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INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES LTD

Check List for Successful Traveling.

Being organized is the secret to travel success. To help you reduce the stress of leaving home, I'm providing my personal organizational checklist. By using this list as a guide and then personalizing it to fit your lifestyle you'll find that you will have "peace of mind" about leaving home.

Steps to Follow Several Days before Departure.

1. Check phone message machine and revise message, if necessary. Consider subscribing to your phone company's voice mail service if there's a chance that your answering machine will max out. **Don't leave a message saying that you're out of town!**
2. Stop or forward mail. Stop newspaper and other deliveries.
3. Maintain an emergency folder for office and home. Include copies of your itinerary, what to do in an emergency and whom to alert, copies of passport, birth certificate, credit card numbers and cancellation phone numbers, computer passwords, emergency health care info (include blood types, drug allergies, doctors name and phone numbers for access to medical records). Update this file regularly!
4. Notify alarm company of travel plans. Furnish them with names and phones numbers of house sitters or caretakers. Provide your itinerary and contact information. Contact local neighbourhood watch patrols or police departments for further suggestions.
5. Provide friends and neighbours with itinerary and relevant phone/fax numbers and the names of those who have keys, etc. to enter your home.
6. For extended trips, review bill payment schedules and arrange for pre-payments for utilities, rent or mortgage, phone, etc. This avoids utility shut-off's, late fees and credit damage.
7. Contact credit card companies and inform them of travel plans, especially if traveling to exotic destinations. Advise of possible unusual charging or more frequent spending from various locations. Arrange for prepaying minimum payment amounts to avoid late payment charges.
8. Record credit card numbers for those cards taken (take only cards that can and will be used). Keep a copy at home and take a copy along (do not pack this, it's as valuable as your cards). If going to foreign countries, call the 800 numbers for reporting lost or stolen cards and verify that those phone numbers are valid from the countries that you will visit (write these numbers on your list). Do the same with traveler's checks.
9. Arrange for pet's care.
10. Take along phone numbers of friends and neighbours, including their work numbers for emergency contacts. Also a list of doctors and dentist's names and numbers.
11. Check current insurance policies for coverage on rental cars especially if traveling in foreign destinations (if covered take a copy of policy).
12. Call health insurer to clarify coverage when overseas and in transit. Make a copy of policy and card. Ask if coverage includes life-flight or emergency transportation home.
13. Obtain enough prescription medicines for duration of trip. For extended periods, get additional medication authorization from physician (some insurance programs limit monthly quantities). Keep prescriptions in original dosage containers. Ask pharmacy

- to provide medicine in smaller vials for easier carrying. Or ask doctor for sample size prescription medicines. Never pack medications in check-in bags. Include copy of medicine, eyeglasses and contact lenses prescriptions.
14. Make copies of birth certificate, drug and eyeglass prescriptions, health insurance, passport, visas, packing lists, and credit cards/travelers checks numbers and tickets. Do not pack these lists; keep them with you.
 15. Put itinerary and luggage tag information inside each bag (including carry-on's). Luggage tags are often separated from the luggage making identity difficult. List only name and phone on outside luggage tags. Remove any old airline luggage routing tags. Keep a copy of packing lists separate from luggage in the event of a claim for lost baggage.
 16. Buy an emergency phone card that can be used in the area traveled. Check cell phone coverage area and costs of long distance or roaming fees. No sense lugging a useless cell phone.
 17. Compile a list of friends and relatives with their sizes for buying gifts while traveling. Take a list of addresses for sending postcards.
 18. Arrange for snow removal or lawn mowing and watering while gone to avoid calling attention to an unattended house.
 19. Do not hide things - house key under the mat, etc. Put jewellery and other valuables in safety deposit box.
 20. If traveling by auto, have car thoroughly serviced and the tires checked.

Just Before You Walk Out the Door.

21. Move plants as required and arrange for their watering.
22. Stop garbage or arrange for garbage to be set out and, later, cans collected.
23. Check doors, windows and locks. Don't overlook locking pet doors and the door between the garage and house.
24. If leaving cars in the garage, set out car keys for neighbours to move cars in event of fire or other emergency. If on extended leave disconnect the car battery to avoid drainage, follow auto manufacturer's suggestions.
25. Consider disconnecting the receiver of electric garage door openers or engaging the manual lock on the door. Electric doors are can be opened by other electronic devices. Remove door openers and valuables from cars parked outside.
26. Ask neighbours to walk by house periodically to check doors, rear of house, and see if any unexpected packages or door hangtags were left.
27. Unplug expensive home electronics, computers and other devices that might be damaged by a power surge. Disconnect Internet access to computers.
28. Remove perishables from refrigerator and discard.
29. Empty coffee pot, wash dishes.
30. Shut off water lines to washing machines to avoid flooding problems. Do not leave the dishwasher, dryer or washing machine running when leaving the house (especially if no one will be home or available to check if these appliances shut off). Make sure all appliances are turned off, stove, oven, coffeemaker, etc.
31. Count the number of bags or items taken (i.e. coat, briefcase, carry-on luggage = 3). Keep track of this number at each destination, adjust if you add or combine. Count bags after deplaning, taxi rides, bus trips, etc. This will avoid loss of items left behind. Especially good advice if traveling with children (car seats, favourite toy, diaper bags, blanket, etc.).
32. Review en route weather conditions and check transportation schedules for delays.
33. Check for tickets, medications, glasses, passports/visas, photo ID's and money before you walk out the door.

When on Holidays

Security tips for women travelers

34. Want to fool thieves completely? At your destination, buy something at a local grocer's shop. Then use their plastic bag to carry your wallet and camera and other valuable. Let them think it is groceries.
35. Choose your travel wardrobe carefully, eliminating bright attention-getting colors and expensive jewellery and watches. The smart traveler wants to remain as inconspicuous as possible.
36. At the airport, don't send any of your possessions through the x-ray security check until you're ready to go through yourself. Scam artists work in teams. The person in front of you holds up the line by deliberately leaving change in his or her pocket, for example, and setting off the metal detector. While you are waiting to go through, his partner is picking up your valuables off the conveyor belt and melting into the crowd.
37. If you take a handbag, it should have only a bit of money in it and a few grooming essentials. It should also have a long shoulder strap that's thick enough not to be easily cut and that will allow you to wear the strap across your body with the purse part in front against your stomach where you can keep a hand on it at all times. With this kind of body language, pickpockets are 90% less likely to target you.
38. Double lock your hotel room door if at all possible. If not, then never leave your valuables unattended in the room. It's no effort to bring your purse or money belt into the bathroom when you're showering, where you can keep an eye on it.
39. Carry your real valuables - your extra cash, credit cards, travelers' cheques and credit/bank cards in a cotton money belt under your clothes.
40. Never, never count your money in public or try to exchange your foreign currency for local currency with a street vendor. This is an open invitation to be robbed.
41. Be extra vigilant at airport check-ins and at train and bus stations. Always keep luggage in front of you where you can see it at all times. Always carry a light scarf in your bag. It's perfect for tying your camera bag, day pack, or purse to your luggage cart. Imagine a thief's surprise when he tries to "snatch and run".
42. When other travelers ask you what you do for a living and you're not sure if they can be trusted, tell them you're a policewoman on holiday or a retired policewoman. It gets their attention and it works.

Hotel Security Measures

43. Avoid temptation to save a few dollars, and stay at a reputable hotel chain, located as close to planned activities as possible.
44. If utilizing a vehicle during trip, make sure the hotel has a well-lit, secured parking area with controlled access restricted to hotel guests.
45. Ask for a room between the 3rd and 6th floors. Avoid ground level room as they can be easily broken into. Rooms that are higher than 6th floor can not often be reached by fire department ladders.
46. Don't leave valuables in your room. Put them in the hotel safe or safety deposit box.
47. Be observant of individuals watching you, or following you to your room.
48. Don't open your door to any unexpected deliveries. If you are unsure if person is hotel staff, calls down to the front desk to confirm.
49. Upon entering your room. Make note of the floor plan, and plan exit strategies in anticipation of a fire or other events, that forces evacuation.
50. Make sure that outside doors and windows open, if designed to do so.
51. If you have to exit in a fire, take your room key with you, encase you have to return to the safety of the room.

52. Don't reveal your hotel name or room number to strangers. Watch leaving your room key on display.
53. Don't discuss your travel plans or daytrips away from the hotel in front of strangers.
54. Don't entertain strangers in your hotel room.
55. Be alert to overly friendly locals who may have criminal intentions. They may offer to take you to a "special" restaurant. Their ruse may be to offer drugged refreshments.
56. Use the door chain or dead bolt lock when in your room.
57. Keep your room neat, so you will notice upon entry of disturbed or missing items. Back out of the room, as the bad guy could still be hiding inside.

Vehicle Security Measures

58. If using a rental vehicle, try to select one without stickers that advertises you are a stranger to the area.
59. Select a modest vehicle common to the area. Large expensive vehicles attract unwanted attention.
60. Keep vehicle gassed up, and cell phone charged and handy at all times.
61. Keep doors locked at all times.
62. Leave ample manoeuvring space between your car and the car in front of you. Always leave an escape route.
63. If you are approached by suspicious persons while you are stopped, do not roll down the windows, drive away quickly.
64. Make sure you know your daily travel route and have maps. You want to avoid getting lost, and straying into unsafe areas. You also want to avoid having to ask directions of strangers if possible.
65. If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel or public facility. Don't lead them to your residence. Don't worry about a legal parking place, simply get close as possible to the door, and enter quickly for safety.
66. Avoid repetitious behaviour. Vary travel routes.
67. Never, never pick up hitchhikers.
68. When you park, look for a spot that offers good lighting, and is close to lots of people and activity. Lock valuables in the trunk and lock all doors.
69. When shopping, if you return to your car with parcels, lock them in your trunk, and drive away, and park in another part of the mall complex before returning inside. This will give the impression of any watching criminals that you are leaving and they will not set up on your vehicle waiting for your return.
70. Before leaving a mall, watch for any strangers that may be following you. This is very important if you have purchased valuable articles.
71. If at any time you feel threatened by people outside your vehicle. Lock all the doors, and start to attract attention by hooking on the horn.

Other travelling tips.

72. Avoid looking like a tourist.
73. When traveling on public transportation. Sit near the driver. Be alert to who gets on and off the bus with you.
74. When riding in a taxi, sit in the back seat.
75. Be careful in large crowds where there is jostling, as pickpockets look for this situation to get active.
76. Be aware of your surroundings. Know where emergency exits are, and don't visit out of the way places, unless you know it is safe to do so. The ability to foresee or detect a dangerous situation is the best means to avoid trouble.
77. Check with the government advisory service about visiting foreign countries.

Bon Voyage and have a great holiday.