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REAL ESTATE

# My Seemingly Boring Suburban Home Helped Me Flourish During Quarantine

By Candace Ramirez • published Dec 1, 2020

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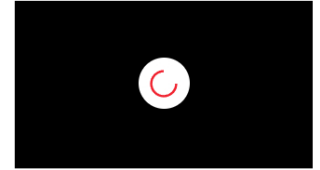
## DEAR HOME

Love, Me

There's probably never been a calendar year where we've spent more time at home than this one. This story is part of Apartment Therapy's *Love Letters to Home* series, which thanks our homes for all they've done for us in 2020.

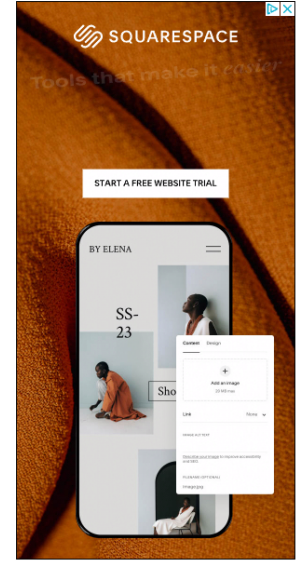
You can read more love letters [here](#) before writing one of your own.

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To my sweet Kirkland home,

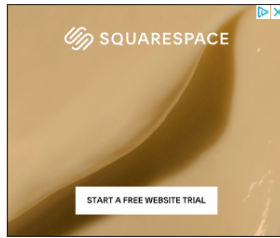
I was wrong about you.

During my 20s I lived in a handful of Seattle apartments, never staying in one spot for long. Though downtown living overwhelmed me at times, it's hard to beat a city with a coffee shop on every corner. I'd made it to my dream city, and I felt proud of every shoebox-sized apartment I rented.

Eventually, though, I needed something more laid-back. I wanted to stay in Seattle's orbit, but just far enough away that I'd no longer worry about being startled awake at dawn by a Speedo-clad saxophonist outside my building. (Yes, that happened.)

Even though I was ready for you, I admit I felt hesitant when my boyfriend and I came to see you for the first time. I loved your blushing cherry blossom tree, your natural light, and most of all, I loved that you offered us room to breathe after years of studio apartment living. You were a

forced that you offered us room to breathe after years of studio apartment living. You were a decidedly grown-up choice. Still, I was afraid to give up my exciting Seattle life.



Credit: Candace Ramirez

That's why when we moved in, we never really "moved in." I made you functional, but I never took the time to decorate you. I thought I'd get bored and move again after a year, so why bother? That's where I was wrong.

When the pandemic hit, you came through for me in ways I never expected, and I am forever grateful. You gave me three powerful things.

**A place to heal.** When I had knee surgery two months into quarantine, you made the whole ordeal smooth and comfortable. You gave me a [little home gym](#) where I could sweat out my pre-surgery anxieties. Your big windows let sunlight and nature into my room while I healed. After a couple weeks of bedrest, my first trip to the living room felt like *going somewhere*. I started to appreciate you more.

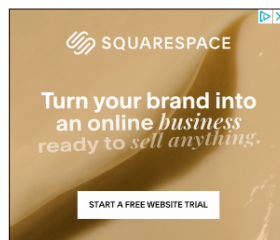


**A stronger relationship.** I'd heard horror stories about cohabitating couples annoying each other or even breaking up during quarantine. Had we stayed in our old apartment, that might have been us, too. Instead, you helped us thrive as a couple by giving us each a dedicated space for solitude.

For me, it's my home gym where I flow through calming yoga poses or meditate to my favorite songs. For him, it's his home office where he spends hours gaming with friends or building computers. This time apart gives us the energy and space we need to enjoy each other's company the rest of the time. You've given us peace.

**A steady stream of inspiration.** My small business grew during quarantine, and I credit you for that. You make me feel inspired. As a classic Cancerian, I need to feel cozy and relaxed in order to work. I've never been able to focus in an office building, but thanks to you, I have the coziest home office that motivates me to create. When I lose focus, I grab some treats from the kitchen and teach our dog a new trick or two. At the end of the day, you don't judge me when I finish up work from my couch, shrouded in blankets. With your support, I built my dream business this year without ever leaving home.

So, to my benefit, I was wrong about you. You've given me so much more than I ever expected, and I really, truly appreciate you. You bring us comfort, togetherness, and boundless inspiration. I think it's time to give you the glow up you deserve.



With so much gratitude,  
Candace



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by SUSAN MARQUE



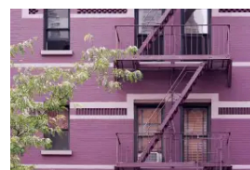
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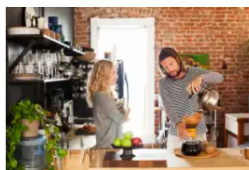
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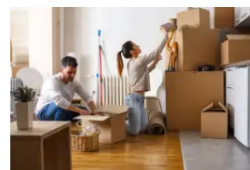
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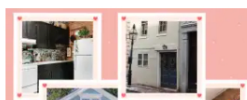
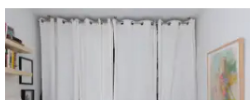
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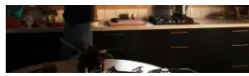
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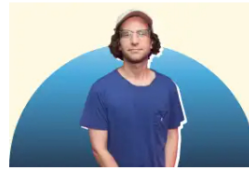
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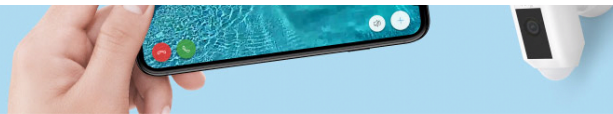
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# 5 Vital Things to Do at Home Before You Travel



By Courtney Balestier • published Jun 1, 2023

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Credit: Ring

In the days before a big trip, our to-do lists just seem to get longer: Pack an extra phone charger! Pick up that prescription refill! Don't forget to check in for your flight! There's so much to remember when preparing *yourself* for travel that it can be easy to forget to prepare your house, too.

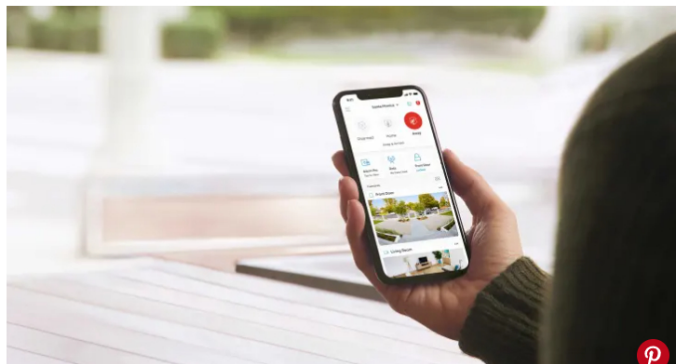
Making sure your home is safe and sound while you're gone is a crucial part of travel prep — but luckily, it's not complicated. From better security outside to easier maintenance inside, these simple precautions will help you enjoy your travels with extra peace of mind.

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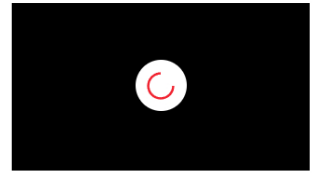
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## 1. Unplug Small Appliances

It's a no-brainer way to reduce your energy use: Save a few dollars by unplugging your TV, computer, and other small appliances. (Whether you spend that savings on an in-flight cocktail is up to you.) To conserve even more energy, you can also adjust your thermostat and turn your water heater down or off.



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## 2. Get an Extra Set of Eyes

A [Ring](#) doorbell or camera can keep you in the loop from anywhere. Replace an existing bell with the [Ring Video Doorbell Wired](#) or choose the battery-operated [Ring Video Doorbell 2nd Generation](#). Both feature high-quality live video, motion detection and alerts, and two-way talk. Or try the [Ring Floodlight Cam Wired Plus](#), which has a wide-angle view and bright LED bulbs, plus a built-in siren. And it can't hurt to have an extra set of eyes inside, which is where the [Ring Indoor Cam 2nd Generation](#) comes in handy. (Tell your cat we said hi.)

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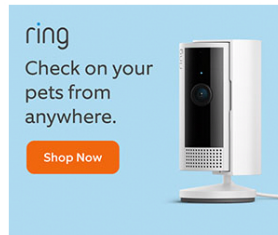
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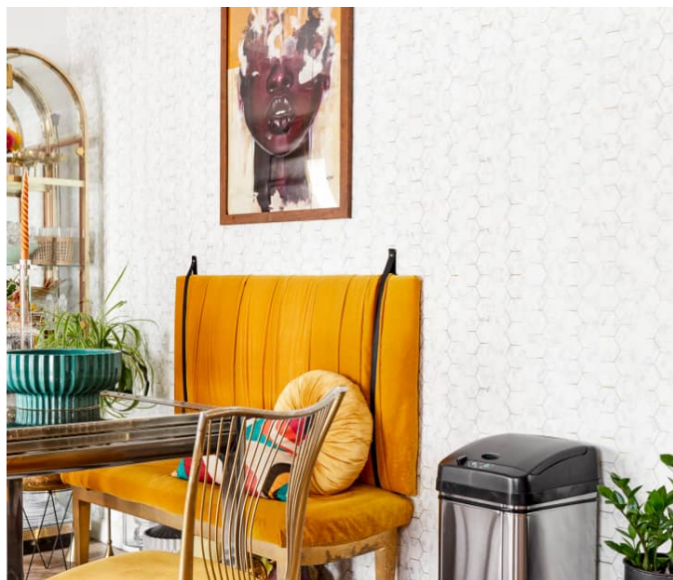
## 3. Pause Your Mail

Nothing says "no one's home" like an overflowing mailbox. If you're going to be gone for longer than a couple of days, stop delivery of your mail and newspaper. Plus, this way your mail won't get damaged by the weather while you're gone.



## 4. Don't Forget Your Plants!

We've all come home to find a drooping and disgruntled houseplant that's gone too long without water. Give them a good drink before you leave. Depending on the length of your trip, have a friend stop by to water them while you're gone, or use self-watering stakes to keep them hydrated.





Credit: Photo: Rikki Snyder; Props: Margaret Ward; Talent: Choco

## 5. Clear the Air

Three words you *never* want to say when you get home: “What’s that smell?” Prevent things from getting that far by cleaning out the fridge, emptying the litter box, and taking out the trash. Rinse the garbage disposal with vinegar to clear out any lingering food scraps. And — this one is easy to overlook — toss any fresh-cut flowers. You’ll thank us after your trip.

*See all the ways Ring can help keep your home safe, whether you're there or not.*

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