



Road Trip!

Is your pet travel-ready? Here's how to safely satisfy his wanderlust—and yours.

by ARNA COHEN

Third wheels aren't a standard feature of honeymoons, but when Joanne and Jonas Banner were planning a camping trip to the redwood stands of Northern California, the newlyweds had no intention of leaving behind their 10-year-old pointer mix, Sandy. "Getting married was really important to us, and she's a big part of our lives," says Joanne, who lives with her husband in Trabuco Canyon, Calif. "So we wanted to take her on that important trip."

The Banners' desire to share vacations with their pet isn't unusual. In a *petrelocation.com* survey of more than 6,000 pet owners worldwide, 61 percent of respondents reported taking their pets on a trip of more than 50 miles at least once a year. Dogs are the most frequent traveling companions, but some plucky cats enjoy getting out of the house, too.

Vacationing together can be a rewarding experience for you and your pet, but multi-species travel requires thought and planning. Before you hit the road with a four-legged copilot, assess whether the trip is in his best interests. If your plans include activities where animals aren't allowed, consider whether your pet will be happy and well-behaved when left alone in a hotel room. And as much as you may long to watch your pup frolic on the beach or to share a cozy mountain cabin with your feline friend, animals who suffer from motion sickness, anxiety in new environments, or other conditions that make travel unpleasant for them should be left at home with a trusted pet sitter.

For first-time travelers, start by preparing them for the long road ahead. Sue Percival and her husband introduced their

dog and five cats to their new motor home by "camping" in the driveway of their St. Johnsville, N.Y., home for several nights. "This way it's not a strange place," Percival says. "You're not just ... throwing them in there and heading down the road."

When your pet is comfortable in the new space, you can follow up with short jaunts around town to accustom him to the vehicle's motion and evaluate his suitability for longer trips.

If he proves to be the adventurous type, start mapping your itinerary by checking the many websites that list animal-friendly hotels, campgrounds, restaurants, parks, beaches, and events. Call ahead for reservations and ask about any size or breed restrictions, deposits, or extra charges. And double-check the pet policies at the sites you want to visit; not all recreational spots allow dogs on trails, and some dog parks are open only to local residents.

Jennifer Fearing did plenty of pre-trip planning when she and 7-year-old pit bull mix Yoda took a cross-country adventure from Washington, D.C., to Sacramento in 2008. The trip wasn't a vacation; Fearing was reporting to a new position as The HSUS's California state director. The journey was lengthened by daily stops at dog parks along the way, but the effort enhanced the experience. "One of the pluses about having dogs in the car is that I think you take better care of yourself," Fearing says. "We stopped more and walked around more because we had him with us."

The Percivals enjoy traveling with their pets so much that this summer they're



Secured to harness and leash, Choupette visits the beach with owner Virginie Sanchez of Minneapolis. She's accompanied her family on trips to national parks and even San Francisco.

Happy Trails, Safe Travels

Safety is a priority on any road trip, but pet companions necessitate extra precautions. Even mild fender benders can be life-threatening to those who aren't properly packed in. Loose cats have been known to wedge themselves beneath brake pedals, and a hard stop can throw an unrestrained animal into the windshield.

- ▶ **SHOW SOME RESTRAINT** To prevent injury, pets should always be secured in the backseat when the car is moving—dogs in a seat belt and harness, cats in a carrier. As much as your pet may want to ride shotgun, the explosive force of an expanding airbag can crush a cat carrier and seriously injure an animal in the passenger seat. If you have a station wagon or SUV, another option is installing a barrier behind the backseat that keeps your pet confined to the cargo area.
- ▶ **PACK IT IN** If your car is piled with luggage or household goods, make sure everything is securely tied down to prevent heavy objects from toppling onto your pet when the vehicle is in motion.
- ▶ **EVERYBODY INSIDE** Don't let your dog ride with his head out the window. As much as he enjoys the wind in his fur, flying rocks and debris can cause injuries and the increased airflow can damage lungs.
- ▶ **CAUTION: PRECIOUS CARGO** To prevent theft or heat stroke, never leave your pet in the car unattended. Even with windows cracked, the temperature inside a car on a mild day can rapidly rise to dangerous levels that can cause brain damage or death.
- ▶ **MAKE LIKE A BOY SCOUT** Make sure your pet's vaccinations are up to date, and bring a copy of her records and, in case of emergency, a list of veterinary clinics along your route.

RESOURCES

PET TRAVEL GEAR: Find seat belts, harnesses, and backseat barriers at humanedomain.org.

WEB EXTRAS: For tips on international pet travel, packing with pets, traveling with rabbits, and taking pets on planes, trains, or ships, visit humanesociety.org/magazine.

accompanying their dog Sterling on his vacation. The 7-year-old pooch and his owners are heading to Four Paws Kingdom, a North Carolina campground that offers agility classes, obedience training, canine

massage, and activities for the human tagalongs. The cats will stay behind in the RV, content with bird-watching and climbing the 72-inch cat tree inside their home on wheels.

In for the Long Haul Not all travel is optional. If you're moving, your pet may need to weather a road trip even if she loathes it. Here are some steps to make the experience easier and more enjoyable for both of you.

- ▶ **PREP WORK** Help prepare your pet for moving day by introducing her to your vehicle and taking brief drives together.
- ▶ **UNEASY RIDER** If your pet turns out to be a poor traveler, ask your vet for a mild sedative or homeopathic remedy that will calm her but not knock her out. Do a trial run with the treatment to make sure she doesn't have an adverse reaction.
- ▶ **CALMING TRICKS** To soothe rattled nerves, try providing your pets with some cover, such as a blanket to snuggle under. When Aaron Dean moved his family from Florida to Colorado, his two dogs were experienced riders, but the cats were quick to vocalize their complaints. After four hours of nonstop yowling, "we wanted to drive into oncoming traffic," Dean says. Eventually, he draped blankets over the carriers, and the darkened den atmosphere calmed the kitties for the rest of the trip.

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