

Snowbird checklist

Closing up two homes: the house up north for winter and the Florida home for summer, what travels with you and what stays. Tick each one as you go.



The settings to leave

- Up north in winter: the heat on at 55°F or warmer, day and night, so the pipes don't freeze.
- In Florida in summer: the air conditioning at 85°F at most, so it still runs and dries the air.
- Humidity in the Florida home at 60% or less. Mildew grows in warm, damp air.
- Both homes: the water off at the main or the meter, and someone with a key looking in.

A few weeks before you go

- ☐ **Forward your mail.** Temporary forwarding at usps.com/move runs up to 6 months at a time, and 12 in all. Set it up a couple of weeks ahead, ending the day you head back.
- ☐ **Bills on autopay or online.** So nothing that comes by mail gets missed while you're away.
- ☐ **Call your home insurer.** Say the house will stand empty, and ask what your policy needs. Some limit cover for a home left empty a long time.
- ☐ **Someone to look in on each home.** A neighbor, friend or caretaker with a key, who checks regularly and after storms, and has your number.
- ☐ **Medicines for the season.** Enough to last, or prescriptions moved to a pharmacy near your other home. If your health plan has a network, check what it covers there.
- ☐ **Photograph both homes.** Every room, closets and drawers open, and your valuables. If something happens while you're away, it shows your insurer what was there.
- ☐ **The car ready for the drive.** Serviced, with its registration and insurance up to date.

Closing the home up north

- ☐ **Heat on, at 55°F or warmer.** The same day and night, so the pipes don't freeze.
- ☐ **Cabinet doors open under the sinks.** So warm air reaches the pipes.
- ☐ **Outdoor faucets drained.** Hoses off and stored, and the valves inside that feed the outdoor faucets closed.
- ☐ **Main water valve off.** So a burst pipe can't keep flooding the house. If your heat runs on hot water from a boiler, ask a plumber first.
- ☐ **Water heater turned down.** To its vacation setting, if it has one.
- ☐ **Unplug what doesn't need power.** TVs, computers and small appliances. Leave the furnace, any alarm, and the fridge if it stays on.
- ☐ **Fridge and pantry cleared.** Of anything that will spoil.
- ☐ **Gutters, snow and lights.** Gutters cleared, someone booked to clear the snow, and lights on timers, so the house doesn't look empty.

Closing the Florida home for summer

- ☐ **Air conditioning at 85°F at most.** So it still runs now and then and pulls the damp out of the air.
- ☐ **Humidity at 60% or less.** A dehumidifier helps: one that works at 70°F and up, in a central spot, with its hose run to a drain.
- ☐ **Air conditioner serviced.** About three weeks before you leave, with its humidistat checked.
- ☐ **Water off at the meter.** Unless it also feeds the sprinklers, so a burst pipe can't flood the house.
- ☐ **Stoppers in, toilets covered.** Close the sink and tub stoppers, and put plastic wrap over the toilet bowls and tanks. Their water would dry out into the house and let sewer gas in.
- ☐ **Fridge cleaned and dried.** Turned off? Prop the doors open so they can't close. Left on? Leave a bag of ice cubes in the freezer: a solid block when you're back means the power was off.
- ☐ **Houseplants to a neighbor.** Watering them adds damp to the air, and no one will be there to do it.
- ☐ **Ready for hurricane season.** It runs June 1 to November 30. Arrange for the shutters, and bring in outdoor furniture and anything that could blow around.

What travels with you

- ☐ **Medicines, and a list of them.** With the doses, and your doctors' numbers.
- ☐ **Documents.** IDs, insurance and Medicare cards, passports, and the car's papers.
- ☐ **Cards and checkbook**
- ☐ **Phones, laptops and chargers**
- ☐ **Jewelry and small valuables.** Safer with you, or locked away, than in an empty house.
- ☐ **Keys to both homes.** And to the mailbox, the car and any storage unit.
- ☐ **Pet food, medicine and records**
- ☐ **A list of what's at each home.** So you pack only what isn't there already.

Keep a set in each home

- ☐ **Toiletries.** A full set in each bathroom, so they never need packing.
- ☐ **Spare chargers.** For each phone and tablet.
- ☐ **Reading glasses.** An old pair is fine.
- ☐ **Clothes and shoes for that weather**
- ☐ **Kitchen basics.** A coffee maker, a good knife, and the pans you use most.
- ☐ **A small toolkit.** Screwdrivers, tape, batteries and light bulbs.

When you arrive

- ☐ **Walk through before you unpack.** Look for leaks, water stains, mold and pests.
- ☐ **Water back on slowly.** Then check under each sink for drips, and run each tap.
- ☐ **Plastic wrap off, toilets flushed**
- ☐ **Check the ice in the freezer.** Melted and frozen again means the power was off: throw the food out.
- ☐ **Test the smoke and CO alarms**

Pax's tip

Which home are the golf shoes in? Make a box in BoxTrack for each closet and bin in both homes and snap what's in it, then search from either home before you pack anything twice. Your first box is free at box-track.com.



Scan to tick it off

What's at each home

Tick where each thing is and note where it's kept, so you pack only what isn't there already.

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