

Checklist:

How to Leave your Own Home & How to Welcome your Guests

Prepare the binder with a welcome pack for your guests. Most commonly, house owners prepare a three-ring binder with sheet protectors, as this allows regular updating of the individual pages inside. The plastic also protects the binder contents as well as allowing you to make multiple copies of some pages that you know guests will want to remove and take with them.

The binder should include the following information:

- telephone numbers and names of who to contact if they need different types of advice;
- names and numbers of neighbors or local friends or family who are aware the guests are arriving and may contact them. Explain who each contact person is and when they should be contacted if at all;
- how to contact the owners if they need to - this may be a phone number or an email address;
- where or with whom a spare key is located in case you accidentally lock yourself out;
- if you are swapping a vehicle, details about the vehicle road tax and insurance, where it is located and what to do if the car breaks down or develops a fault;
- some details of local highway code driving information such as "in this state you can turn right on a red light, but if you cross to our neighboring state you cannot do that," or you are required to turn on headlights at all times when driving, and so on;
- a local road and street map of the area;
- details of information that is useful such as "be careful not to jaywalk in this city as people are regularly fined at the traffic lights outside our house for jaywalking."
- local handyman and local tradesmen you use e.g. electrician, plumber (we had a sink block once when away and it was very useful to have this info) and what to do about payment (in most cases you will ask the tradesman to leave a bill for later payment by the owners). Sometimes you will have to contact the owners or their local friend or family member with an initial quote before the work goes ahead. Explain in the binder what to do in this type of situation and who to contact;
- where the switches and controls are for air conditioning and heating, where each is located and how they work;

Checklist:

How to Leave your Own Home & How to Welcome your Guests

- where the master electrical box is located and how it can be accessed;
- how the computer and printer and internet/ Wi-Fi systems work, as often guests will need to use your printer to print out travel tickets for forward journeys. If you do not want guests to use your computer, leave a note telling them this or move your computer to a secure locked area. I do advise that you leave a printer for their use and please ensure it is filled with ink and paper. Most guest will expect to have access to internet/ Wi-Fi. Ensure you leave them the Wi-Fi codes and, if you are on a limited plan, make them aware of that, too, e.g. "please use internet sparingly as we are on a limited plan, do not use for downloads, do use for checking emails etc.";
- how the shower/ bath system works – you would be amazed how many different types of switches and knobs we have encountered trying to have a simple yet essential thing as a shower;
- where the hot and cold water stop cocks are located and how to turn them off;
- how each house appliance works, especially the cooker/ stove, the barbecue/ grill, the washing machine and the dryer, and a list of do's and don'ts if required e.g. ensure you clean the filter in the drier every time you use it, or never use too much detergent in this type of dishwasher;
- information on local places of interest together with any coupons or vouchers you may have for these;
- information on local cafes and restaurants with your comments on each e.g. what days they are closed and what each is best for, what days and times they serve special deals;
- local transport options including best options e.g. go visit that island on Tuesdays and pay via internet because they have a half price deal every Tuesday but only if you book in advance over the internet. This is an actual example from Rottnest Island in Western Australia and we felt great getting a good deal. Another example from Colorado was free Gondola rides up the mountain every Friday afternoon. Local knowledge can be so very useful and save the traveler money;
- how and when to override set systems such as hot water, swimming pool pumps and so on;
- where local markets are, what types of things they sell and what days are best and what days they are on and are not on;

Checklist:

How to Leave your Own Home & How to Welcome your Guests

- ❑ the number of your dentist and doctor or a doctor and dentist you would recommend they use if they require one;
- ❑ the local emergency number e.g. in USA its 911, UK its 999 and Australia its 000. It's very handy to know the local emergency number and hope you never have to use it;
- ❑ include some brochures of local tourist places of interest and local transport brochures and leave details of how to pay for public transport e.g. pay on the bus but no change given, or must buy ticket at local news store before journey as cannot buy on bus etc.;
- ❑ let guests know if they can or cannot use your telephone and if so under what conditions e.g. use our phone if you have an emergency or use our phone for as many local calls as you like but please no overseas or long distance. Be specific e.g. local call are calls with a 07 prefix. Mobile calls here have a 04 prefix please avoid calling mobiles using our house phone but please use them from our mobile phone we left beside the landline phone. Be specific. If you have a great phone deal with unlimited local and mobile calls, then your guest may as well benefit from it rather than pay \$ 1 per minute under some difficult overseas SIM card option;
- ❑ please leave quite explicit and detailed instructions regarding how to use the TV and audio systems, TV systems can be very tricky at times, and are frequently multi controlled. It's easy when you know how, but when you are new to a system it can be very confusing indeed;
- ❑ leave some DVDs/ films which guests can watch if they want a rest day or inclement weather forces them inside; and leave them a selection of books they can read;
- ❑ information on what days the garbage is collected and how it is collected. We have come across some very complicated systems of garbage collection and it is important that garbage is put into the correct bins/ colored bags/ boxes and disposed of correctly. This seems to vary enormously from country to country and town to town. Earlier in this book I told you about a house swap we once had where we were left an eight page booklet on garbage disposal and collection. It was very complicated indeed, in fact so complicated that we ended up taking our garbage out with us every day and finding a public place to dispose of it outside of the home;
- ❑ leave a surplus of everyday cleaning substances and essentials such as toilet rolls, soaps, detergents, cleaning cloths, cleaning substances and so on. Do not expect guests to buy essentials and cleaning materials for you;

Checklist:

How to Leave your Own Home & How to Welcome your Guests

- ❑ leave a note indicating which, if any, foodstuffs in your fridges and cupboards can be used – most people are happy for guests to help themselves to most everyday foodstuffs in cupboards such as vinegar, herbs and spices, sugar, tea, coffee and so on. It is best if it is clear which can be used. It is also important to make clear which cannot be used. For example, most are happy for cooking sherry to be used but not the \$ 200 bottle of wine;
- ❑ the contact number of a local cleaner in case guests prefer to have the house professionally cleaned before they leave. Most people are happy to give and receive a normal run of the mill clean-up and tidy-up. Let them know you expect the house to be in the same condition they found it in, that is, clean and tidy. As a rule, in addition to ensuring that the house and bathrooms are clean and tidy, we always wash the bed clothes and towels in the morning before we leave and make up the beds with the clean linen. If this is what you expect, let your guests know this;
- ❑ detailed instructions, codes, passwords, and phone numbers for your home security system. Setting of an alarm can be disruptive to the neighborhood and anxiety-ridden for the offender. Usually, a security service will call when the alarm has been tripped and if the person answering the phone does not know the password, the police are sent. If they fail to prove they are guests and you cannot be reached, they will be arrested. This is a terrible way to start a vacation.

The above sounds like a long list and a lot of work to put together. However, the good news is that you only have to do it once, and then just update it as and when required. Make multiple copies of some of the pages to allow your house guests to take those pages with them if they need the information, particularly in relation to public transport and local deals and places of interest to visit. If you have any expensive items or personal items which you do not wish others to see, use or touch, lock them away so that you know they are safe. In addition to the folder, it is really nice to add a little welcome gift. Commonly, people leave a bottle of white wine chilling and a little cheese and crackers. Sometimes people leave a jar of local produce or maybe some homemade preserves. Some may leave fresh fruit, fresh bread and butter, others a fancy bubble bath. It is up to you whether you do this or not, and of course it is not always possible, especially if you are off travelling and a succession of different guests are coming to your house while you are overseas. A small welcome gift is always appreciated, especially if it comes after a long and arduous journey and it saves you going out shopping on your first day at your new home,

Checklist:

How to Leave your Own Home & How to Welcome your Guests

allowing you to relax and enjoy your first evening and settle in enjoying a little bit of luxury in the way of a gift received. If you do have the luxury of personally meeting and greeting your guests, it is a great advantage, as it is often easier to show and explain how things work than to leave instructions on when to press which buttons on each gadget. It is also lovely to welcome guest with a cup of tea or a glass of wine/ water. Here I do make a plea, however, if you are greeting your guest personally; remove yourself from your house within one hour. Your guests will usually be tired, having had a substantial journey to reach your house/ country/ town. Be aware of this, and only show them the “tricky” gadgets, the ones which it is easier to explain by showing than by telling. Offer to answer any questions they may have, and then remove yourself quite quickly. Guests are not in a position to ask you to leave your own home, but they may be desperate to do something they do not like to do in front of you, such as take medication, call a relative, or prepare a meal. You do not know their situation and I have had people complain that hosts have overstayed their welcome when greeting new guests.

Travel consults and vaccines:

☐ <https://screen.yahoo.com/reluctantly-healthy/essential-traveling-tips-170805243.html>