



Protecting Your Home When You Travel

Stopping mail delivery, putting a few lights on a timer, and leaving a key with a good neighbor are still wise home protection ideas before leaving on vacation. And while it's important to protect yourself with these basics, today there are also more advanced home security solutions to grant you peace of mind while you're out of town.

Home Security Tips for Travelers

Before packing your suitcase, consider these home security tips for travelers, a collection of 10 proven classics.

1. Your home's lights are your number-one defense: Set inside and outside lights on a timer (buy a device that lets you pick irregular intervals); make sure exterior lights illuminate 100 feet around your home; position motion-sensor lighting at various points around your home's exterior.
2. Your second best home protection defense is a dependable neighbor: Inform him or her of your travel plans, and make arrangements with him or her to keep an eye out for stray papers and flyers. You also may want to consider asking the neighbor to periodically go into your home to check on it. Some people even have neighbors readjust the curtains or take their car out of the garage for a few hours or days, to create the appearance that someone's home.
3. If your vacation will be long, set aside time in the days before you go to do some basic lawn maintenance: Trim branches and hedges near windows, cut the grass a little lower than usual, weed the garden. If you'll be away more than a week, hire a lawn service to do these tasks while you're away.
4. Secure your toolshed—many thieves take advantage of the homeowner's own ladder and tools to break in.
5. If you live in a snowy climate, make arrangements ahead of time for snow removal. A lack of footprints can be a telltale sign of an empty house, so you may want to ask the same trusted neighbor to come over (to water your indoor plants or adjust curtains) and in the process leave some footprints in the snow in your driveway.
6. If needed, do some simple furniture rearranging so your computer or a valuable painting can't be seen from the road. (For instance, don't leave a laptop in a ground-floor office space visible from a window.) While you're moving around these items, take a few extra minutes to photograph them for insurance purposes. Take note of the serial numbers, then store the photos in a safe place.
7. In some neighborhoods, the local police department may be able to increase the number of drive-bys on your street if you inform them of your travel dates.
8. Beyond telling your close neighbors, friends, and family, don't publicize your vacation plans on your answering machine or Facebook page, or via Twitter. Wait until you get home to let your friends know how much fun you had.
9. Turn off your phone's ringer. Or consider having your home calls forwarded to your cell phone.
10. Ensure that your personal and home insurance policies are up-to-date.

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