (Yeast vaginitis is caused by an overgrowth of a fungus in women.)

OTHERS

- **Dress like the locals** and avoid wearing shorts, plunging necklines, see-through blouses and bikinis, especially in more conservative parts of the Middle East, India and Africa, said Ms Tan. Avoid expensive accessories.
- She added: "**Keep your bags close** to you. Also avoid using a waist pouch as it is very often left behind when visiting the toilet."
- Keep your passport, cash and traveller's cheques in a **money belt** that can be worn around your waist or neck beneath your clothes.
- Make **photocopies of passports** and other important travel documents and keep them separate from the originals. Should you lose your passport, getting replacement documents with the help of hard copy evidence will be easier, said Ms Tan.
- Have the **hotel's address** with you at all times. If you are lost, use it to ask for directions back to the hotel; approach another woman or a man with children.
- If you are not comfortable eating alone, **take along a book** to read.
- **Wear a ring** to ward off potential sexual harassment and avoid eye contact with men.
- Buy **travel insurance**.
- And try to **travel light**; you will be less vulnerable without excessive luggage.