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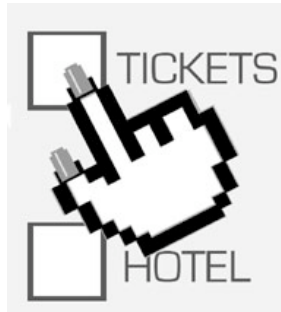
EXTRADE

ON THE ROAD

# Women Keeping Up Pressure for a Better Travel Experience

By JOE SHARKEY  
Published: April 10, 2007

IT isn't easy to astonish Kathleen Ameche, who is usually on the road five days a week as a speaker, and who literally wrote the book on women and [business travel](#).



Chris Gash

But the results of a recent Web seminar on travel safety that she helped organize among 500 female business travelers did just that.

"Ninety-eight percent of them said they had their personal safety compromised on a business trip within the last 45 days," said Ms. Ameche, the author of "The Woman Road Warrior: A Woman's Guide to Business Travel" (Agate, 2005). "Ninety-eight percent! That number is staggering. In 2007 we still have that issue?"

It has been noted, here and elsewhere, that the growing number of female business travelers has had significant effects on the travel experience. Women are a big part of the reason that a typical hotel room, whether midlevel or luxury, has better bedding, lighting, room service, closets, work spaces and overall design.

Unlike men, women tend to notice the details and share them with friends and colleagues. So hotels are going to be hearing more about safety.

"We do take notes and we talk, and we do make most of the buying decisions in business and personal travel," said Ms. Ameche, who encourages women who travel to network with one another.

"The hotel experience got a lot better over the years," she said. "They improved the creature comforts of the room, and now we're talking a lot more about food service and healthy eating. Obviously, they have to go a little further on safety, but they're listening."

Among the biggest complaints about safety are hotel clerks who address a female guest by name and announce her room number at check-in. "That drives women crazy," Ms. Ameche said. "There are issues that need addressing about where you put us on a floor, like next to the elevator. We're telling them, just be cognizant of us."

Much of the recent growth in business travel among women comes from small businesses. Women own nearly 10.4 million businesses, employing nearly 13 million people. And many of these women are frequent travelers who approach life on the road differently from men.

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“Women and men have different management styles,” according to a report by the Center for Women’s Business Research. “Women emphasize relationship building and are more likely to consult with experts, employees and fellow business owners.”

Hotels took the major initiatives in designing travel marketing specifically for women. In 1995, [Wyndham](#) Hotels, with American Airlines as a partner, began a marketing program called Women on Their Way.

Yesterday, American Airlines, encouraged by the Wyndham program’s successes, introduced a Web site for female travelers, [www.AA.com/women](http://www.AA.com/women). It is the first airline to do so.

Besides a booking system, the site offers advice from an advisory panel of seasoned female travelers, and will soon offer tips and experiences from customers. According to American, 48 percent of its passengers are women.

“We think the market is right for it,” said Peggy Sterling, American’s vice president for safety, security and environmental issues. “Women clearly have very strong purchasing power.”

Mary Sanderson, director of corporate communications for American, added, “Ultimately, if American taps that resource and is able to come up with a broader level of women travelers, it goes directly to the bottom line.”

Besides a dedicated Web site, American has upgraded its Admirals Club airport lounges to add children’s playrooms and more commodious bathrooms and private showers. The new lie-flat seats it is installing in business-class cabins of its long-haul 767-300 and 777 fleets allow women more private space and have features that take into account things like where to store a purse in the seat for security and easy access.

The new American Web site includes offers from Wyndham Hotels. There are numerous links to safety tips, advice on combining business and leisure travel and other issues.

American, Ms. Sterling said, has made a special effort to involve its own female executives and workers, including flight attendants, in the Web site and in networking. The response had been enthusiastic, Ms. Sterling said.

That’s encouraging, Ms. Ameche said. Like many other female frequent business travelers, she has noticed “issues” with the way women are treated by some flight attendants on airlines in general.

“We’ve traditionally been treated almost as second-class citizens, which I’ve never been able to figure out,” she said. Opening the network wider can only help, she said.

“It would be nice,” she added, “if we could work together better as we start to become a collaborative voice.”

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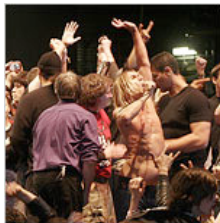
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