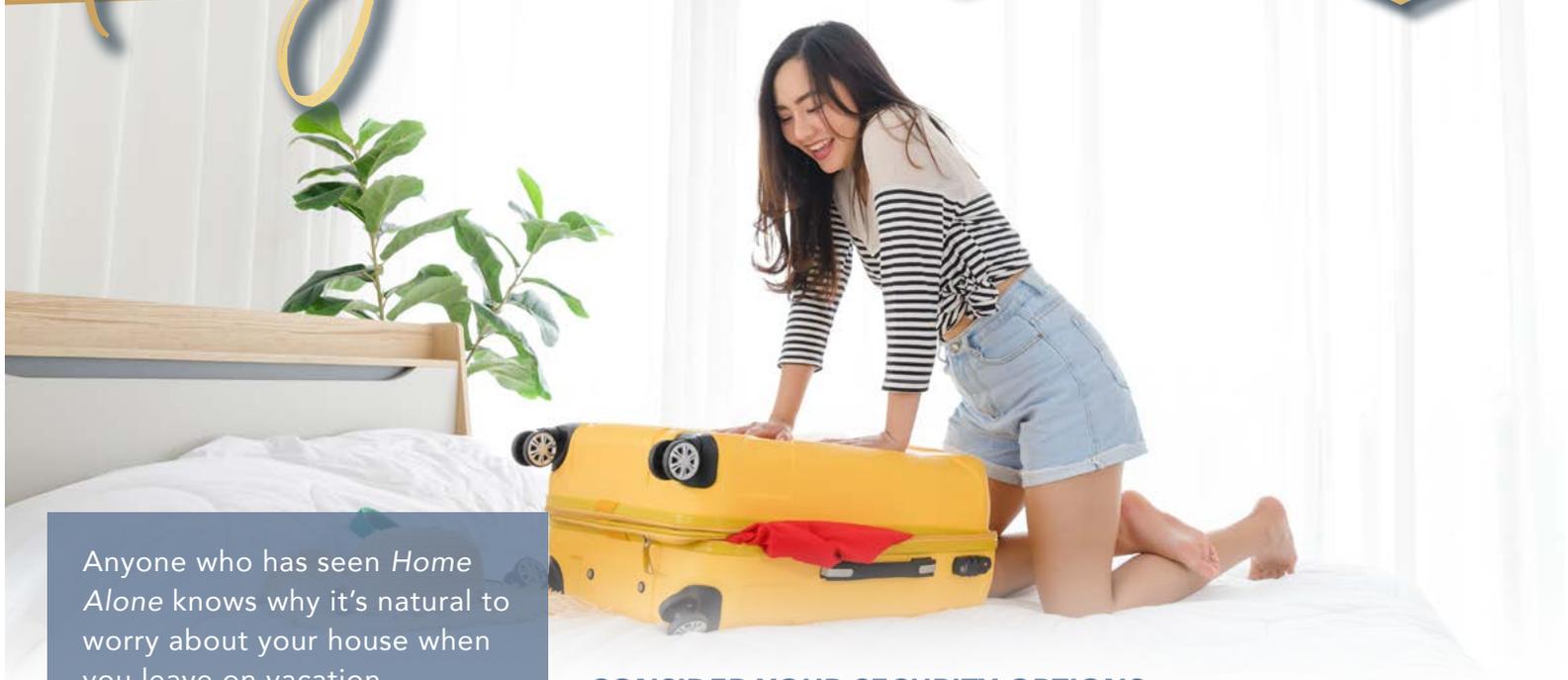


PREP YOUR HOME BEFORE *Going on vacation*



Anyone who has seen *Home Alone* knows why it's natural to worry about your house when you leave on vacation.

Whether visiting family overnight during the holidays or heading to Paris on vacation, ensuring your property is secure while you're away is a high priority. You can invest in an expensive security system or make simple changes to relieve some of those worries.

Patten Title understands your need for peace of mind while on vacation. Whether it's avoiding thieves or making sure inclement weather outside doesn't compromise your home inside, we've compiled this checklist to help you handle the hassle of locking up while you're away.

CONSIDER YOUR SECURITY OPTIONS

It's vital to note that some [insurance companies](#) give a significant rate break to property owners with an electronic security system. So your investment could save you money and worry.

High-tech home security systems include the [Ring Video Doorbell](#) or the [SkyBell Wi-Fi Video Doorbell](#), and the cost varies depending on how extensive you'd like your security to be.

The Ring system costs \$99.99 to \$399.99 and connects to your existing doorbell. A ringing doorbell triggers an alert to an app on your smartphone. Whether you're home or away, you can communicate with the person at your door. Most Ring devices also have night vision and a monitor with a speaker.

The SkyBell has similar features and detects motion outside your door. It also allows you to answer a door and talk to visitors using your smart device.

If you have an existing alarm company, like [ADT](#) or [AT&T](#), talk to your representative about upgrades for cameras inside and outside of your home. These programs often include features to automatically alert first responders in case of a fire.



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Other systems to consider include [Alarm.com](https://www.alarm.com), which offers similar services and can use existing equipment, like your computer's webcam.

When you choose your alarm company, find out if there are special procedures you need to follow while you're on vacation. For instance, you may be able to program specifications into your system to alert you if there are drastic temperature changes or if you can adjust your home's lighting using your smartphone.

Don't let your home go dark!

Kevin McCallister briefly fooled the Wet Bandits by using his mom's sewing mannequins and a cardboard cutout of Michael Jordan to pretend there was activity in his *Home Alone* house. However, you don't need to fake a house party to show movement in your home.

OUTDOORS

- ❑ When leaving for more than a day or two, make sure it looks like there is activity at the house. Keep your car outside if you usually park your vehicle there, or ask your neighbor to use your driveway occasionally.
- ❑ If you have a great relationship with your neighbors, ask them to keep an eye on your house, checking for unusual activity. Also, they can alert you if a rainstorm in the area has created problems for other homes.
- ❑ Ask a relative or neighbor to pick up the mail or newspapers. Letting your newspapers pile up in front of your home is an easy signal for crooks that the house is unwatched. You can also hold your mail to be delivered the day you return.
- ❑ Unplug the power to your automatic garage so that thieves can't use a universal remote to try to open it.
- ❑ Don't leave spare keys under the welcome mat or outside at all. Even though it's a slight risk that a burglar could find a key, it's easy to eliminate.

INDOORS

- ❑ Invest in timers to set your floor lamps and other devices to come on when you are usually home. You can also consider investing in FakeTV, an electrical device that mimics television lighting. During the holidays, utilize your timed lights outdoors to activate decorations. In the summer, set your sprinklers to a regular timer as another deterrent for an intruder.

- ❑ Keep your blinds and drapes open or at least cracked. Make sure there is nothing valuable in sight.
- ❑ Set smart home monitors in your basement and near your water heater to monitor areas that could cause a flood or home disaster if they fail.
- ❑ If you have a regular housekeeper, keep your scheduled time and day. Not only will you come home to a super-clean house, but you'll also know that someone you trust has been in the home to alert you if something has gone wrong.
- ❑ Invest in deadbolt locks for exposed doors, as these are the hardest for burglars to crack. Also, if you have a pet door, keep it locked.

WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

- ❑ Use social media wisely while you're on vacation. Posting daily lets others know you aren't at home and, sometimes, how long you'll be away.
- ❑ There's no need to give taxi or car service drivers more information than necessary.
- ❑ Avoid putting your name or address on anything in or around your car stored in an airport parking lot. That's an invitation for a thief to find your house, knowing you're out of town. A car's GPS device can also lead a bad actor straight to your home.

Relax + Enjoy!