

Travel Tips for the Independent Woman

There are so many wonderful and exciting places to see, so many dear old friends and treasured relatives to visit in faraway places that one may not know where to start. Starting out, like that 1st jump off the high-dive, is the hardest part for me when I travel alone. I've always a long distance to go if I want to see close relatives who all live in Alberta or B.C. Of course, for someone with "aerophobia" (i.e. fear of being air-bound or even just off the ground) then the word traveling means driving or hiking. But how to do it safely?

As a woman who has often driven long distances alone, I can share a few ideas, that, for me, have been very helpful. A novice might call the O.P.P. first to ask about their seminar on safety tips for women. Then relax. Driving really is a great way to wind down. In fact, the first step, after you turn the key in the ignition, is to forget everything behind you and to look forward to the adventures ahead. They will be fun-filled. The wildly fascinating varied programming on CBC radio is essential for me anytime, and a real treat then because there are no interruptions... Vicki, Peter, James Keelahan, story-telling. A tape deck with sing-a-longs and old favorites is great to use when you're feeling sleepy. Singing keeps you alert and cheerful. My

camera becomes my only working tool, other than my little K-car (which must be patted and praised regularly to keep her purring). But just in case she's having a bad tire day, a good tip is to have CAA coverage before you leave, and to have a cellular phone in the car. CAA will also give you maps with your whole trip highlighted and a HELP sign to place in the back window if your car brakes down, or breaks down - whichever. I've discovered that an excellent safety factor to prevent thugs from victimizing you - other than the fail-safe driving of a K-Car, old car or small car - is to keep a cell phone aerial on the roof or clearly visible in the back window. They don't usually prey upon anyone who has the potential to call for help.

I take my dog with me when I travel now, and feel that that is a big factor to my traveling safely (you must have proof of pet's shots to cross the border). The collie used to show her teeth to strangers through the windows. She was named Chelsea R.D. (rotten dog) and I would display a muzzle on the dash. She came with me on a trip to a beautiful wedding on one of Colorado's mountain ledges near Rattlesnake Gulch, and she leant a large element of safety during my hiking trips up the steep mountain trails. Half an hour up one trail I came across a government sign advising behavior in the event that one met a mountain lion - do NOT turn your back, back away while making lots of noise, make yourself as big as possible - wave arms/shout (don't run, faint or whimper). I think the dog was my best deterrent as I

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