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Foreword Review WOMEN'S STUDIES

Safety and Security for Women Who Travel

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Travelers' Tales (December 1998)
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Travelers? Tales presents another of its unique and invaluable collections of anecdotes, stories and quotes from people who travel: Safety and Security for Women Who Travel. This new volume is different from many of the others published by Travelers? Tales in that it's one of their guides, which means it includes practical tips as well, making for an immeasurably reassuring companion to have along on a trip anywhere.

This slim volume—as a 150-page paperback, easy to throw in a backpack—includes sections on preparation, money, getting there, lodging, dealing with officials, health and finding the lay of the land. Through it all, the book addresses the ever-present worry of most women travelers (and the thought of which keeps many would-be travelers at home): safety. Each chapter starts with stories and anecdotes, such as the time one of the co-authors offered to wash dishes at a pub in Czechoslovakia and got to know the owners and patrons, giving her an insider's view of the country. After the stories come lots of helpful tips: from a suggestion to use rubber doorstops as extra hotel doorlocks to the information that most cafes in Greece and the Balkans are culturally off-limits to women.

Swan and Laufer, the well-traveled and experienced authors, offer anecdotes gleaned from a wide circle of women traveling in many areas of the world, including the United States. Each chapter starts with a quote from a woman who ventured abroad long before airplanes, illustrating that not only can women travel in safety but that they have been doing so for well over a century. Additional quotes from contemporary women travelers are scattered throughout.

At the end of the book is an excellent section of resources and references, including books, newsletters, magazines, web sites and mail order companies. There are also lists of organizations specializing in women's travel, house swapping, lesbian travel, world health, credit card advice and even fear of flying. There's even a tear-out card with a predeparture checklist and safety tips.

By far the most valuable aspect of the book is its sheer readability; the stories of women travelers are not only interesting and well-told but offer a group of fellow traveling companions, who, even if they aren't there for the actual trip, can provide comfort in showing that other women have been there before.

CELESTE SOLLOD (January / February 1999)

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