

Before You Leave

- Ask for help. Enlist a friend or hire someone to bring in the mail, water your plants, and take care of anything else that may make it obvious that no one is home. If you hire a pet sitter, they almost always include gathering mail and other tasks in their fee. You can also have your mail held at the post office during the period of time you are away. Don't forget to have your newspaper put on hold as well. Visit www.USPS.com to use their Hold Mail Service.
- Don't tip off criminals on the web. Sharing personal information such as when you are out of your home and posting vacation pictures while you are out of town has led to many people's homes being robbed. There is plenty of time to update your friends when you return.
- Leave curtains just as you would when you are at home and move expensive items such as jewelry or computers out of plain sight. Significant changes such as closed curtains can be a tip that no one is home.
- Remove your spare key. Reach under the mat, into the mailbox, above the door frame or in the flower pot and remove your spare key before the criminals do!
- Sometimes use of your credit card outside of your home area will trigger a fraud alert with your bank leading them to cancel your card until you get in touch with them. To prevent this, call your bank before you leave and let them know where you are going and for how long.

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Pack Smart



- Pack light so you can move more quickly and have a free hand when you need it. This is especially important when traveling overseas.
- Carry a minimum number of valuables and plan on places to conceal them.
- Don't carry credit cards you don't need or large amounts of cash. Split your credit cards up to avoid being left with no access to funds in case your wallet is stolen. Carry one and leave another hidden in your hotel room, for example.
- Avoid packing IDs, tickets and other vital documents in backpacks or other locations that are not visible to you while walking around.
- Make two photo copies of all your important travel documents and identification in case of an emergency or if your documents are lost or stolen. You can also scan and email documents to yourself and others. Leave one copy with a friend or relative at home. Carry the second set of copies packed with you, stored in a separate location from the originals.

Crime

There is a high risk of pickpockets in many tourist areas. Pickpockets are stealthy and quick. They will be long gone when you realize your money, credit cards and even jewelry are gone. Follow our tips and find others on the internet about the steps you can take to avoid being a victim and where the thieves hot spots are.

Tourist Attractions: Tourist attractions including museums and other cultural spots. Statistics show no destination is sacred when it comes to thieves.

Transportation Hubs: With so many people moving through a train station or other transportation hubs, thieves can remain undetected. Pay particular attention at stops along the way as pickpockets will be able to exit quickly after stealing items.

Streets: Pickpockets are hard to identify on the streets and it is easy for them to steal your items without you noticing. Try to blend in and don't stand out by being flashy with your cloths and jewelry.

Plan in advance: It is a good idea to learn the tricks and techniques of pickpockets. There are many good online videos on this topic. You can also invest in travel products that allow you to store your license, passport and money in a zipped pocket worn under your cloths. Items include anti-theft wallets, purses, money belts, neck wallets and even t-shirts, underwear and undershirts that have a secret pocket that thieves will not be able to access.

Health

- Carry your medications in their original labeled containers and pack them in your carry-on bag since checked luggage is sometimes lost or delayed.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), a program run by the U.S. Department of State at www.step.state.gov. When you sign up, this free service will allow you to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy when traveling abroad. You will receive important information about safety conditions and the U.S. Embassy will contact you in an emergency situation. It also helps family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.
- Check with your insurance provider to find out what you are covered for an out of network emergency where you are visiting. Additionally, most policies do not cover you for medical treatment abroad. Several U.S. based companies offer international health insurance. Just do an internet search to find the best option for you.

