

making some long needed repairs before you leave. Although you may have adjusted to the “funny” hot water tap in the shower, your renter will most likely prefer something a little less hilarious. And if the garage door sticks a little now and again, fix it. Attempting to solve a problem back home when you’re living abroad can easily make that tiny molehill resemble the proverbial mountain.

*Note:* Your overall goal, once you’ve left for your sabbatical, is to be able to limit communication with your renters to once a month — to thank them for depositing their full rent check in your bank account. With this in mind, accept the reality that whether you’re renting your home furnished or unfurnished, it’s probably going to take a bit of work to get it ready for someone else to move in. And you have to build in time to do that work.

## SIX MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

### Begin Basic Research on Flights, Schools, Housing

- Make your flight and ground transportation arrangements if you’re going on a pre-trip visit to your sabbatical destination.
- Begin researching transportation to your destination (flights, maps for driving, trailers to haul luggage, etc.).
- Make arrangements for the transportation of your unaccompanied personal effects.
- Make arrangements for the transportation of your pets if they will be traveling separately.
- Begin researching housing options in your destination (see *Chapter 4: Finding a Home Away From Home* for more on this).
- Inform your child’s current school of your sabbatical plans. (See *Chapter 7: School Daze Part One*.)
- Begin researching schooling requirements in your destination. (See *Chapter 8: School Daze Part Two*.)

## House Matters

- ***If you intend to sell your home:***
  - Choose a reputable real estate agent to market the property for you.
  - Employ an attorney.
  - Organize a Power of Attorney in case the sale is not finalized before your departure.
- ***If you intend to rent your home:***
  - Market the property yourself through advertisements in newspapers, bulletin boards, and by word of mouth. Or choose a reputable rental agent to market the property for you.
  - Hire an attorney to study the tenancy agreement. Or draw up your own agreement. It's easy to find sample rental agreements at bookstores or online (see "Other Useful Internet Sites: Legal Forms" in *Resources*).
  - Decide who will manage your property in your absence. Ask a friend, neighbor, or relative; or hire a professional management agent.
  - Get consents for the rental from your mortgage company and insurers and make sure your renter has renter's insurance if necessary.

Again, expect the renters to put some wear and tear on your house while you're away. (See *Chapter 6: The Money Thing* for more on the pros and cons of leasing your house.)

## TWELVE TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Make a reconnaissance trip to your sabbatical location if possible. While there, you might choose your house, a bank, and/r schools(s) for your children.

## School Matters

- Notify your children's school of your departure if you have not yet done so.
- Get copies of all pertinent school records (See *Chapter 7: School Daze Part One*).

## TWELVE TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE, CONT'D.

### House Matters

- Remove your name from junk mail lists (this can take up to three months to kick in).
- ***If you intend to leave your house empty:***
  - Check your insurance coverage.
  - Advise your mortgage lender.
  - Make security arrangements for your home.
  - Arrange for cleaning, gardening, snow shoveling, grass cutting, and other maintenance as necessary.
  - Arrange for someone to check the property on a regular basis. (See the following chapter, *The Money Thing*, for more on this.)

### Health Matters

To protect your health while overseas:

- Arrange medical and dental check-ups before you go.
- Go over vaccination records with your doctor and arrange extra shots, if required. If your doctor or HMO offers “travel clinic” services, be sure to take advantage of them. Such clinics specialize in helping travelers prepare for trips to other countries by offering vaccinations, immunization shots, and helpful, up-to-date recommendations about medical services, food, water, and other health concerns in countries around the world. (See also *Chapter 13: Getting Sick*.)
- Arrange for an AIDS test if your host country requires it.
- If you take prescription medication, make arrangements with your doctor for obtaining a supply, and ask the doctor to write a letter documenting your need for them.
- If you or a member of your family has any special medical conditions, ask your doctor for a copy of the pertinent medical records for use by your doctor abroad.
- Consult with your doctor about whether you will need any preventa-

tive medications, such as quinine, where you will be living. Make arrangements to acquire these if needed.

- Consider taking along a supply of eczema cream, nebulizer/allergy medications, and other medical supplies your family may need that might be difficult to locate abroad. How do you know if it will be hard to find? Ask your doctor and pharmacist and check the message boards. Generally speaking, the more important a medication is to your family, the more important it is to bring along a supply. Also make a point of having someone back home prepared to send you more of particular items if you can't find them abroad. We had a hard time finding dental floss, of all things, and more importantly, hydrocortisone cream.
- Apply for International Health Insurance if necessary (see *Chapter 13: Getting Sick* for more on this topic).
- Put together or purchase a family first-aid kit (see page 73).

*"I'm originally from the UK and I arrived in the U.S. with a backpack and a bicycle. I had previously lived and traveled in Australia, Puerto Rico, and Holland and my medical kit typically consisted of a bottle of tea-tree oil. But now with two children, we had a suitcase of medical supplies to cover everything from a dose of the trots to acute asthma."*

— Sarah

## Financial Matters

Begin your financial preparations. (See also *Chapter 6: The Money Thing*.)

- Contact mortgage brokers, stock advisors, etc. and ensure that you have online access to all your accounts. Also, change all statements to online notification if you no longer want hard copies mailed to you.
  - Notify your banks. Ensure that you have online access for all accounts. Arrange for automatic payments, deposits, and withdrawals as necessary. Get the name of an employee, his or her local telephone number, and both the 800 and local numbers for each of your financial institutions. (You may not be able to access the 800 numbers back home from your sabbatical destination.)

## TWELVE TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE, CONT'D.

### Financial Matters, cont'd.

- Set up electronic “bill pay” accounts for all anticipated payments including mortgage, utilities, and insurance.
- Prepay utilities, insurance, and the like if automatic payments are not possible.
- If you receive government benefits (for example, Social Security or Veterans Benefits), make arrangements to have your money sent to your new location.
- Review your will to ensure it still reflects your wishes. Arrange to meet with your attorney to make any desired changes or to make a will if you don't have one yet. You can create a simple will very economically using do-it-yourself software. (See “Other Internet Sites: Legal Forms” in *Resources* for programs.)
- Arrange for Power of Attorney, if required.
- Advise any insurance companies with which you have policies that you are moving to live overseas temporarily. (Companies have been known to refuse to pay out when they have not been so advised.)
- Draw up a preliminary overseas budget and begin calculating your monthly expenses at home and abroad. Begin strategizing how you can economize on anticipated expenses.

### Packing and Storage Matters

- Decide what to do with your car(s). Arrange for storage or sale if necessary.
- Start packing up your house and disposing of unneeded items (see “Packing Up Your House” below).
- Consider whether you want to put some things in storage, and make any necessary arrangements.
- Arrange for moving companies to carry out a pre-move survey if you will be moving your belongings into storage.

## TAKE A FAMILY FIRST-AID KIT FOR YOUR HOME ABROAD

You can purchase ready-made first-aid kits from any camping or medical supplier online. A cheaper option is to buy a soft-sided multi-zippered storage bag and put one together yourself. Include:

- Sterile gauze pads.
- Bandages/Band-Aids in a variety of sizes.
- Adhesive tape.
- Sterile cotton balls.
- Antibacterial hand wipes.
- Small jar of Vaseline.
- Scissors, tweezers, safety pins, Swiss Army knife.
- Digital thermometer.
- Small cold pack.
- Anti-itch cream such as hydrocortisone or calamine.
- Antibiotic cream or ointment.
- Syrup of ipecac.
- Aspirin, Tylenol, ibuprofen (adults' and children's).
- Cold tablets.
- Cough syrup, throat lozenges (adults' and children's).
- Antihistamine (Benadryl oral and ointment).
- Diarrhea medicine (adults' and children's).
- Sunscreen, lip balm, insect repellent.
- Vaginal cream for infections.
- Spoon/oral syringe to administer kids' doses.
- Moleskin for blisters.
- Inhalers, special medications, etc.
- Any other specific over-the-counter medication that your doctor or pharmacist recommends for your sabbatical destination.
- Emergency medical reference book.

### **Optional:**

- Antibiotics such as amoxicillin.
- Louse treatment.
- Pinworm treatment.
- Rehydration mixture.
- Lotrimin (or other clotrimazole- or miconazole-based) anti-fungal.

**Tip:** Do not pack your first-aid kit in your carry-on luggage if you fly. Airports keep changing their carry-on restrictions, and you might not be able to take it aboard.

## SIX TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Arrange any needed flight tickets, hotels, and either a car for hire or an airport shuttle to get you to your flights. If friends or relatives have a large enough car, they may be able to chauffeur you.
- Consider the need for independent tax/financial advice on your status as an expatriate and see your tax advisor prior to leaving (see also *Chapter 6: The Money Thing*).
- Arrange with the post office for your mail to be forwarded (see *Chapter 9: Is Anyone Out There?* for details).
- Send out change-of-address cards, and make arrangements for staying in touch with friends and relatives.
- Renew your driver's license if necessary so it won't expire while you're gone.
- Cancel subscriptions to book clubs, magazines, home Internet service, and cable.
- Notify credit card companies and cancel cards, if necessary.
- Make a detailed inventory of the contents of your home including value and age. (You may want to take photos for insurance purposes.)
- Get a safe deposit box in which to store important documents and valuables while you are away.
- Make final decisions about what things to take with you overseas and what things to leave behind.
- Hold a garage sale and give household items that don't sell to charities and friends to minimize storage needs and make some extra cash.
- Make final arrangements for moving day with your moving company (if you're using one).
- Collect copies of legal documents such as marriage, birth, adoption, and divorce certificates to take with you. Make two copies of each document. Put the originals in your safe deposit box.
- Collect copies of additional documents you may need to take with you (insurance certificates, medical records, optical and/or medical prescriptions, school records, references).

- Deplete food in your kitchen cupboards and freezer.
- Deplete stocks of alcohol. (Plan to throw a big party before you leave!)
- Contact your local election or voter registration office if necessary to register as an overseas voter.

## TWO TO ONE WEEK(S) BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Complete any house repairs and home maintenance tasks that need doing, such as draining the fuel from the lawn mower.
- Make sure that gutters, air conditioner, garbage disposal, etc. are all in good working order.
- Compile a master address/email/phone list.
- Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries.
- Advise utility companies of your turn-off date for gas, electricity, water, and telephone.
- Dispose of houseplants.
- Pack the possessions you are taking with you.
- Sort out those items you will need to keep with you when you travel.
- Double-check that important paperwork is available and collected in one folder to be hand-carried and not sent in luggage.

## DEPARTURE DAY

- Be sure your important paperwork and valuables (see above) are safely stowed in your carry-on luggage.
- If you plan to leave your home empty:
  - Drain down water.
  - Disconnect the gas.
  - Turn off all the lights.
  - Lock the doors and windows.

## Items to Hand-Carry

- Passports.
- Visas.
- Work permits and employment documents (if necessary).
- Plane tickets.
- Money.
- Traveler's checks.
- Currency.
- Credit cards.
- Driver's license(s).
- Essential medication.
- Health and vaccination records and certificates.
- Extra passport-sized photos for legal documents abroad.
- Certified birth certificates for every family member.
- Adoption papers.
- Marriage/divorce certificate(s) — copies are fine.
- Mortgage and property management information.
- Financial information, including:
  - Credit card numbers and contact information for each card.
  - Investment information.
  - Bank account information.
  - Insurance forms for house, car, life, and medical.
  - Power-of-attorney forms.
  - Copies of recent tax returns.
- Drug and eyeglass/contact lens prescriptions.
- Dental records.
- School records.
- Address books.
- Jewelry.
- Things for children to do on the flight or car ride.
- At least one change of clothes if you're flying, in case your suitcases don't arrive with you.

## Packing Up Your House

Let's step back a bit in time to twelve to eight weeks before departure. O.K. You've got your document applications underway. Your bedside is littered with books and brochures about traveling in your highly anticipated new home. You've told everyone where you're going and when you're leaving. You've decided to keep, sell, or drive your car and you know by now whether you're renting or selling your house or just leaving it empty while you're gone. It's finally time to start packing up. But where do you begin? It can seem pretty overwhelming.

The first thing to do is whittle down your inventory. Start by getting rid of what you're not using right now. What's in those mystery boxes down in the basement and out in the garage? What's up in the rafters? How long has it been since you've looked in those high kitchen cabinets and behind the coats in your closets? Take a good hard look around and start getting rid of stuff. Our rule of thumb was if we hadn't used it in a year, it was either time to get rid of it or to at least ask ourselves if we really needed it. The point is to lighten your load any way you can.

### The fifty percent rule

Our family's goal was to get rid of half of everything we owned. That may sound drastic but once you start culling through all the stuff you own, you may be surprised at how good it feels to start sending things out the door. Selling furniture you don't like or rarely use is not only money in your pocket, it's less money spent on storing useless stuff while you're gone. Donating items to charity is a good deed and a tax write-off as well. Think about it as recycling. The less stuff you're paying to store, the better, and psychologically it feels great to cleanse ourselves of the flotsam and jetsam of our stuff-driven lives.

*"We had to rent our house out. This was a big ordeal because we had lived in the same house for twelve years. Twelve years of accumulation! We had to get rid of most of our*