

Traveling Safely with your Pet

A well planned trip with your pets can be a great experience with a little bit of advance planning. First, you should decide if you are going to have your pet accompany you on your travels or arrange for your pet to have care at home or a boarding kennel. In home pet care is a great option for a pet who does not handle change well.

There are more places every year that will allow pets to stay with you at campgrounds, hotels and bed and breakfasts. With internet searches, reading books about traveling with your pet, calling the airlines and calling ahead to the local Chamber of Commerce at your destination, you often can find pet-friendly airlines and facilities. Of course, you want to be very considerate in how you handle your pet when the hotels will be gracious enough to accommodate you. You should cover the beds and floors in hotel rooms with a clean sheet (your own, not theirs), not leave your pet there unattended when they could bark and disturb other guests. Always pick up your dog's stools and refrain from letting him or her urinate in the exit doorways of hotels. If you are careful with your pet, others will also be invited to stay in the same hotel.

If you will be flying with your pet, there are more precautions you should take. 1. Sedation is generally not recommended as some medications can trigger equilibrium, respiratory, cardiovascular or temperature regulation problems. Instead, condition your pet to be comfortable in a pet carrier.

2. Be sure the pet carrier is airline approved and the correct size - neither too large nor too small. The pet must be able to stand in the carrier with their head above their shoulders. A carrier that is too large could cause injury if there is turbulence.

3. You must have a rabies certificate, health certificate signed by a veterinarian at a recent office visit and a letter of acclimation if the weather is extremely hot or cold. If the weather does not allow your pet to fly, plan for last minute flight changes.

4. The pet carrier needs "Live Animal" stickers, absorbent material, a water dish and a 24 hour supply of food taped to the top. I also include a leash on top in case there is a delay or your pet is separated from you so the dog can be walked (they aren't supposed to do this but sometimes they will).

5. There is usually a limit of 2 to 4 dogs per flight so plan your trip in advance to allow for this.

6. Arrive at the airport even more in advance than you usually would.

For travel by car, prepare your dog for a long trip by taking short trips beforehand. Feed only a light meal prior to travel. If possible, take your own water along to reduce the likelihood of diarrhea due to unfamiliar water sources. Always take your pet's rabies certificate with you as this is required by state law to cross state lines. Remember to take your pet's medications and medical records if your pet has a complicated medical history. Identification on a collar and tag and a microchip will improve the chances your pet will be returned to you should he or she become separated from you.

Whether boarding your pet or traveling with them, be sure they are current on vaccinations including Bordetella and Lyme disease, and you are using flea and tick control.

Remember, overheating in a vehicle can occur in only a few minutes, so be very cautious when leaving your pet in your car or truck.

Most of all, plan your trip so your pet and your family can have a great time