



IS IT SAFE?

Madison, WI

SOLO TRAVELER SAFETY GUIDE

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Overall Safety Assessment

RATING: Safe -- the isthmus neighborhoods, Capitol Square, State Street, and Williamson Street are comfortable; standard university-town awareness applies after midnight.

Madison is one of the safest mid-size cities in the Midwest for solo travelers. The compact isthmus geography keeps the visitor areas concentrated and well-lit. Capitol Square, State Street, the UW-Madison campus, Willy Street, and the Memorial Union lakefront are all active, well-patrolled, and comfortable at any hour within normal awareness.

The university environment creates a generally safe social fabric: 50,000 students and a large academic community mean populated streets and active public spaces at most hours. The farmers market on Saturday morning is among the most welcoming public events in Wisconsin.

The State Street corridor between the Capitol and the campus is the most active pedestrian zone in Madison and is safe throughout the day and evening. The stretch of Mifflin Street and West Washington Avenue around the Capitol requires standard downtown awareness late on Friday and Saturday nights when bar traffic is heaviest.

RATING SCALE: ★★★★★ = Very safe ★★★★ = Safe ★★★ = Use awareness ★★ = Avoid at night ★ = Avoid

Neighbourhood Safety at a Glance

Capitol Square	★★★★★ Very Safe	Civic center, well-lit and patrolled. Very safe at all hours.
State Street	★★★★★ Very Safe	Pedestrian-only corridor. Well-trafficked day and evening. Very safe.
UW-Madison Campus	★★★★★ Very Safe	Active university campus. Safe throughout, with regular campus security.
Memorial Union Terrace	★★★★★ Very Safe	Lakefront public space. Very safe during operating hours (noon-11pm).
Williamson Street (Willy St)	★★★★★ Very Safe	Progressive neighborhood. Very safe day and evening.
Mifflin Street / Capitol area	★★★★■ Safe	Active bar district on weekend nights. Standard nightlife awareness applies after midnight.
Near East Side	★★★★■ Safe	Residential-commercial mix. Safe throughout.
Areas south of the Beltline	★★★●■ Use Awareness	Outside the itinerary area. Not recommended for solo evening walking.

Common Risks & Specific Considerations

Bar district on weekends

The Mifflin Street and State Street bar corridor is very active on Friday and Saturday nights. Standard nightlife awareness applies: confirm rideshare before entering, watch your drink, and stay on well-lit streets.

Badgers game weekends

University of Wisconsin home football games (fall) bring 80,000+ fans to Camp Randall Stadium. Downtown fills; hotel rates spike. Book transportation in advance and expect crowds on State Street through the evening.

Lake swimming

Swimming in Lake Mendota and Lake Monona is common and generally safe at designated beaches. Blue-green algae blooms occur in summer -- check the Dane County health page before swimming. The blooms are toxic to pets.

Weather: winter

Madison winters are severe (-10F to 30F, heavy snow). If visiting October through April, pack proper cold-weather gear. The lakes freeze and the city remains fully operational, but outdoor movement requires planning.

Rideshare

Uber is reliable in Madison. Confirm driver before entering. On Badgers game weekends, surge pricing can be extreme -- walk from the venue before requesting.

Health & Medical

UW Health University Hospital (600 Highland Ave) is the region's Level I trauma center -- a major academic medical center affiliated with UW-Madison, approximately 10 minutes from Capitol Square. UW Health at The American Center (4602 Eastpark Blvd) is the primary suburban full-service facility.

SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital Madison (700 S Park St) is a full-service hospital south of the isthmus. Multiple urgent care clinics (UW Health Express Care, Urgent Care Centers of America) are available throughout Madison.

Travel insurance with medical coverage is strongly recommended for US travel.

Solo Women Travelers

Madison is one of the more comfortable cities in the Midwest for solo women travelers. The progressive university culture, active streets, and visible public life make it easy to move through the city independently. The farmers market, Memorial Union Terrace, and State Street are all welcoming solo environments. The bar scene on State Street and Mifflin Street requires the same awareness as any active bar district. The Williamson Street neighborhood and the campus area are comfortable at all hours. Book your own rideshare; avoid unfamiliar streets alone after midnight.

Emergency Contacts

Emergency (Police / Fire / Medical)	911
Madison Police (non-emergency)	(608) 255-2345
UW Health University Hospital	(608) 263-6400
SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital	(608) 251-6100
Poison Control (US)	1-800-222-1222
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	988
UW-Madison Dean of Students (emergency)	(608) 263-5700
