



All Canadian Pet Services Network

Dedicated to Professionalism ~ Educated for Quality Care

Traveling With Your Pets

The All Canadian Pet Services Network has recently formed a relationship with Pets Can Stay, a Canadian regulatory body for pet friendly accommodations.

With the recent growth of Pet Friendly accommodations and services, the Pet Parent now has the option of traveling with their pets. Before travel is considered, it is important to consider all options and requirements when it comes to bringing your furry friends along.

Where are you traveling to?

If you are traveling out of your own country, remember that there are usually strict requirements placed on pets. Before crossing any border, it is necessary to have your pet examined by a veterinarian. Have the veterinarian supply you with a letter stating the animal is free from communicable diseases, and poses no threat. If you are traveling with an animal other than a cat or dog, investigate any legal issues regarding exotic pets – many different states/provinces have bans or restrictions placed on certain animals.

Also consider the climate of your destination. Some animals, such as cold-weather dog breeds (Huskies, for example) do not fare well in milder climates. Similarly, if you are traveling with an animal used to mild weather, taking them on an Arctic cruise can be a shock to the system. Ensure that your destination is amiable to the animal – air conditioned or heated facilities are a must when changing climates.

How are you traveling?

By Car

Some animals are not used to traveling, and may experience stress or anxiety, or may become motion sick. If you are unsure of how your pet will cope, try taking them on shorter drives around your home to evaluate their response. Consult with your veterinarian – they will usually provide you with sedatives if necessary, or other medications such as antacids for upset stomachs, or anti-diarrheals for accidents.

If you are planning to travel by car, ensure you have adequate space in your vehicle for the pet. Large dogs should be given a large bench seat to lie on. Some dogs travel better in an enclosed space, such as a large dog crate, while others prefer the freedom to roam about the back seat and look out windows. Ensure upholstery is covered for protection from a blanket or towels. Cats should never be allowed to roam free in a car – they can interfere with your driving ability and may cause accidents. Cat carriers should be roomy, with plenty of space for your cat to stretch, stand up, or turn around. All crates should be covered on the bottom for comfort – commercial pet pads are available, or an old blanket will suffice. Regardless of what animal you are traveling with, if they are not in an enclosed carrier, a wire barrier should be used to separate the driver's seat from the back of the vehicle.

If you are planning on traveling with your pet in a rental car, ensure the rental agency is aware you are traveling with a pet, and agrees to such. If not, you could be billed for extra cleaning time (to remove hair) or for any damage done to the interior of the vehicle, and it could be quite costly.

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By Bus

Most bus lines will not allow dogs to travel on their vehicles. Some permit cats, and small or miniature sized dogs in enclosed carriers. Ensure you speak to the ticket agent about your plans to travel with pets. As well, since not all ticket agents are familiar with procedures, speak with a driver of the vehicle to ensure there won't be a problem when you arrive to board. Ask specific questions about what preference they have for carriers, and ask about breaks taken along the route – you will need to take the animal out of their crate for litter use and feeding at some point. Most bus routes have regular drivers for each departure time – plan to visit the terminal prior to your departure – at the same time of day. Introduce yourself to the bus driver, and ask them these questions.

By Train

Some passenger trains permit animals, with the same restrictions as buses. The same guidelines should be followed. Most frequently, mixed passenger/freight trains have an area in their cargo car for animals. Find out specifically what requirements are needed for traveling on the train with your pet. Some companies insist animals are in a crate, while others allow dog leashes to be clipped to grooves on the wall in their pet area. Observe the area beforehand, and decide which is best for your pet. Long train rides will usually not have a break for letting your animal out, but ask about whether there are any wait times at certain stops (usually larger cities) during which you can tend to your pet's needs.

By Air

Traveling with your pets on an airplane has been controversial to some. There are hazards with any form of travel, but even more so with air travel – you and your pet are in a more vulnerable position. Airlines usually do not permit your animals to travel with you – the animals travel in the cargo area (which may or may not be heated). Airlines have very specific requirements concerning the container your pet travels in, ensure you purchase one that is approved for airline travel. Mark the crate, and your pet, with all of your contact info – ensure your pet is wearing all ID tags, and that the crate is marked with your flight number, destination, and all relevant info about you and your pet. Carry your pet's paperwork with you (when traveling across borders), and affix a photocopy to the crate. Speak with the airline representative about the requirements the airline has for pets. If you are using a travel agent to book your trip, make sure you call the airline personally.

Where are you staying?

Pet friendly accommodations have experience in dealing with weary pet travelers – speak to them about any concerns you have regarding accommodation. If you are planning to stay in a large hotel, ensure you have easy access to the outdoors – it is not fun to be on the 30th floor waiting for the one working elevator with Rover crossing his legs.

Ask up front about any additional charges or deposits for your pet's stay – don't wait until you get there to find out.

Ensure your room or suite has adequate space for you and your friend. You don't want to step out of your bed and into the litter box – look for the most convenient places to store your necessities while you are there.

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Examine your room before allowing your pet to have free run of the place – look for any small spaces, vents, open windows etc. that your pet may get into, and block them off accordingly. Look for any small items your pet might try to swallow or play with. Remember, you are in a new place, and your pet will want to inspect everything... Remove any mints or candies that might be choking hazards!

If you are staying with friends or family, ensure that no one in the household has allergies, and that your animal will get along with other pets in the household. If something goes wrong, you could find yourself frantically searching for a kennel or a pet friendly hotel!

What are planning to do?

You brought your companion with you so you wouldn't be away from them for long. But if you are sightseeing, going to shows, and eating out, your friend is going to be left alone – in a strange place. Evaluate your pet's needs, and ensure you are able to provide for their comfort. Are you certain you will be able to make it back to the hotel 2 or 3 times in the day to take Rover for a walk? Is your cat going to be alone for 9 hours, and tear the drapes to shreds? If you are unsure that you will be able to care for your pet adequately in their new environment, plan ahead. Scout for a pet sitter or dog walker in the area in which you are traveling – make some calls and conduct some phone interviews. Most of the paperwork and contract details can be arranged prior to your arrival. Arrange to have the pet care professional meet with you on the day you arrive, or on the first morning of the day you will be sightseeing. Evaluate how they interact with your pet. Ensure your pet care professional knows how to reach you, or an emergency contact, while you are out. When determining how many visits you require, it is best to overestimate. If you are traveling with a cat, you may just want them to come in for 45 minutes or so in the middle of the day. If you are traveling with a dog, you will want to have them walked mid-day (about 4-5 hours after you leave the hotel for the morning) and again in the late afternoon (since you will probably be eating dinner out, and may not return until well past your usual time. Hiring a pet care professional will ensure your pets are comfortable, your environment is secure, and you are able to have fun.

What if there is a medical emergency?

Always plan for the worst. Ensure you know where the veterinarian is located, and establish contact prior to your arrival – find out hours of service, where to obtain after hours care etc. Bring a copy of your pet's medical records with you, and ensure your pet sitter or dog walker has this information. Leave the veterinary information with the hotel in the event they discover an injury or illness while you are away, and leave your pet health insurance information and / or credit card information with the vet so treatment can commence in your absence. Your pet sitter or dog walker will also require a release form stating that you consent to treatment, should they seek it.

What supplies will you need?

Always ensure you have enough food and water for the trip, and dishes for the pet to use. Remember that water from a tap may have different chemical components at your destination, and may make your pet ill. Plan to use bottled water during your trip, and stock enough in the hotel room so you won't be running out during your stay. Ensure that your pet's brand of food is available at your destination as well. While most major chain brands are widely available, smaller brands may not be. Find a supplier in the area to which you are traveling, or take enough with you for the whole trip.

Always remember food dishes, pet beds, your pet's favorite toys and bones. There is no sense in bringing your pet if they are going to be bored. For cats, bring a litter tray and a small supply of litter with you – you can get more when you get to your destination. Ensure your pet has their ID

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tags on a secure collar at all times, and bring an extra collar and lead – just in case one is lost or broken. And of course, remember to stock scoop bags!

Where can your pet go?

This is their vacation too. While cats may be content to lay around a hotel room, your dog should be able to have some fun of his own. Plan at least one day of your vacation devoted to your dog's needs. Research pet friendly activities and dog parks in the area to which you are going. Remember that zoos or parks with animal attractions usually restrict dogs.- don't go to somewhere you aren't welcome. Always know and respect any specific animal control bylaws in the city in which you are staying, and research where the animal control centres are located, just in case your friend escapes from you – you'll want to be able to find them quickly.

Traveling with your pets can be a fun and rewarding experience for you both. Planning ahead can ensure it is safe and comfortable as well!



The All Canadian Pet Services Network is a professional organization for pet sitters and dog walkers in Canada. Founded in April 2004, the All Canadian Pet Services Network is dedicated to enhancing the skills and service of pet care professionals across Canada. Members of ACPSN - Pet Sitters and Dog Walkers - adhere to Professional Standards, ensuring quality care for pets.

The All Canadian Pet Services Network can be found on the web at www.acpsn.com. Our growing directory of professionals can meet your pet care needs today!

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