

Taking care of women on business

Maiden Voyage offers a support network for female business travellers that ensures while they're working away, they still feel very much at home

Maiden Voyage began during a hot summer in California in 2008, when Founder and CEO Carolyn Pearson was sent halfway across the world on a solo business trip. She found herself in a soulless business hotel in downtown LA. Pearson found herself eating room-service alone, disappointed and frustrated at the missed opportunity to explore. She created a global social network specifically for female business travellers, through which members could safely connect and meet.

Nearly ten years on, and the network continues to grow and thrive. For Pearson however, making business travel more social for women was just one part of a much greater vision. Safety was to be the focus of the Maiden Voyage agenda; the need for better and more comprehensive gender-specific duty of care for female travellers.

Maiden Voyage is now internationally recognised as the leading authority and



provider of travel solutions to safeguard female business travellers. Alongside the popular network, Maiden Voyage has added a female-friendly certification programme for hotels – which includes inspecting for compulsory safety features such as double-locking doors – female travel safety training for both the classroom and eLearning (five modules of which are to launch in May) and a tailored membership package for organisations with multiple features and benefits.

Pearson found that in the early days of Maiden Voyage, it wasn't uncommon to receive thinly-veiled accusations of sexism. What it is important to realise though – and a message that Maiden Voyage actively promotes – is that gender-specific duty of care is not about 'special treatment'. It is not about treating women travellers differently, but appropriately.

In 2016, Maiden Voyage commissioned 'The Women in Business Travel Report'. It found that one in four women have suffered a negative incident; that 31% of female business travellers have suffered sexual harassment while travelling; and that 64%

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of female business travellers say they would not travel to destinations, such as the UAE, which they would probably travel to as a man.

Perhaps most tellingly of all though, is that 79% of female business travellers claim they are under-prepared to deal with the incidents they encounter. And accordingly, attitudes to gender-specific safeguarding in travel are changing – for the better. More and more organisations are taking a closer look at what they do to support their female business travellers and, if it could be improved, they're doing something about it.

Further information
www.maiden-voyage.com

Carolyn Pearson,
CEO and founder,
Maiden Voyage

