

[By David Buster](#)

Pet friendly vacations and travel planning make sense -- after all, pets are family members too! In the United States alone, over 60 million households have one or more pets. Pet owners in 15 million of those households travel with their pet, and the majority stay in pet friendly lodging. Fortunately, pet friendly hotels, condos and vacation home rentals do exist. If you will be planning pet friendly vacations, here are some tips for safe and trouble-free travel.

1 - When you make your reservation, double-check that pets are allowed. An important advantage of reserving online is that you can see in writing whether or not pets are permitted and any restrictions. Online, you can print out your reservation receipt that includes the "pets allowed" information. Verbal reservations leave more room for misunderstanding and miscommunication. If reserving by telephone, ask the reservation person to mail you a confirmation receipt that includes the "pets allowed" information.

2 - Is your pet an experienced traveler? If not, you should begin getting your pet more accustomed to traveling so that pet friendly vacations won't be something new. Begin by making your car a fun place for your pet. Get in the car with them, play with them, give them a treat — have them enjoy being there with you. Then take a short drive with them. Gradually increase the length of time and distance that you drive with them. Before making a long trip with your pet, the idea is to have them comfortable with being in the car for extended periods of time.

3 - Remember that securing your pet while traveling in the car is crucial for their safety and yours. Consider purchasing a dog safety harness for your pet to use while traveling in the car. If you have a station wagon or SUV, you can purchase a vehicle barrier that keeps your pet confined to the rear area. They are usually sold at pet stores or are available online.

4 - Pet friendly vacations planning should include taking steps to ensure your pet can be found if it accidentally becomes lost while on vacation. Be sure that your pet has an identification tag and wears it while on the trip. The tag should have your pet's name, your name and phone number. If possible, use your cell phone number, a home number and the number of where you will be staying.

5 – Carry a photograph of your pet with you on your trip. If your pet should ever become lost, you'll be able to show others exactly what your pet looks like instead of just relying on a verbal description.

6 - Check with your vet for any recommended vaccinations appropriate for your trip -- exposure to ticks while hiking, exposure to other dogs while being boarded or heartworm prevention if your dog will be exposed to mosquitoes are examples of important preventative measures to take before your trip. If your pet is a dog, have an up-to-date rabies tag for your dog's collar. If you decide to day board your dog while taking pet friendly vacations, you may be required to show paperwork proof of the rabies vaccination.

7 - Once you arrive at the pet friendly lodging, inform the check-in person that you have your pet. You can inquire if there are any restricted areas where your pet should not be taken. Pet friendly lodging staff should be very accustomed to answering these kinds of questions and will appreciate your awareness.

8 - In your hotel room, condo, cabin rental or vacation home rental -- never let your pet use the furniture or beds to sit, lay or sleep on unless you've covered the furniture or bed with your own cover. Place your pet's food and water containers on a mat or newspaper in the bathroom, where cleanup will be easier. When staying in pet friendly accommodations, you may even choose to feed your pet outdoors.

9 - If you'll be leaving your pet alone in the room or vacation rental, make sure the front desk or rental agent knows. Be sure that you leave your pet secured in their travel container or crate if housekeeping staff will be entering the room at any time to clean. You certainly don't want a housekeeper to enter and be surprised or even attacked by your pet! A pet may also run out of the room when housekeeping enters if left unsecured.

10 - Be very careful while taking pet friendly vacations in warm or hot weather. Leaving your pet in the car can be deadly. Even when the outside temperature is only in the 70's or 80's, the interior of a vehicle can reach 100 degrees and higher, especially when parked in the sun. It doesn't take long at these temperatures to cause serious or even fatal harm to your pet.

Traveling with pets and staying in pet friendly lodging can be lots of fun -- after all, your pet is part of your family too. Just using common sense and planning ahead makes for enjoyable and surprise-free pet friendly vacations.

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