

Travel Tips: "Before You Leave"

This website is mostly about what to pack (and what **not** to). I would be remiss, though, if I did not include mention of those important but easily forgotten tasks that people often neglect to take care of before setting off on their grand adventures. If it's been a while since you last refreshed your memory about [how to survive a hotel fire](#) or [how to survive a plane crash](#), this would be an excellent time to do so; few agglomerations of knowledge offer such potential benefit!

And here's **the other important list on OneBag.com**: items you might want to take care of before leaving (depending on the duration of your trip):

- Make sure that someone knows your travel plans, and can deal with emergencies (do they have a key?) in your absence.
- Suspend your mail delivery, or have it forwarded appropriately (to a rented P.O. box if a long trip makes it necessary).
- Suspend or cancel your newspaper delivery and other services (like magazines, gym membership, ...).
- Inform your credit card issuer(s) of your travel dates & locations, else they might suspend your account(s) when unexpected charges appear from far afield.
- Ensure that nothing important (passport, ATM & credit cards, etc.) will expire while you're away.
- Make arrangements for the care of any pets in your charge.
- Adjust your thermostat settings & check its batteries as appropriate.
- Clean your toilets, and anything else prone to "growing" stuff when you're not around.
- Check your refrigerator & other storage locations for food that could spoil.
- Dispose of your garbage (including any lurking in the disposal unit).
- Turn off taps, on washing machines and anything else that could leak or freeze while unattended.
- Schedule the payment of any bills that might come due during your trip; switching to on-line payment options can facilitate this. If using a cellular telephone with a prepaid plan, ensure that it has sufficient remaining time.
- Confirm accommodation reservations, especially any with smaller B&Bs, etc. ... people who may be as concerned about your arrival as you are about having a place to sleep.
- Inspect all your doors and windows to ensure that they are secure; garage doors can be "locked" by inserting a large bolt through one of the tracks in which the door rides (there are usually holes for this; if not, drill one). If you use an alarm service, notify them of your plans, and let them know who to contact for emergencies.
- If you live in snow country, consider how a virgin snowfall (or drift) makes it obvious that your house is unoccupied. When appropriate, arrange with a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Or even shovel/plow.
- Unplug things (don't just turn them off); your gadgets will be safer and more rested, and why pay for electricity to keep remote controls functional while you're away? That said, leaving a couple of lights on when you're away gives your house an "occupied" look.
- Use energy-saving bulbs, ideally on a timer. For an even more crafty/elaborate approach, consider using a [fake TV](#).
- Water your plants.
- Clean the gutters; water is not always your friend.



A final thought: it is unwise to advertise your travel plans — even if you'll just be out for the afternoon — on answering machines, voicemail, e-mail auto-responders, or *social media status updates* (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Google Buzz, foursquare). For that matter, you should omit any physical address information more specific than a city from social media profiles. Don't make it easy for opportunists to discover where you live, or that you're [not at home](#).