

Travel Cybersecurity - April 8, 2023

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

Tina Nerat

Now that spring has arrived and the rains are subsiding, most of us are thinking about planning travel for later in the year. As part of the planning and the trip(s) themselves, cybersecurity considerations are important.

Planning. Be careful to use reputable online booking sites to avoid fake vacation rentals and cheap hotel scams. There is an article from 9/11/2021 at oakmont-learning.org under tech articles about different vacation rental resources. Also be sure to visit travel.state.gov for federal warnings about dangerous places for travel. Google "covid travel information" to get to the State Department site for Covid travel information. Make sure you have RFID sleeves for your passport and credit cards.

Before leaving on your trip. Backup critical data. Remove sensitive data. Update to the latest versions: OS, apps, anti-virus software, malware apps. Check privacy and location settings. Clear your history and cookies on your browsers. Turn off WiFi auto-connect and disable Bluetooth as much as possible. Update passwords. Limit the number of devices you take on the trip (more devices=more risk). Do NOT list specific dates if you look for a pet- or house-sitter online and think carefully about where you post this. Do you really want to ask in Oakmont only or thousands of people in Sonoma/Napa counties on Nextdoor?

While traveling. Beware of "shoulder-surfing" or get a privacy screen. Pay attention to physical security of your electronics. Do not use public WiFi; use a VPN for more security. Ditto for hotel WiFi. Using your cellphone as a WiFi hotspot is more secure. Do not use public computers in hotels (could have spyware or keystroke loggers). Get receipts or keep track of purchases. Be careful with ATMs that might have skimming devices attached. Be aware of the scam where the ATM machine card reader is jammed and you have to tap your credit/debit card to get the money out - make sure you get the receipt and log out of the transaction completely before walking away. Think before posting on social media or wait until you get home - do you really want people to know your home is empty?

To read an electronic version of this article with clickable links and other articles over the past 2+ years, visit oakmont-learning.org.