

THE ULTIMATE CANADIAN SNOWBIRD DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

As Canadian snowbirds increasingly look beyond the United States for their winter escapes, proper preparation becomes even more important. International destinations offer incredible value—often 30-40% less expensive than Florida—along with rich cultural experiences and diverse environments.

This comprehensive checklist will guide you through every step of preparing for your extended stay abroad, from documentation and home security to healthcare and financial planning. Use it as your roadmap, starting 3 months before departure to ensure a smooth transition to your winter paradise.



by **Kymm Dracup**

DOCUMENTATION & LEGAL PREPARATION

Passport & Travel Documents

- Ensure passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond your planned return date
- Check visa requirements for your destination (Portugal: 90 days visa-free, then residency permit)
- Apply for necessary visas or residency permits for stays beyond tourist visa limits
- Make copies of important documents (passport, visa, insurance, etc.)
- Store digital copies in secure cloud storage accessible from abroad
- Register with the Registration of Canadians Abroad service (travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration)



Insurance & Legal Matters

Purchase comprehensive travel medical insurance specifically for Canadian snowbirds

Ensure coverage is valid for your entire stay and covers pre-existing conditions

Prepare power of attorney documents (both financial and healthcare)

Update your will and ensure executor knows your travel plans

Prepare a document with emergency contacts and important information

Research local emergency services at your destination



Tax Considerations

Consult with a tax professional about implications of extended stays abroad

Understand residency requirements to maintain provincial healthcare

Document your departure and return dates for tax purposes

Research tax treaties between Canada and your destination country

Set calendar reminders for Canadian tax filing deadlines

HOME SECURITY & MANAGEMENT

Home Insurance & Security

- Notify home insurance provider of your absence (may require special coverage)
- Arrange for regular property checks (requirement for most insurance policies)
- Install timers on lights and consider smart home security features
- Secure all windows, doors, and other entry points
- Consider installing security cameras with remote monitoring
- Notify trusted neighbors of your absence and share emergency contact information

Home Services & Utilities

- Arrange for mail forwarding or digital mail service
- Consider reducing heating to economical level (but not so low pipes could freeze)
- Unplug non-essential appliances and electronics
- Arrange for snow removal and yard maintenance
- Place hold on newspaper and other deliveries
- Notify service providers of your absence (cleaning services, etc.)

Vehicle Considerations

- Prepare vehicle for storage (fuel stabilizer, tire pressure, battery maintenance)
- Notify auto insurance company (may qualify for reduced "storage" rates)
- Consider canceling or reducing auto insurance if appropriate
- Arrange for someone to start vehicle occasionally if not storing properly
- Ensure vehicle registration won't expire during your absence

HEALTHCARE PREPARATION



Provincial Healthcare

- Understand your provincial healthcare coverage limitations while abroad
- Check if your province allows extended absences without losing coverage
- Notify provincial health authority of travel plans if required
- Apply for any necessary forms for emergency out-of-country healthcare



Medications & Medical Records

- Obtain sufficient prescription medications for your entire stay (typically requires special authorization)
- Get a letter from your doctor listing your medications (generic names)
- Create a medical information card with conditions, medications, and allergies
- Compile digital copies of important medical records
- Research whether your medications are legal at your destination
- Identify pharmacies at your destination for emergency refills



Medical Care Abroad

- Research healthcare facilities near your destination
- Create list of English-speaking doctors and medical facilities
- Understand how to access emergency medical care at your destination
- Set up international telemedicine options if available through your provider
- Pack a comprehensive first aid kit and regular medications
- Consider medical evacuation insurance for serious emergencies

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Banking & Currency

- Notify banks and credit card companies of your travel plans
- Research optimal currency exchange strategies for your destination
- Consider opening an account with a bank that has no foreign ATM fees
- Set up online banking and bill payment systems
- Order some local currency before departure for immediate needs
- Research typical payment methods at your destination (cash vs. card)

Budget Planning

- Create a detailed budget for your entire stay
- Research cost of living at your destination
- Factor in exchange rates and potential fluctuations
- Include emergency funds for unexpected expenses
- Set up automatic payments for recurring Canadian bills
- Research local tax implications for long-term stays

Financial Security

- Set up travel notifications for all credit and debit cards
- Consider carrying two different credit cards from different networks
- Research fraud protection policies for your cards while abroad
- Set up account alerts for unusual activity
- Arrange for secure access to financial statements
- Have a backup financial plan in case of emergency

COMMUNICATION & TECHNOLOGY AND DESTINATION-SPECIFIC PREPARATION

Phone & Internet

- Research international phone plan options or local SIM cards
- Consider purchasing an unlocked phone for international use
- Download offline maps and translation apps
- Research internet availability at your destination
- Set up a VPN for secure connections and accessing Canadian content
- Configure international dialing on your devices

Staying Connected

- Set up video calling apps for staying in touch with family
- Configure email and messaging apps for international use
- Join online communities for Canadian snowbirds at your destination
- Research local emergency numbers and save them in your phone
- Set up cloud backup for photos and important documents
- Consider a portable WiFi device if traveling to areas with limited connectivity



Accommodation

- Confirm all reservation details and payment methods
- Research neighborhood safety and amenities
- Arrange for arrival orientation at your accommodation
- Understand lease terms and local rental regulations
- Research local utility costs if not included in rent
- Identify nearby essential services (grocery, pharmacy, etc.)



Local Knowledge

Learn basic phrases in the local language

Research local customs and cultural etiquette

Identify Canadian expat communities in your destination

Research local transportation options

Understand tipping customs and other cultural norms

Research typical weather patterns and pack accordingly



Safety & Security

Register with the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate

Research common scams targeting tourists in your destination

Save emergency contacts for local police, medical services

Understand local laws that might differ from Canada

Research safe and unsafe areas around your destination

Identify emergency meeting points if traveling with others

FINAL DEPARTURE CHECKLIST & CONCLUSION

1 Week Before Departure

- Confirm all travel arrangements and accommodations
- Check weather forecast at your destination for last-minute packing adjustments
- Notify credit card companies of exact travel dates
- Withdraw some cash in destination currency
- Check in with home security monitor or property manager
- Arrange transportation to airport
- Complete online check-in when available
- Charge all electronic devices
- Pack essential items in carry-on (medications, documents, etc.)
- Secure your home (unplug appliances, adjust thermostat, lock all doors/windows)
- Set light timers
- Empty refrigerator of perishables
- Take out trash
- Leave contact information with trusted neighbors or family



Congratulations on completing your Canadian Snowbird Departure Checklist! You're now well-prepared for an amazing winter season abroad. For more detailed information about specific destinations, including insider tips, local recommendations, and immersive cultural experiences, explore our comprehensive destination guides at Deep Travel Collections.

Our detailed guides for Portugal's Algarve, Mexico's Pacific Coast, Costa Rica, Panama, and other top Canadian snowbird destinations provide everything you need to transform your winter escape from ordinary to extraordinary.

RESOURCES AND WARM DESTINATION QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Government Resources

- [Travel.gc.ca](https://travel.gc.ca) - Official Canadian government travel information
- [Canada Revenue Agency](https://www.cra.gc.ca) - Tax information for Canadians abroad
- Provincial healthcare websites for specific absence regulations

Canadian Snowbird Associations

- [Canadian Snowbird Association \(snowbirds.org\)](https://snowbirds.org)
- [Snowbird Advisor \(snowbirdadvisor.ca\)](https://snowbirdadvisor.ca)

Online Communities

- Facebook Groups: "Canadian Snowbirds in [Destination]"
- [Expat.com](https://www.expat.com) Canadian forums
- [International Living Canada](https://www.international-living.com)

Health Insurance Resources

- [Travel Health Insurance Association of Canada](https://www.travelhealthinsurance.ca)
- Provincial auto clubs (CAA) travel insurance

Banking & Finance

- [XE Currency Converter](https://www.xe.com)
- [Wise \(formerly TransferWise\)](https://wise.com) for international transfers
- Major Canadian banks' international services pages



This comprehensive checklist was created by Deep Travel Collections to help Canadian snowbirds prepare for international winter escapes. For more information and detailed destination guides, visit our website.

Popular Snowbird Destinations

Mexico's Pacific Coast: Winter temperatures 75-85°F (24-29°C), 30-40% lower cost than Florida, 180 days visa-free

Costa Rica: Dry season December-April, 25-35% lower cost than Florida, excellent healthcare, 90 days visa-free

Dominican Republic: Minimal rainfall, 40-50% lower cost than Florida, 30 days on arrival (extendable to 120)

Colombia: "City of Eternal Spring" climate in Medellín, 50-60% lower cost than Florida, excellent healthcare

Cuba: High safety rating, 40-50% lower cost than Florida, tourist card required

Portugal's Algarve: Very high safety rating, 30-40% lower cost than Florida, excellent healthcare

Panama: USD as official currency, 25-35% lower cost than Florida, 180 days visa-free