FINANCIAL JOURNEYS

FINANCIAL & RETIREMENT PLANNING FOR LIFE

SPRING 2025

Travel securely: Keep your information protected on the go

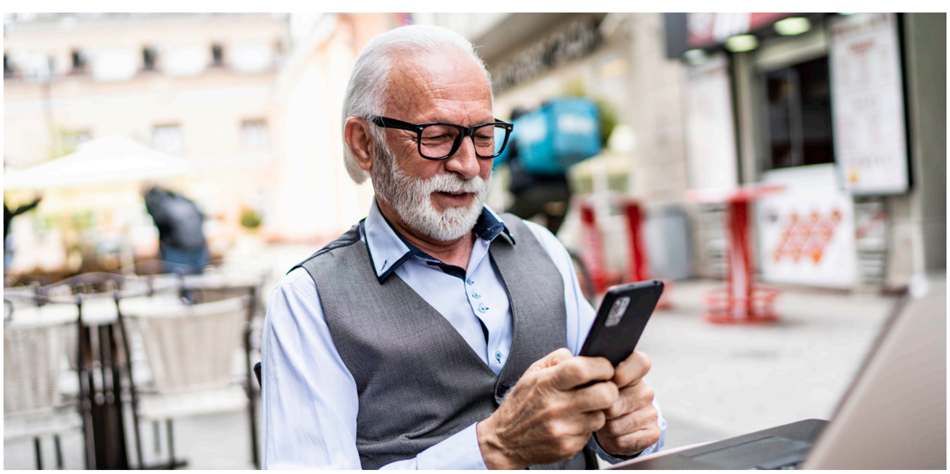
Learn about a few simple things you can do to protect your personal information while you travel.

Travel can be one of life's great pleasures, especially when you're enjoying retirement. Exploring new-to-you countries or revisiting favorite spots is fulfilling, whether traveling by yourself or with family or friends. Regardless of who you travel with, there can be the risk of an unwanted guest – in the form of threats to your personal information.

In the age of smartphones and abundant Wi-Fi hotspots, it's important to remember that your information travels with you. That's why ensuring your devices, as well as your credit and debit cards, are secure when you travel abroad is vital. Fortunately, there are precautions you can take to help minimize the threat of your sensitive data being compromised.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR DEVICE SETTINGS

When traveling, consider disabling certain settings on your devices, like Bluetooth and your laptop's webcam. Use Wi-Fi only through a trusted source rather than a public or unknown source, and make sure your device doesn't try to automatically connect to networks when you aren't using it.



Think about using a virtual private network (VPN) while traveling. A VPN helps to keep your personal information, browsing history and location private so you can use your devices more securely on the road.

> There are numerous providers available for purchasing VPN services, so you can explore the features that will work best for your circumstances.

LIMIT YOUR ACCOUNT ACCESS WHILE TRAVELING

It's also important to be mindful of the websites you're accessing while traveling. Even when using a VPN, try to avoid accessing web accounts that contain any sensitive information, such as your financial, personal or health information. If you do need to access any such accounts, consider changing your passwords when you arrive home as an added security measure.

Keep in mind that any devices you might use that are not your own are especially unlikely to be secure. Public computers, such as those in a hotel common workspace or an internet

Travel securely: Keep your information protected on the go (cont.)

café, pose an additional risk to your information. Looking up museum hours or directions to your dinner reservations is one thing, but it's best not to use any sort of public computer for anything you need to supply a password to access.

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE TAKING WITH YOU

Consider which of your electronic devices you're taking with you while you travel, and which you may be able to leave at home. For example, leave your laptop at home if you can, especially if you're traveling for pleasure rather than business. Likewise with your credit cards and any important documents – take only what you need, and make sure you're carrying them securely.

BE PREPARED TO VERIFY PURCHASES IF NEEDED

It's always a good idea to make sure your financial institution knows that you'll be traveling so your purchases aren't flagged as fraudulent. You may still be notified about suspicious charges, however, as stolen or counterfeit cards are always a risk.

Check with your credit card company before you travel to learn the process for approving any charges the company may flag as fraudulent, so you know what to expect. Debit cards also often have daily limits on ATM withdrawals and point of sale purchases. Certain transactions at high-risk merchants or some transactions identified as potentially fraudulent may also require additional verification from the merchant. It's good to be aware of all of this before your trip. ■

NEXT STEPS ↗

Here are a few more tips for traveling securely:

- Use ATMs inside banks whenever possible and avoid standalone ATMs.
- Pay attention to the card reader. If it is loose or appears to be tampered with, do not use that ATM.
- If you lose a card, report the loss to your financial institution immediately.

Preparing for a long and happy retirement

As with all of life's transitions, adjusting to retirement takes time. Here are five ways to get started.

1 **NURTURE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

Stay connected to the people who matter to you most; for example, by establishing weekly game nights with friends.

2 **FOCUS ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.**

Keep up with your regular wellness appointments, stay active and get plenty of good sleep.

3 **GET YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER.**

If you need to clarify your retirement income stream, do that now with the help of your financial advisor.

4 **TAKE UP A NEW HOBBY.**

Learn how to paint, speak a new language or play an instrument, or audit a college class.

5 **GIVE BACK.**

Volunteer, donate money or contribute to your community in another way. Giving makes the world a better place for everyone.

How an HSA can be a powerful investment and retirement tool

Complement your retirement plan with a health savings plan for the things Medicare doesn't cover

Retirement is an exciting time and a new phase of life worth celebrating with family and friends; however, planning for retirement can sometimes bring uncertainty. Things like changes in your personal life, market fluctuations and uncertainty around Social Security can raise questions in even the most detailed plan.

Although Medicare covers a variety of medical expenses, it isn't the all-encompassing healthcare coverage many people assume. Fortunately, you can leverage the benefits of a health savings account (HSA) to accumulate additional savings for medical and healthcare-related expenses.

An HSA can help cover healthcare costs that Medicare doesn't, along with dental, hearing and vision expenses. With comparable – and, in some cases, better – perks than a 401(k) or IRA, your HSA can help you save and prepare.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR AN HSA AND WHAT ARE SOME OTHER REQUIREMENTS?

- Anyone with a high-deductible health policy can qualify for an HSA. It is not limited to employees.
- There are no income limits affecting eligibility.
- You do not need earned income to contribute to an HSA.
- The HSA belongs to you, not to your employer. If you have a qualified high-deductible health policy through your employer but your employer does not offer an HSA, you can still open an HSA.
- An HSA can be set up through any qualified trustee or custodian.
- You may sign up for and contribute to an HSA as long as you have not yet enrolled in Medicare Part A or B. Once you enroll in Medicare, however, you may no longer make contributions to your HSA.

An HSA is a tax-advantaged medical savings account that allows you to set money aside and withdraw funds to pay for qualified medical expenses. HSA accounts are unique in that they are triple tax advantaged. Contributions to an HSA are tax deductible, earnings are tax free, and distributions from HSA accounts are tax and penalty free if the funds are used to pay for or reimburse yourself for qualified medical expenses.

HSAs can be especially useful because they are not "use it or lose it" accounts. Unlike flexible spending accounts, unused HSA dollars roll over every year.

The annual amount you can contribute to an HSA depends on whether you have single or family health coverage, if you have continual coverage throughout the year, and if you are eligible to make a catch-up contribution (for age 55 and older). For 2025, HSA contribution limits are $4,300 for an individual or $8,550 for a family. Individuals 55 and older can contribute an additional $1,000 catch-up contribution for a total of $5,300 per year.

Distributions that are used for other purposes beyond qualified medical expenses are subject to tax and a 20% penalty if you are under age 65. If you are 65 or older, you can use your HSA much like a 401(k) and withdraw funds for any purpose but will have to pay income taxes on withdrawals made for nonmedical purposes.

THINKING AHEAD

If you or your spouse have creditable health insurance from a group employer, then you could consider delaying Medicare enrollment and continuing to contribute to your HSA, even once you turn 65. Something to consider is that if you decide to delay enrolling in Medicare beyond age 65, when you do eventually enroll, Medicare will automatically give you six months of retroactive benefits. This means if you decide to delay enrollment, you'll need to stop contributing to an HSA six months before you do decide to enroll in Medicare. If you do delay enrollment, this may also impact how much you can contribute in that final year, depending on when in the year you eventually enroll.

Your decision to delay may depend on the benefits coverage between Medicare and your employer, plan costs or your current tax picture and the tax advantages you gain by contributing to an HSA. No two individuals face the same situation when it comes to their healthcare benefits. Depending on your personal circumstances, goals and budget, an HSA may help you to maximize your benefits. ■