

Protect Your Home While Traveling!

Whether a weekend at the beach or a long-awaited road trip, you can enjoy peace of mind while you travel by putting a few extra security measures in place. Whether you simply ask your neighbor to pop in and pick up your mail, or go all out and install a security system, a few simple precautions before you leave will allow you to come back to find your home exactly as you left it.

Here are a few common-sense security tips:

- 1. Have Someone Keep an Eye on Your Empty Home:** If you have a friend, family member, or neighbor that you can trust, ask them to drop into your home on a regular basis to ensure that everything is in order. They should be able to attend every few days or so, and be able to go inside to check back doors, windows, and any other entrances. ALSO: Tell you neighbors! Giving your neighbors the heads up that you are off on vacation is a useful way of making sure that someone is keeping an eye on your home for you, even if they are doing it subconsciously.
- 2. Invest in a Monitored Security System:** Many homeowners choose to invest in smart security systems like a Ring camera. These can be very effective when you have access to your cell phone. If you are heading somewhere remote, you might consider a monitored home security system that can offer an extra layer of protection.
- 2. Stop Your Mail Deliveries:** You can do this from home by simply visiting the USPS website and filling in a short form online. They will stop mail from being delivered to your address and hold it for you until you get back. You should also pause any other regular deliveries that you receive (including monthly subscriptions) if you are planning to be away for a longer period of time.
- 4. Set a Timer for Your Lights:** You can keep your house looking lived in by setting a timer for your lights. You can order timers online or pick them up in your local hardware store. Simply plug in your lights and set the timer to tell each appliance when to come on. If you would rather, you can even purchase electronic timers with random settings that give a more natural inhabited look, making your home look full of people, even when it isn't. If you are one of those people that is into home automation, you can leverage your smart lighting for this.
- 5. Keep Your Plans Away from Social Media:** Posting pictures of you and your family sunning themselves hundreds of miles from home is an open invitation to would-be burglars and those who intend to do you no good. Checking in at the airport may seem like a cool way to flex on Facebook, but in reality, it's just

telling people your home will be empty for the next week or so. **Keep your photos and memories to share privately....or post after your return (if you must).**

You may also want to double-down and make sure that your home address isn't accessible via your social media pages and delete any posts or party invites that contain your phone number. Nobody needs to know any of that stuff anyway, apart from those you know and trust who won't be looking on Facebook for it.

6. Lock up Your Valuables: This should be pretty obvious, but your most treasured possessions are more vulnerable when you are not there to look after them. Just in case somebody is able to find their way through your external security measures, you should always ensure that your expensive or sentimental items are locked away in a safe, hidden lockbox, or other secure space before you leave for your vacation. Hint: Lock boxes and safes should be secured to the foundation or studs of the home so that they cannot be carried off

7. Consider Your Curtains: Strange as this may sound, your curtains, blinds, and shutters tell a story of their own to anyone who is watching your home with a view to gaining entry. If you usually leave your shutters half-open, or blinds rolled up, suddenly shutting them all with giving your house a locked-down look which will scream "vacant" to anyone who is interested. As much as possible, keep your curtains, blinds, and shutters in a similar position to how they usually would be.

8. Don't Stash Your Key: For many of us living in relatively safe communities, surrounded by trusted friends and neighbors, it can be tempting to leave a key hidden outside your property just in case someone needs to pop in for you. Don't do this — and especially don't do this when you are going away for an extended period of time. Plant pots, doormats, and even gutters are easy prey for potential criminals, and there is no hiding place you can think of that they won't investigate when trying to break into your home. Leave your keys with a friend or family member instead. If you need to have a key outside the home, use a real estate type lockbox and have it hidden out of site.

9. Disconnect Your Garage Door: If you have an electric garage door that is opened by using a remote, disconnect it before you go. Most garages have direct access into your home, and if a thief can hack the electronic signal, they can be in your home quick as a flash. Plus, they can help himself to any of the valuables (including your car) that you keep hidden in your garage. Your door from the garage into the home should be treated as another entry door, i.e. solid core or steel, reinforced frame, jamb and strikes with a deadbolt.