

The Florida Snowbird Checklist

What to do before you fly north, and before you come back. From Ana Pereira at Lifebliesshub.

Closing up a house in Florida isn't like closing one up north. The heat and the humidity keep working all summer with nobody home, and storm season runs right through the middle of it.

This is the list I go through with my own clients.

PART ONE Before you leave

Start with the air conditioning

This is the one people get wrong.

- ☐ Leave the A/C running. Set it to 78 or 80 degrees, or set the humidistat between 55 and 60 percent.
- ☐ Put a fresh filter in before you go.
- ☐ Pour vinegar down the condensate drain line to clear it out.

Humidity is what damages a closed house here. It shows up as mildew in the closets, cabinet doors that don't sit right anymore, and a smell that takes weeks to get out. Running the A/C all summer costs a lot less than fixing any of that.

The drain line is the other one. It clogs, it backs up, and you come home to a stain on the ceiling.

Water

- ☐ Shut off the main water supply.
- ☐ Turn the water heater off, or put it on vacation mode.
- ☐ Turn off the ice maker.
- ☐ Run the dishwasher and the washing machine empty, then leave both doors open a crack.
- ☐ Pour a little water into the floor drains and any sink you don't use, so the traps don't dry out and let the smell back up.

Electric

- ☐ Unplug the TVs, computers and small appliances. We get more lightning here than anywhere else in the country.
- ☐ Leave the refrigerator running, or empty it completely, wipe it down and prop the door open with a box of baking soda inside. Half measures grow mold.

Bugs

- ☐ Take out all the food. That includes the pantry. Flour, sugar, cereal, pet food, all of it.
- ☐ Empty every trash can and wash it out.
- ☐ Book a pest treatment for the week you leave.
- ☐ Look for gaps around pipes, vents and under the doors.

Storm season, June through November

- ☐ Bring in the patio furniture, the planters, the grill, anything that can move in wind.
- ☐ Close the shutters, or leave the panels somewhere easy to reach.
- ☐ Cut back any branches touching the roof.

- ☐ Take photos of every room and of the outside of the house. If you ever have to make a claim, you'll be glad you did.
- ☐ Make sure somebody local has a key, your number, and your permission to go in.

The one nobody thinks about

- ☐ Call your insurance company and ask what happens if the house sits empty. A lot of policies cut your coverage back after 30 or 60 days with nobody living there. It's one phone call and it's worth making.
- ☐ Put your mail on hold with USPS and stop the paper.
- ☐ Check what your HOA expects from owners who are away.
- ☐ Keep the lawn and pool service going. Grass that's too long tells the whole street the house is empty.

Security

- ☐ Timers on two or three lights.
- ☐ Test the alarm and make sure the call list is current.
- ☐ Tell a neighbor you trust when you're leaving and when you're back.

If you're leaving a car

Battery tender on it, tires up, fuel stabilizer in the tank, cover over it.

PART TWO Before you come back

Start this about a week out.

- ☐ Have someone turn the water back on and stay in the house while it runs. A slow leak that's been going a week is a terrible way to start the season.
 - ☐ Get the A/C down to where you like it a full day early, so the house is dry when you walk in.
 - ☐ Run every faucet and flush every toilet to move the standing water out of the pipes.
 - ☐ Look at the ceilings and around the windows for stains.
 - ☐ Check for ant trails, wasp nests under the eaves, and anything in the cabinets.
 - ☐ Test the smoke alarms and change the batteries.
 - ☐ Wash the sheets and the towels. Linen that sat in a closet all summer smells like it.
 - ☐ Wipe everything down. Even a shut house collects dust.
 - ☐ Turn the water heater and the ice maker back on.
 - ☐ Get milk, coffee, bread and toilet paper in the house before you land.
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Arriving and coming home aren't the same thing

There's a difference between opening the door to a house that's been sitting, and opening the door to a house that's ready. That second one is what I do.

I look after a few homes in Lakewood Ranch, Sarasota and Bradenton, and get them cleaned and ready before the owners land. I keep the number small on purpose, so it's the same person every time and you always know who has your key.

Right now I have room for three more.

CALL OR TEXT

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in you."*

Lee W., client since 2024