

Essential Tips for Traveling with Animals

For some committed pet parents, a trip just isn't the same if their pet companions can't come too. However, traveling with animals can be highly stressful, both for you and your pets. If you're planning to take your pets with you on a trip, we have some tips to make the experience safe, comfortable and enjoyable for everyone.

Quick Checklist For An Animal Move

1. Check Your Destination's Pet Import Regulations

- Do you need to have an import permit?
- Does your pet have to be micro-chipped?
- What vaccinations are mandatory?
- Is a Blood Titer Test (RNATT) test mandatory?
- Do you need to have them checked for internal parasites?
- Does your pet need to go into quarantine upon arrivals?
- Must your pet arrive as cargo?

2. Get Your Pet Used To Their Travel Crate

- All pet carriers must have a waterproof base, sufficient ventilation and be securely fastened. Your pet must be able to stand and comfortably turn around in its carrier
- Pet crates for larger animals traveling as cargo must have a waterproof base, spring lock, sufficient ventilation and meet all IATA requirements
- Include familiar toys or objects in the crate or carrier including an item with your scent
- Leave the door open so your pet can enter and exit the crate or carrier before you leave on your flight
- Take your pet for drives in their crate or carrier

3. Schedule A Visit To Your Vet

- Check your pet's overall health
- If you haven't already, have your pet micro-chipped
- Verify your pet's rabies vaccination is valid
- Discuss any titer and other testing required prior to travel

4. Check Your Airline Or Road Route

- Check for traffic holdups if traveling by road.
- If you are flying, try to avoid airports that have challenging transfers (London, Australia, China) arrangements
- Keep stopovers to 2 hours or less where possible.
- Do not change airlines as this can cause delays and imposes additional stress on your animal

5. Find Pet-Friendly Hotels And Recreation

- Look for pet-friendly hotels and confirm their pet policy
- Locate a nearby animal hospital in case of emergencies
- Identify nearby pet-friendly parks and restaurants.

6. Prepare A Pet Go-Bag

Pack the following in a pet go-bag:

- Harness, collar and leash
- Name tag with your contact details
- Picture of you and your pet if you are separated
- Bottled water and a water dish
- Supply of their favorite pet food, dish, and spoon
- Pet treats
- Brush and shampoo
- Toys
- Medication
- Pet harness for cars, make sure they buckle up for their safety
- An old sheet for covering hotel furniture your pet likes too much
- Plastic bags and gloves for picking up after your pet

7. Schedule A Grooming Session

- A clean pet is a happy and relaxed pet.

Pre-Departure

Always ensure, your pet is micro-chipped for easy identification and has a collar and tag containing your name and contact information engraved on it regardless of your end destination or method of travel.

For international pet travel, it's also a sensible to include a travel tag listing your cell phone and destination contact details.

Flying With Pets

Pet air travel can be stressful for both you and your pets. Delays, bad weather, and faulty planes can all pose problems for your pet's happiness and welfare. However, if you want to travel with your pet on your flight, here are five easy tips to ensure your precious pet is happy and safe during their flight.

1. Always book direct flights where possible. This dramatically reduces the chances of your pet being stranded on the baggage trolley during severe weather events or manhandled by baggage staff during a stopover
2. Have your pet checked by a veterinarian before you fly: Ensure your pet's vaccinations are all current and ask your vet for a health certificate dated

- within 10 days of your flight. Check with your vet for ideas to relax your pet if you are concerned they may be scared or anxious during the flight
3. Purchase an IATA compliant pet transport crate. Your pet should be able to stand and turn around easily in the crate. Line your crate with bedding, to absorb mishaps. Tape a bag of dry food to the crate so airline personnel can feed your pet if necessary. Freeze a dish of water the night before you fly. It won't overturn during loading and will melt by the time your pet is thirsty
 4. Ensure your pet's crate is properly identified. Label the crate "Live Animal," and include your name, contact details, a photograph of your pet, your destination phone number. You should also carry a photo of your pet
 5. If your plane is delayed, or you are concerned about your pet's welfare, insist airline personnel check the animal when possible.

Keeping Your Pet Safe Flying Cargo

Many of us prefer to travel with our pet, be it for a holiday, business, or relocation. While we would all like to have our pet accompany us in the cabin, this is not always physically possible. The only option then is for your pet to fly in the cargo hold.

There are many steps you can take to help ensure your pet's safety when traveling in the airline's cargo hold. Begin by understanding your airline's pet travel policy. Bring a copy of it with you should you experience any problems at the check-in desk or cargo area.

Transferring to another plane adds to your pet's stress. Where possible, opt for a carrier with a non-stop flight to your destination. Remember airlines do not interline pets. So, if you are changing from one airline to another during a stopover, you must remember to pick up and recheck-in your pet.

Where possible, buy a pet crate with metal fastenings joining its halves. Increasingly, airlines are mandating metal fittings when it comes to connecting both halves of your crate.

Avoid flying with your pet during extremely hot or cold weather. The danger time for your pet is greatest during check-in, loading and taxiing.

Also, try to avoid major holiday and peak-traffic periods. Look to fly mid-week when airline employees are rarely as busy and they have more time to monitor your pet's journey.

Pet Road Trip

Traveling with your pet on a road trip involves more simply remembering to load your pet in the car, particularly if you intend traveling long distances. Here are four simple car travel ideas for helping your pet enjoy a serene and safe road trip.

1. Acclimatize your pet to riding in your car before your road trip. Take your pet on short drives, gradually lengthening their time your pet spends in your car. Remember to bring along your pet's vaccination record just in case
2. Secure your pet in a well-ventilated shipping crate. As with air travel, your pet's crate should be generously sized to ensure your pet's comfort. Always use your seatbelt to fasten your pet's crate so it won't slide around or become airborne if you have to stop suddenly. If you skip the crate always keep your pet on the back seat in a harness attached to their seat buckle and don't let your pet hang their head out the window
3. Put together a travel go-kit for your pet. Pack their favorite food, a bowl, waste scoop, plastic bags, grooming gear and your pet's travel documentation. Include a favorite toy or pillow so your pet has something familiar. Remember to include plenty of bottled water, and never feed your pet while your car is moving. Feed your pet a light meal three to four hours ahead of departure
4. Don't leave your pet unattended in a car. On hot days, a parked car can quickly become an oven bringing the risk of heatstroke. Similarly, in cold weather, your car can turn into a fridge, trapping the cold.

Dog-Friendly Airlines

Planning a flight with your dog can be complex and challenging. While air travel is a speedy way to get from one location to another, every airline has their own rules covering pet transportation.

Some allow small dogs to travel in the aircraft cabin as part of your carry-on luggage allowance. Others only allow pets to travel in the cargo area. Fees can vary from nothing at all to over \$500.

Moreover, most airlines have a one or two dog limit on each flight, so always make sure a "seat" is available for your dog before buying your own ticket.

If having your pet pooch fly with you in the cabin is your idea of nirvana, here seven handy tips on flying with your dog in to make any flight a breeze:

1. Make sure your dog is the right size to fit under your seat comfortably. Unfortunately, the size of your dog is important when deciding if you can bring your dog in-cabin with you. Airlines have strict regulations when it comes to the size of pet carriers.
2. Make sure your dog has the right temperament to fly. Nervous dogs or dogs with high anxiety levels do not make ideal plane companions. It's not worth the stress your dog will endure. Moreover, some airlines require your dog be well-trained, or quiet to fly. Vocal dogs are also not the ideal choice for an in-cabin companion.

3. Find a comfortable pet carrier. Make sure to check your airline's requirements governing the size and type of carrier you are allowed to bring onboard. While all airline specifications vary slightly, most require the carrier to be between 16 and 19 inches long, and about 10 inches tall. Don't try to make your dog fit in a carrier that is too small, it will stress them out even more. Remember, your dog's carrier is now your carry-on. That limits you to bringing one other personal item in the cabin, so choose a carrier with extra pockets on the side for items you might want to keep handy.
4. Pack all your pet's requirements. While baggage often gets lost, it's important to have enough food, toys and treats to get your dog through a few days after you land. Be sure to bring a non-spill water carrier and a favorite toy to keep your dog occupied during a long flight.
5. Call ahead to reserve your dog's space. Most airlines only allocate a fixed number of dogs to fly in-cabin, so make sure to call well ahead of time to book your dog's spot.
6. Brace for extra fees. Bringing your dog on your flight is not cheap. Depending on the airline, flying just one way with your dog can cost over \$100.
7. Make sure you have a veterinarian health certificate for your dog. Even if your airline doesn't require one, always bring a health certificate just in case. This certificate will show that your dog has had all its shots and vaccinations, and is healthy to travel in-cabin with you and the rest of the passengers.

Traveling With Cats

Sadly, cats are not happy-go-lucky travelers. They tend to get very stressed very easily. Cats much prefer routine and the safety of their home, and they notoriously dislike change.

However, if you absolutely must travel with your cat, here are seven easy travel tips to make the trip little less stressful for everyone.

Traveling By Plane

1. If your cat is traveling in the cabin with you, always get the name and contact information of the airline staff member confirming your reservation, or even better, get it in writing by email, or mail
2. Show up early to the airport. Most airlines impose a limit on how many animals they allowed in the cabin, and if the airline over-books pets in the cabin, it will be a first come first served
3. Be sure that you have an airline-approved cat carrier. It needs to fit under the seat in front of you

4. Have a cloth cover that covers your cat's carrier openings so your cat cannot see what is going on around them. The less they see, the less stress they experience
5. Keep copies of your cat's health certificate and vaccination record on your person and taped to the cat's carrier
6. If your cat tends to meow a lot when stressed, consider a mild sedative from your vet for the trip. This is controversial, but you don't want to be asked to leave the plane before it takes off because your cat is making too much noise, or have to check your cat into cargo
7. If you are checking your cat into cargo, be sure the inside of your cat's carrier is well padded, and the carrier is secure and will not break open if dropped. Be sure the carrier is labeled with your name, phone number, departure point, destination, and contact information.

Traveling By Car

1. The first thing is to ensure your cat is comfortable and safe. Place your cat in a large sturdy carrier that they can stand up in, turn around in and stretch easily. Cover the floor of the carrier with some type of bedding
2. Secure the carrier with a seatbelt. If you are in a car accident, you want your cat to be as safe and secure as possible
3. If it is a short trip, under 6 hours your cat will be fine in the carrier during the trip. If you are taking is a longer trip, you may want to let your cat out of the carrier periodically to get a drink of water and use the litter box.
4. Never let your cat out of the carrier while you are driving. Always park first. If your cat is wandering around the car while you are driving and you have an accident they could be seriously injured
5. Don't open the car door once your cat is out of their carrier and exploring your car unless your cat is wearing a harness. If your cat suddenly makes a break for freedom, it is much easier to step on a trailing leash that to grab a panicked cat
6. Make sure that your cat is wearing ID with your name, address, and phone number
7. Bring your cat's vaccination passport with you showing your cat's current vaccination status.

Final Observation

If your life includes treasured pets, then you understand that making plans to travel includes deciding whether to take your pets with you or leave them at home in the care of a sitter or opt for a boarding facility. Traveling with animals is never easy, however, like many pet owners, chances are you would prefer to take your best friend with you. If you aren't sure how to pull together plans for pet-friendly travel, we hope our tips on how to prepare for traveling with your pet helps makes your trip a safe secure one for you and your pet.