

Tips for Safe Pet Air Travel

Before you begin your trip, be sure that your pet is "up" for the journey. 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. Be sure to tell your vet about your plans to travel by air. Your vet can recommend to you whether your pet is suitable for this method of travel. Once you've got the green light, here are some tips that will help make you and your pet's air travel happy and safe.

- During your pre-trip vet appointment, ask your vet to issue a health certificate for your pet. This typically needs to be dated within ten days of departure. Carry this with you while traveling with your pet, as it may be required at different points throughout your travel.
- Consider booking a non-peak flight, which typically means less passengers and more cabin room. This will help ease potential stress for your pet.
- Have everything packed early and leave early to allow plenty of time to deal with normal air travel as well as your pet's needs. Keep yourself calm before the flight as pets sense your stress and anxiety.
- Select the right carrier. Carriers are available in both hard-sided and soft-sided. Soft-sided carriers are more suitable for carry-on and tend to fit better under the seat. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations as far as the appropriate size carrier for your pet. The proper size carrier should allow your pet to be able to lie down comfortably, stand up and turn around. Ensure for proper ventilation and comfort.
- Give your pet at least a month before your flight to become familiar with the travel carrier. This will minimize his or her stress during travel.
- Include a favorite toy or item with your scent in the carrier with your pet for comfort.
- Affix a travel label to the carrier with your name, the name of your final destination or contact person, home and final destination addresses, as well as your home, cell, and final destination phone numbers.
- Fit your pet with a collar that can't get caught in carrier doors.
- Make sure that your pet's nails have been clipped to protect against their hooking in the carrier's door, holes, and other crevices.
- Do not feed your pet for four to six hours prior to air travel. Small amounts of water can be given before the trip. If possible, secure a collapsible travel bowl to the inside of the carrier and place a few ice cubes in it.
- Use direct flights. Changing planes with your pet may cause undue stress on your pet, particularly if layover time is not adequate for a pet walk and bathroom break.
- When you board the plane, notify a flight attendant that your pet is traveling with you as special precautions may be taken.
- Attach two pieces of identification to your pet's collar, a permanent ID tag and a temporary ID tag. The permanent ID tag should include your name, home address, and home & cell phone numbers. The temporary ID tag should include the name of your final destination or contact person name, your name, address and phone number of your final destination, as well as your cell phone number.
- Bring along a current photo of your pet. This will make it easier for others to help you find your pet should your pet get separated from you.
- Do not give your pet tranquilizers unless your veterinarian prescribes them. Make sure your veterinarian understands that the prescription is for air travel.
- Carry a leash with you so that you may walk your pet before check-in and after arrival. Do not place the leash inside the carrier or attach it to the outside of the kennel.
- When you arrive at your destination, open the carrier as soon as you are in a safe place and examine your pet. If anything seems wrong, take your pet to a veterinarian immediately.

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About the Author

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