

Tips for Planning a Trip

Many Canadians travel south each year to escape the cold and snow of winter. Whether it's a long stay or just a few days, here are some tips to help you prepare so you can depart for your sunny destination well-organized and worry-free.

Your Home

- Anytime you are away for more than 4 consecutive days in the usual heating season, you should ask a family member or a friend to visit your home daily to maintain coverage for water escape due to freezing.
- If you have a monitored alarm that protects your plumbing system, daily visitation may not be required. However, having someone regularly visit your home in your absence makes very good sense and could potentially discourage vandals or intruders. Regular visits would also present an opportunity to discover any problem that may develop with other parts of the home and ensure that snow is cleared as required.
- Tell your neighbors that you will be away and that a reliable person will visit your home regularly during your absence.
- Turn off your main water supply and the breaker or fuse for the hot water heater (if you have one). A leak while you're away can cause a tremendous amount of damage in a short period of time!
- Install light timers to make your home look occupied.
- Arrange a snow removal contractor, or perhaps a friend, to clear your driveway.
- Ask Canada Post to hold your mail, and stop delivery of newspapers to your home while you're away. Or have a neighbor pick them up regularly for you.
- Empty and unplug your refrigerator and leave the doors open (to prevent odour and mildew).
- Give a copy of your itinerary, addresses, and phone numbers where you can be reached to reliable friends and family members.

Your Health

- Visit a clinic to get any required vaccinations for the country that you're visiting.
- Renew your prescriptions to make sure you have an extra supply in case you are delayed.
- Take a written list of your prescriptions with you when you travel, along with any other relevant information regarding your medical history, in case of emergency.
- Be sure to purchase travel medical insurance and take note of all important toll-free numbers to use in case of emergency.

Your Finances

- To eliminate unnecessary mail to your house, arrange pre-authorized billing for electricity, gas, and cable suppliers. Many cable providers will allow you to place your

account “on hold” for a period of up to six months. Call your service provider to find out if this is available to you.

- Set up an online banking account so that you can manage your finances via the Internet while you’re abroad.
- Ensure your driver’s license, passport, and vehicle registration are valid for your entire trip.
- Check with your provincial health insurance plan to determine how long you can be absent from the province (or country) before your coverage will lapse. Be aware that lengthy trips to other countries could also mean you’re subject to foreign laws (*e.g.* income tax) and may impact your eligibility for other government benefits in your home province.

Take some time to be prepared, and enjoy your winter getaway!

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