

Traveling with Your Pet

Traveling by Car

If you're taking your pet on a long drive, it pays to plan ahead. If your pet is not accustomed to riding in the car, get him used to it gradually. Start by sitting in the car (without going anywhere) with him for short periods of time. To make it a more positive experience, you can give him a treat or play with him.



Progress to taking your pet for short jaunts in the car. By the time you're ready to go on a long trip, traveling in the car should be less stressful for your pet. If your pet continues to be anxious, try giving him one of the herbal formulas designed to soothe and calm. Again, try this ahead of time, in case your pet has an adverse reaction. Sometimes, playing the radio or an audio book can help relax your pet.

If you'll need to stop overnight, you should plan ahead by locating pet-friendly accommodations along your route. Many motel and hotel chains are happy to accommodate pets. If your pet is not a cat or dog, you may want to contact the hotel directly to make sure they take your type of pet. Here are some helpful websites that list pet-friendly places to stay and also contain helpful hints for traveling with pets:

www.petsonthego.com

www.petswelcome.com

Before you leave on your trip, it's a good idea to have your dogs and cats microchipped with your address and phone number or, at least, equipped with up-to-date I.D. tags.

If you have a dog, give her a good long walk before you start out and make frequent stops so she can stretch her legs. Before you open the car door at a stop, make sure your dog is restrained by a leash and collar or harness. If your dog is prone to lunging or otherwise attempting to dash out of the car, consider using a harness rather than a collar to help lessen the chance that she might escape. Keep her on a leash at all times when she's outside the car or hotel room. Even if she normally responds to voice commands, she may spook easily in new environments.

Cats should be kept in a carrier or crate while you're driving. At rest stops, you can let your kitty out (in the car, of course) to use the litter box. Or, use a crate large enough to hold a small cat-litter tray. Before opening the car door, make sure your cat is securely back in the carrier.

Take along a supply of your pet's regular food, medication, and some treats – now is not the time to change your pet's diet. Also, you might want to bring along your pet's food and water bowls, bed and favorite toy to provide comfort and familiarity for your pet during your stay in foreign accommodations.

Wherever you stay with your pet, be courteous. Respect the rules of the establishment – many places don't want you to leave your pet unattended in the room, for instance. Bring along poop scoop bags to pick up after your dog. If you are traveling during inclement weather, pack a towel to wipe muddy paws.

Traveling by Air

If you'll be traveling by airplane, you should contact the airline well in advance of your trip to find out whether there is room for your pet on the flight, how much it will cost, and what's required in terms of documentation (such as current health and vaccination certificates). Every airline establishes its own policies regarding pets.

There are several different options for how your pet can fly: as carry-on baggage, as checked luggage, or as cargo. Flying as carry-on baggage is the most comfortable for the pet, but this mode of travel is restricted to smaller animals, since the animal must travel in a carrier that fits under the seat.

Cargo shipping can be a safer option than checking your pet as luggage, since professional shippers have experience in providing an environment suitable for specialized cargo like live animals. Some passenger airlines offer cargo shipping, so check with the airline. For more details on having your pet travel by air, visit the pet care library at www.healthypet.com (click on Dog Articles and then look for the article called "Traveling by Air with Your Pet" under the heading Pet Care Tips).

Vacationing with Your Dog

If you haven't taken a vacation with your dog, give it some thought. It can be great fun to have your dog along on your adventure, and many hotel chains accept dogs these days. To find dog-friendly lodging, visit www.dogfriendly.com, a website that also lists dog-friendly restaurants, parks, beaches and other attractions. The following website includes vacation rentals, such as cabins, condos and B&Bs: www.petfriendlytravel.com.

If you want to take it a step further, look into dog camps, the ultimate vacation for you and your dog. They provide games, training opportunities, and plenty of other dogs to interact with. For a list of dog camps, visit www.dog-play.com/camps.html.