

Is it Wise to Travel when your House is Empty? Never!

Did you know that potential break-in artists could be waiting to burglarize your home while you are on holidays? And who is going to mow the lawn while you're away? Who will watch for fires or leaks in the hot-water heating system? An empty house can be a recipe for disaster!

Career criminals will be on the alert for things like:

Yards with untrimmed hedges and unwatered lawns

More than a day's worth of newspapers inside the screen door

Windows that reveal no change in lighting during the night

An absent vehicle in the garage or driveway

Full garbage bins that are not set out on collection day

Mail carriers skipping a house because of redirected mail

Nobody answering the door when someone rings the bell

Crafty criminals will often ring the doorbell themselves before attempting a break-in. If you are at home, they will have a reasonable story like: 'I am conducting a survey of homeowners in the area to see if they are happy with the local school system.'

No thief wants to be caught, and no burglar will want to put more effort than necessary into a robbery. Criminals are by necessity suspicious (and lazy as well). Anything you can do to make your house more challenging is likely to deter them. A good security system is a commendable first step.

But is a security system enough? Maybe you should investigate hiring a housesitter. A housesitter can help prevent break-ins, and can also monitor for fires, roof leaks, and other potential home emergencies.

The internet is full of helpful sites. An internet search for keywords and phrases similar to the following will help you to locate a good sitter:

house sitting services

find house sitter

professional housesitters

experienced home sitter

pet sitting service

At the end of this article is a link to a page containing several search engines.

As a homeowner, you can usually post a free ad in a housesitter directory. Many sites will have an auto e-mail service that notifies you whenever a new housesitter registers in your community. Housesitting services may include:

Mowing the lawn and trimming the hedge

Watering houseplants

Walking, feeding, and caring for pets

Picking up mail and newspapers

Paying bills

Answering the telephone

Homesitters come from various walks of life - and ages may vary from late teens/early twenties to ?? Typical sitters might be:

Retirees

A world traveller who is trying to conserve on expenses

A college student trying to make ends meet

A person who needs a place to stay during home renovations

Someone new in the community

In recompense for their services, a home sitter will receive free rent and (usually) an additional fee. Sitters are normally responsible for their own food and telephone calls.

It is important that all arrangements are in writing. Some of the important points you should include in your written contract include:

How long the sitter is permitted to be away from the premises

The maximum number of guests allowed ('zero' being an option)

Expectations for pet, plant, and yard care

What should happen in case of illness or emergency

Exact duration of house-sitting contract

What will happen if your return home is delayed

If you are working with a professional housesitting service, be sure that it does appropriate security checks on its employees. If you are hiring a private sitter, ask local law enforcement authorities what is needed for you to perform your own background investigations.

This article is just a short primer on the subject of homesitting. Be sure to spend sufficient time doing individual research long before your holidays.

. . . And Happy Travels!

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About the Author

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