

Prior preparation can give vacationers peace

Theft. Accidents. Unfamiliar laws. Strange diseases. For some people, the perils awaiting the unaccustomed traveller seem monumental. Can a vacationer truly have peace of mind when travelling?

According to the Hamilton Automobile club it is indeed possible... if you plan carefully.

"There are several risks to be aware of," notes Dan Carthy, director of HAC Travel, "but Canadian travellers can take steps to make their vacations as worry-free as possible."

The not-for-profit Club offers the following helpful tips to travellers this summer.

*Before you drive away, have your vehicle thoroughly checked to avoid breakdowns far from home. The Club has an auto inspection centre for members at its Burlington office.

*Drive carefully. Accidents can happen anywhere at any time. Responsibility cannot be left at home.

*Pack only what you need. The more you take, the more can be stolen or lost. If you drive, unnecessary luggage adds weight to your vehicle, causing more fuel to be consumed. That is bad news for both your wallet and the environment.

*Before driving abroad, familiarize yourself with local traffic signs. HAC offers a free guide to foreign traffic signs. You also may need an International Driving Permit, which you can get through any HAC office.

*Plan your route. Touring vacations can easily be spoiled by getting lost. The Club offers free maps and tourbooks to members.

*Choose accommodations according to your needs. Tourbooks include a comprehensive rating of hotels, campgrounds and restaurants across North America.

*Always obey the speed limit, especially in a foreign country. Legal hassles will ruin any vacation. Moderate speeds will also

increase safety and lower gasoline consumption.

*If you must leave your vehicle

unattended, keep it locked and store all valuables out of sight. Park it in a brightly lit area at

night.
*Protect yourself from burglary. Have your mail collected

Minimizing the risk of being burglarized

Being notified by police that your home has been burglarized can bring your summer vacation to an abrupt and unpleasant end. Although there is no foolproof method to ensure this does not happen to you, there are certain steps which you could take to minimize the risk. Otherwise, it may be more than your skin that gets burned while you are at the beach.

While most preventative steps are common sense, it is a good idea to make a list of precautions to take and place it in a convenient location where the items can be checked off as they are undertaken.

Newspaper and magazine subscriptions should be cancelled to avoid having them pile up on your front porch. Such clutter is an obvious signal to potential burglars that nobody is home.

Publishing companies should be notified well in advance of your planned vacation to give them ample time to temporarily suspend delivery. It is wise to have such deliveries stopped one or two days in advance of your holiday so you know the cancellation is in effect.

Gardening must also be tended to while you are away. A boy in the neighbourhood is often glad of the opportunity to earn a few extra dollars by looking after the cutting and watering of your lawn. If you can not find a reliable young person, there are numerous landscaping companies equipped to do the job.

Lights should be put on a timer and if you are away for more than three or four days you should arrange for someone to change the settings periodically.

Mail and flyers should be

picked up by a neighbor so they do not accumulate around your front door, which is a sure sign that you are away.

Windows and doors should be locked and where necessary place a length of wood in the track of sliding windows and doors.

Driveways are an area that most people forget therefore you could arrange to have someone park a car in your driveway during the evening and over night.

House plants are always a major concern when on vacation. The neighbor who picks up your mail and changes the timer settings could water your plants or you can give all your plants a good soaking by placing them in the bathtub over night. Then place them in a circle on your basement floor. Place a bucket of water in the centre of the circle and cut a length of jute twice

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