

Pets on the Go

If you do a little planning, it's easy to travel with your pet. Whether it's a weeklong getaway or your annual migration to escape the winter cold, you may be making plans to take a four-legged family member with you. Keeping your pet safe and healthy on the road is easy, but it does take some preparation. Consider these tips:

Consult your veterinarian. Start with a phone call to your pet's veterinarian. He or she will provide valuable advice.

Ask yourself if it's the best choice for your pet. The logistics of some trips might make it difficult to include your pet. Your veterinarian can help you decide if leaving your pet at home with a pet sitter or at your favorite kennel is a better option.

Check with your airline. If you're flying, call your airline to find out the requirements for pet travel. Each airline has its own rules and regulations.

For travel by car, invest in a carrier. Your pet will appreciate having a safe haven while in transit and when arriving at a strange new destination. Add a favorite blanket or rug to provide a sense of familiarity. Another alternative is a pet safety harness that attaches to a seat belt.



Bring the comforts and routine of home. Travel bowls, plenty of pet food, a few favorite toys, supplies for clean-ups and all your pet's medications are necessities, not luxuries. Bringing water from home can help prevent diarrhea. And don't take a "vacation" from your pet's health maintenance. Whether it's a daily medication or a monthly preventive, don't let travel disrupt his treatment schedule. You especially don't want to miss administering heartworm, flea and tick preventives while you're away from home.



Help your pet avoid motion sickness. Although you want to make sure your pet has access to water, don't feed your pet right before departure. Restricting food can help prevent digestive upset while in transit. Also, if your pet isn't used to traveling, getting your pet accustomed to car travel is important.

Inspect your new environment. Your ski chalet, beach house or hotel room may not be pet-proofed. Look for potential dangers, such as top-heavy furniture and weak door latches, to ensure your pet isn't injured or can get loose. Keep holiday decorations, such as candles, plants and goodies out of reach.

Monitor your pet's exploration of the new digs. Although you may enjoy settling into a new place, your pet might be stressed with the strangeness of it all. Let your pet acclimate for a few minutes before removing the leash or opening the carrier. Make sure your pet has an identification tag or a microchip to ensure you can be contacted if your pet escapes.

Enjoy yourselves! Most important, relish this break from your busy, workaday life to spend some quality time with your pet.