



PET TRAVEL GUIDE

Used with permission from The Pet Professional Guild

Consider the needs of your pet carefully

Whether you are traveling by air, car, train or foot, consider the needs of your pet carefully. Thoroughly review the options available to you and plan accordingly. You should always consider your pet's health, safety and preferences when deciding whether to take your pet with you or leave them at home with a qualified pet sitter. If your pet becomes anxious, motion-sick or does not enjoy new and different situations, especially older dogs, then the best choice is often to leave them home where they feel safe, secure and comfortable. Always do what is best for your pet. If air travel is involved, then leaving pets home with a good pet sitter is usually the preferred option.

What to pack?

When you do travel with your pet, deciding what to take is always a good place to start. Depending on the mode of travel and the length of the trip, you will need to pack any necessary medications and medical records, especially if your pet has chronic health problems or is currently under a veterinarian's care for an ailment. And the appropriate paperwork is essential if your travels take you across international borders (see the links below for specific requirements).

The Basics:

- Food
- Food and water bowls
- Leash and collar
- Pet waste bags
- Bed and crate
- Required tags (ID and Rabies)
- Pet First Aid Kit
- Toys (especially an interactive or chew toy that will keep them entertained)

You will also need litter and a litter tray or disposable litter trays for your cat. Just in case, take a recent photograph along. It will be much easier to locate your pet if it becomes separated from the family if you have a photo to show people. And if your pet has an embedded ID chip you will need to have the phone number of the company and your account details so you can contact them immediately.

Your pet should have its own travel bag so you know where everything is and can grab items when you need them. Don't forget to carry some water if traveling by car, and remember to take enough of your dog's regular food for the entire trip. If you can't find the same brand on the road, abruptly changing a dog's diet can cause stomach upset and diarrhea, something to be avoided while traveling. It is always best to stick to their regular feeding schedule as well.

Car Travel

If your pet is unaccustomed to car travel, begin preparing in advance of any long trips by first getting your pet comfortable in the car. Gradually introduce it to being inside the car, and then take it on several local trips of increasing duration. This will help minimize the risk of motion-sickness and help your pet become accustomed to car travel. If your pet appears to be prone to motion sickness consult your vet.

Your animals should never be allowed to ride in the passenger seat, on your lap, or allowed to run loose in a moving car. Always use either a crate or one of the available special safety harnesses or other barrier systems to restrain your pets. Some states even require restraints on pets in a moving vehicle. Restraining your pet is as important to their safety as buckling up is to ours, and serves the same purpose as our seatbelts; to help protect your pet in the event of an accident, keep them from distracting the driver or jumping out an open window. Restraining your pet also maintains control of your pet when you stop for gas or a snack.

Crate-training your pet at home pays big dividends while traveling. Not only does the crate provide a safe place for your pet while traveling when secured to the seat or floor of the vehicle, but your pet will feel at home, safe and secure in their comfortable crate wherever your travels take you. And crates are the most effective way of restraining cats and small dogs in a moving vehicle.

For larger dogs, or if your pet prefers, there are also pet restraints available that work with your car seat belts or cordon off part of your vehicle. There are a wide variety of styles and types including harnesses, seat belt attachments, car booster seats, and screens and netting that create an internal barrier in your vehicle. Whichever method you choose, make sure it fits your pet, your pet is comfortable wearing it for hours at a time, and that your pet's head stays inside the car window to avoid eye injuries.

Stop every two hours; this is advisable for you as well as your pets. Stretch your legs and take a walk. Be a responsible pet owner and don't forget the pet waste bags and antibacterial wipes. Finally, never leave your pet alone in a parked car. They may attract thieves and can easily become overheated and distressed even on a cool day.

AIR TRAVEL

Traveling by air is always stressful for an animal so visit your vet well in advance of the planned trip to make sure your pet is physically fit and don't fly your pet unless it's absolutely necessary. But if you must, always check with the specific airline carrier and ask about all regulations (see the websites below for more information). Find out what their requirements are, including quarantine periods at your destination and if your pet qualifies to ride in the cabin or must be sent as checked baggage. You will need to determine the container requirements, check-in times and health documentation needs as well. Always use a good quality container in good condition; many mishaps occur every year from pets traveling in damaged or poor quality containers.

If your pet must travel as checked luggage use a direct flight and travel on the same plane as your pet. Don't travel when temperatures are forecast to be above 85 degrees F or below 45 degrees F. When you book your flight, ask the airline if you will be allowed to watch your pet being loaded and unloaded and when you check-in, request that you be allowed to do this. After you've boarded, notify the Captain and the head flight attendant that your pet is in the cargo area. If your flight departure is delayed or has to taxi for longer than normal, ask that they check the temperature in the cargo area and report back to you. Even if you know that your pet is a nervous flyer it is not advisable in most situations to use sedatives to calm them. According to the American Humane Society and the American Veterinary Medical Association, sedatives for air travel are not recommended because it is much more difficult for an animal to regulate their body temperature and maintain their balance and equilibrium if they've been sedated. Because of the altitude and temperature of a plane's cargo area, pets that fly in the cargo area are also more susceptible to respiratory and cardiovascular problems if sedated.

Before any trip, get your pet's papers and medications in order. Research the area you will be visiting in case there are diseases or hazards foreign to you and your pets. Your veterinarian can advise you about any additional vaccinations or medications, and have your vet perform a routine examination on your pet. Get any required legal travel documents (for air travel, contact the airlines for specifics that you'll need to give to your vet), make sure your pet's vaccinations are up-to-date, and pack any medications your pet might need during the trip. If you're giving your pet medication specifically for travel, test them on your pet several days before you travel to ensure the dosage is accurate and that there are no adverse side effects. Depending on where you've been, another examination by your vet after your trip might be a good idea to check for parasites such as roundworms, tape worms, hookworms, heartworms, ticks and fleas that might have been picked up while you were away.

If you are traveling overseas there are very strict and detailed regulations for transporting pets. Be sure to follow the vaccination requirements exactly. You don't want your family pet to undergo any unnecessary quarantine periods.

Pets are an important part of the family so be sure to take the time to plan and properly prepare them for the family vacation. By planning ahead and knowing what to pack, what to expect, and what to do each step of the way, you will ensure that your pet has a safe and stress-free holiday season.