

Is Your Pet Ready for the Big Road Trip?

By Kim Salerno

Planning to hit the road with your best friend? Before you do it's important to plan ahead and always keep the best interests of your furry, four-legged, or feathered friend in mind. Traveling with your pet can be a wonderful and bonding experience or a not so pleasant one. It's all function of proper planning and preparation.

Your first decision is whether to bring your pet along with you on your trip. Not all pets are suited for travel. While it may be very tempting to bring your pet with you, keep in mind that not all pets are happy travelers. Things to consider include your pet's temperament, any physical impairments, or if your pet suffers from an illness. If you're uncertain whether your pet is suited for travel, you may want to consult with your veterinarian.

If you determine that your pet is up for the trip, then it's always best to have a healthy start. The last thing you need is a sick pet when traveling. This means a visit to the vet for a medical checkup and to ensure that your pet is up-to-date with all necessary vaccinations. The veterinarian can also issue a health certificate for your pet. If you and your pet will be traveling across state lines, you must obtain a recent health certificate and a certificate of rabies vaccination. If your plans include traveling with your pet from the United States to Canada, you will need to bring along a certificate issued by a veterinarian that clearly identifies the animal and certifies that your pet has been vaccinated against rabies during the preceding 36 month period. Be sure to contact the government of the province you plan to visit as each province has its own requirements.

Have a plan for how you're going to properly restrain your pet in your vehicle. This is a crucial element of pet travel that is not taken seriously enough. The reality is that hundreds of pets are injured or even killed each year because they are allowed free reign in cars, trucks, RVs, and SUVs. Even more real is the toll in human life and property damage caused when an "enthusiastic" animal distracts a driver, leading to an accident. Vehicle pet barriers, pet safety harnesses, and pet carriers are all excellent ways to keep your pet (and you) safe when traveling in your vehicle. It's important to familiarize your pet with the vehicle restraint of choice weeks or months before traveling so that they are comfortable.

In the unfortunate event that your pet runs off while you're traveling. A temporary identification tag, along with a photo of your pet will help ensure their safe return. Attach a temporary ID tag to your pet's collar in addition to their permanent tag. Include the address and phone number of where you'll be staying along with your cell phone number and perhaps your email address. This is one of the most important aspects of traveling with your pet, but also one of the most overlooked. In addition, bring along a current photo of your pet. A photograph will make it easier for others to help you find your lost pet.

When packing for your pet include an ample supply of your pet's food. Don't rely on stopping along the way to pick up their food or picking it up at your final destination. Their particular brand of food may not be readily available and it is not advisable to introduce your pet to a new brand of food while traveling. Other essentials to pack for your pet include collapsible travel food and water bowls, bedding, litter and litter box, leash, collar and tags, favorite toys, grooming supplies, a pet first-aid kit and any necessary medications. And of course...be sure to always have an ample supply of water available for your pet.

If you're planning a long journey and will need to stay in pet friendly accommodations on the way to your final destination, be sure to secure these accommodations BEFORE you hit the road. Map out where you'll be spending the night and arrange for lodging along the way. TRIPSwthPETS.com provides an online directory of pet friendly accommodations across the U.S. Pet policies do change and accommodations may be limited so it's recommended that you contact the property in advance.

In case of a medical emergency while traveling you can find a directory of pet hospitals on the TRIPSwthPETS.com website. Research this before your trip and bring this information along with you. It is also advisable to bring along your own vet's contact information should they be needed for consultation.

Careful preparation is the key to ensuring that you and your pet have a happy and safe trip. Check back next month when we talk about "Rules of the Road" when traveling with your pet!

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About the Author

TRIPSwthPETS.com is the premier online source for pet travel. They provide resources for pet travelers to ensure they are welcome, happy, and safe when traveling. They offer directories of pet friendly accommodations across the U.S., pet hospitals and pet recreational activities, an online pet shop, airline pet policies, along with other pet travel resources. Visit our sister site <http://www.choochoobeans.com> for specialty dog beds.