

Travel with pets

Some questions to ponder

How well was your pet socialized to travel as a young animal?

If he has had positive travel experiences and is accustomed to being in a kennel, he's more likely to be a good traveler.

Is he in good health?

What kind of temperament does he have?

If your pet is either very timid or extremely high strung, he may make the trip more worrisome than wonderful.

What kind of transportation is involved?

Cars and airplanes are relatively hassle-free means of travel, but be advised that either can be less than safe in very hot or very cold weather. Many busses, trains, and cruise ships prohibit pets entirely, except dogs who accompany people who are physically challenged.

General travel tips

Don't feed your pet the morning of your departure, and do not give him water for four hours before departure, unless the day is hot.

Exercise your pet and allow him to eliminate immediately prior to departure. Administer any prescribed tranquilizers at the designated time.

The pre-trip checklist

Once you determine that your pet will make a good traveler, make sure to prepare him for the trip. A pre-trip veterinary exam is a must. Keep these points in mind:

- Interstate plane travel usually requires a health certificate, stating the animal's general health and current vaccinations. This must be signed by a veterinarian and issued no earlier than ten days prior to departure.
- Your airline may also request a copy of your pet's rabies vaccination certificate.
- International trips may require a health certificate signed by the state veterinarian.
- Be aware of important restrictions in the country of destination.
- Ask your veterinarian about motion sickness medication or tranquilizers, if you think they are necessary. (Never medicate your pet with human medications. Tranquilizers, for instance, can cause a drop in the animal's body temperature.)
- Make sure the crate is well ventilated and large enough for him to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably.
- As you pack, keep your pet's health papers easily accessible.

The essentials... your traveling pet will need

- Food and water dishes
- A container of your pet's regular food, and possibly bottled tap water from home. (It's not wise to leave bowls of food and water in your pet's carrier, to avoid possible motion sickness. In addition, your pet will need to eliminate more frequently and unpredictably.)

- Schedule water breaks every few hours (more frequently in very hot weather). Give your pet the opportunity to eliminate 20 minutes to an hour after each break. Wait until you have reached that day's destination to feed your pet.
- A "security blanket" such as a towel or old clothing in your pet's carrier to make him feel more secure about being away from home.
- Both cats and dogs require a collar or harness, leash, and ID tag that gives your name, address, and home telephone number plus your destination number. Neither animal should ever be outside without being placed on a leash, and both should always wear collars.
- Cats will require a litter box and cat litter. Carry a filled box inside a garbage bag to prevent spills and contain odors, plus a scoop and plastic bags for disposal of used litter.

Your pet's home away from home

To acquire a list of hotels that accommodate animals, consult Mobil Travel Guides 1997 (Rand-McNally). While you and your pet are hotel guests, observe these courtesies:

- Display a do not disturb sign on your door and inform hotel personnel when you leave your pet alone in your room.
- Have your pet sleep in her carrier rather than on furniture.
- For cats, provide a scratching post or piece of nubby carpeting for claw sharpening instead of hotel bedspreads or drapes.
- Be aware of your dog's bathroom needs to avoid accidents.

Car travel

Rules of the road if your trip is by car:

- Never let your dog ride with her head out of the car window because sand and debris could hurt her eyes
- Never leave your pet in a hot car! She can die within 20 minutes, even with the window cracked open.
- Avoid leaving your pet unattended in the vehicle, but if you must leave your pet in a car in cool weather, be sure windows are up and doors are locked.

Air travel

Here are some tips for air travel:

- Check with your air carrier to find out if they allow pets in the cargo hold or in the cabin.
- If pets are allowed, make a reservation for your pet, and book a direct flight if possible. Only one or two dogs are allowed per flight, so reservations must be made well in advance.
- Travel mid-week to avoid the Friday to Monday airport rush. For the same reason, do not ship pets on holidays.
- Ask your airline if your pet can ride under the seat in front of you. Under-seat carriers must be 21"x 14"x 8" or smaller.
- Pets may also travel as checked baggage in the cargo hold, which is a pressurized, temperature-controlled compartment that is required by law to provide adequate ventilation for safe animal transport. A pet flying without you must travel in the cargo hold. Very large dogs are usually not taken on passenger flights and must travel by air freight on a cargo flight.
- Only healthy, adult animals should be shipped in a cargo hold. The environment in the cargo hold can change depending on the weather, so ask what your pet may experience. For

summer travel, schedule an early morning or evening flight to avoid the heat of the day. Do not put choke collars on animals flying in the cargo hold; use a flat-buckle collar.

Cargo crates

Pets traveling in the cargo hold must have a U.S. Department of Agriculture approved carrier. These are available from the airline or at most pet stores. Make sure the crate is securely fastened but unlocked in case the pet must be removed in an emergency.

The crate should contain a water dish attached by brackets, positioned to be filled by an attendant without opening the crate. Newspaper or some other absorbent, disposable material may be the most convenient for your pet's bedding.

Clearly mark the crate "Live Animal", and put arrows on two sides indicating the correct upright position. Paste a label on the top of the crate indicating your name, address, phone number, and destination. Some airlines require health papers to be attached outside the crate, clearly visible. Airlines say that crates "decorated" with colorful strips of plastic tape, or painted with a design, make them easier to identify for owners wishing to confirm that pets were loaded on the aircraft.

Make a note of baggage retrieval times and pick up your pet at the "special handling" area of baggage claim upon arrival.

Leaving your pet home, but not alone

You may decide that your pet would do best at home, surrounded by the sights, sounds and smells she knows best. You can hire an individual or a pet-sitting service to tend to your pet in your home while you're away. In some cases, refilling food and water dishes may be all you require, or you may wish to pay for extra visits, walks, and attention. These services can also be hired to water plants, bring in mail, and turn lights on and off to give the home that "lived-in look", which deters thieves.

In-home sitters and boarding

By choosing to bring your pet to a person who does pet-sitting in their own home, you allow your pet to get close attention and care in a personal setting.

Visit the residences of in-home pet sitters. Note the cleanliness and noise level. Inquire as to the maximum number of animals that the person will care for at a time.

Whatever service you choose, ask for references, and check them out. You don't want to leave your pet in the hands of someone who is less than responsible, and you don't want to give an untrustworthy person the key to your home.

Boarding

Boarding kennels are the most commonly used pet care alternative. They vary a great deal in services provided, quality, and cost, so check around.

The Animal Humane Society has a full-service pet boarding facility.

When you do select the best way to care for your pet in your absence, make sure to provide all the information the caregiver may need. To help maintain a regular schedule, provide your caregiver with:

- Your pet's regular feeding, sleeping, and playing schedule
- A supply of everyday food
- Any medications your pet needs

- Your emergency phone number, your veterinarian's phone number, and someone who can authorize emergency veterinary care

