

Tips for Traveling with Your Pet

Taking your dog or cat along can make the family vacation more fun for everyone, if you plan carefully. Here are some trip tips to make traveling with your pet more enjoyable.

Health and Safety

- Health Checks. Bring your pet to your primary care veterinarian for a check-up before going on an extended trip. Make sure all his or her vaccinations are up to date and obtain a copy of the vaccinations record to bring with you. Health certifications are required for airline travel or if crossing borders into Canada or Mexico.
- To keep your pet healthy as you travel, bring along a supply of his or her regular food and some local, or bottled, water. Be sure to bring any medications s/he needs.

Crates

A crate is an excellent way to keep your pet safe in the car, and is required for airline travel. It can also keep your pet from getting into trouble in a hotel or at your host's home. Crates are available from most pet supply stores. Look for these features when purchasing:

- Large enough to allow the pet to stand, turn and lie down.
- Strong, with handles and grips, and free of interior protrusions.
- Leak-proof bottom covered with absorbent material that can be removed for cleaning.
- Ventilation on opposing sides, with exterior rims or knobs to prevent blocked airflow.
- "Live Animal" label, arrows upright, with owner's name, address and phone number.
- Stock the crate with a comfortable mat, your pet's favorite toy, and a water bottle, and you and your pet are ready to go.

Identification

In the event that your pet gets away from you on your trip, you can increase the chances of recovery by making sure s/he can be properly identified:

- Make sure your dog or cat has a sturdy leash and collar. The collar should have identification tags with the pet's name, your name, your home phone number, and email address as well as proof of rabies shots.
- Consider a permanent form of identification, such as a microchip.
- Bring a recent picture of your pet along with you.

Traveling by Car

- Get your pet used to the car by letting him or her sit in it with you without leaving the driveway, and then going for short rides.
- Avoid car sickness by letting your pet travel on an empty stomach. However, make sure s/he has plenty of water at all times.
- Never give your pet sedatives or tranquilizers unless under a veterinarian's prescription. Such medications can interfere with your pet's ability to maintain its balance and equilibrium, which could prevent your pet from being able to brace itself and prevent injury. Air travel while under the influence of



these medications is especially dangerous as exposure to increased altitude can cause respiratory and cardiovascular problems.

- Keep the car well-ventilated. If the pet is in a crate, make sure that fresh air can flow into the crate.
- Do not let your dog or cat ride with their head sticking out of an open window. This can lead to eye injuries, falls or escapes!
- Never let your dog ride in the back of an open truck. This is extremely dangerous and can lead to severe injuries or death.
- Stop frequently for exercise and potty breaks. Be sure to clean up after your dog.
- Car rides are boring for everyone, so instruct your children not to tease or annoy the pet in the car.
- Never, ever leave your dog or cat unattended in a closed vehicle, particularly in the summer. See Summer Safety Tips for more information. If you must leave the car, designate a member of the family to stay with the dog.

Traveling By Plane

- Each airline has its own set of rules for pet air travel. You should call for information and make arrangements well in advance of your trip.
- All airlines require health certifications and proof of vaccinations.
- Some airlines will not transport animals when it is extremely hot or cold.
- Cats and dogs must be in an airline-approved crate when transported as cargo. However, cats and small dogs may ride under the seat in the passenger cabin in a crate or carrier that fits under the seat.

Traveling By Train, Bus and Boat

If you plan to travel by train or bus, you may be disappointed. Cats and dogs are not permitted on Amtrak trains or on buses operated by Greyhound and other interstate bus companies. (Service dogs are permitted.) Local rail and bus companies have their own policies.

You may fare better if you're taking a cruise. The QE2 luxury cruiser, which sails from New York to England/France, provides special lodging and free meals for your pet. However, you should check the policies of the cruise line or ship you will be traveling on before making plans to take your pet on a cruise with you.

Lodging

- Find out in advance which hotels or motels at your destination or on your route allow pets. Many do not, or have size or breed restrictions.
- If your pet is allowed to stay at a hotel, respect other guests, staff and the property.
- Keep your pet as quiet as possible.
- Do not leave the pet unattended. Many dogs will bark or destroy property if left alone in a strange place.
- Ask the management where you should walk your dog, and pick up after him or her. Do not leave any mess behind.
- Never take your pet on an escalator unless it is securely in its crate as its claws or fur could become caught.
- Remember that one bad experience with a pet guest may prompt the hotel management to refuse to allow any more pets. Be considerate of others and leave your room and the grounds in good condition.