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Link to photos:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1e0BItfWDvcFuyPd1NinXQIMMmM5tskVS>

Title (in search results): How to fly with your pet

Fly, my furry friends, fly! How to travel with a pet

So you've seen those adventure-cat TikToks and want to try it yourself, huh?



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/pet-owner-carrying-backpack-funny-looking-1538645288>

Alt: Wide-eyed cat popping out of a backpack on a hike

Caption: *I regret everything*

If you're planning to fly, prepare for the parts that won't fit in a 15-second video: the red tape, the shelling out, the screaming into a pillow. The process can be so frustrating that many advise avoiding it altogether and driving. Sometimes, though, that isn't an option – like when you're moving across the ocean, and your Camry isn't equipped with submarine mode.

But while flying with a pet can feel overwhelming, **it can be done!** Below you'll find some basic things to consider, plus some hard-earned life hacks from yours truly.

Flying domestic

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Flying domestic



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/holiday-vacation-jack-russell-dog-waiting-619468115>

Alt: Jack Russell terrier wearing sunglasses next to a carrier in an airport
Caption: *They call me the Wanderer*

Prep for lots of research

Every airline is different in how it approaches pet travel. Your options depend on your pet (species, breed, and size), your destination, and even the time of year. And don't rely on Aunt Betty's advice from her trip ten years ago – **rules are subject to change** at any time.

See the chart below for a few examples of what to expect. But when in doubt – call the airline!

	Allowed in cabin*	Cargo an option?	Fee (each way)	Carry-on kennel dimensions (in)
United	Cats, dogs	Yes	\$125	Hard: 17.5x12x7.5 Soft: 18x11x11
Delta	Cats, dogs, birds	Yes	\$95 for US and Canada	Varies; soft 18x11x11 recommended
American	Cats, dogs	Yes; checked pets for US military only	\$125; cargo fees vary	Hard: 19x13x9 (but varies by plane) Soft: 18x11x11
Southwest	Cats, dogs	No	\$95	18.5x13.5x9.5 (or their branded carrier)
Alaska	Cats, dogs, rabbits, birds	Yes	\$100 cabin; \$150 cargo	Hard: 17x11x7.5 Soft: 17x11x9.5

*In all cases, cabin animals must fit under the seat and remain there the entire flight.

Get your paperwork in order

Airlines have different paperwork requirements, and unfortunately, so do US states. Look at official websites for the most up-to-date and accurate information, and pay close attention to the details, such as carrier size and weight.

Typical requirements include a vet's health certificate issued within 10 days of travel.
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Snakes on a plane?!

If your pet is anything other than a dog or cat, look into species-specific airline rules as well as [USDA regulations](#). **Some animals aren't classified as pets**, regardless of their status in the family!



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/woman-loading-elephant-on-board-plane-746115109>

Alt: Woman trying to load an elephant onto a small plane

Caption: *I'm starting to think this was a bad idea, Sharon*

Traveling with multiple pets? Most US airlines only permit one or two (if they share a kennel), although larger planes may allow more.

Cabin or cargo... that is the question

When there is a choice, you ideally want your pet in the cabin with you – but whether you can do that depends on your pet's size and species as well as what other pets might be on board. For instance, my cat could stay with me on a long transatlantic flight, but he had to travel in the hold for a shorter flight because there was already a dog booked for the cabin.

Register early!



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/pug-biting-toy-384416803>

Alt: Cute pug biting a toy and looking at the camera

Caption: *No cargo hold for me? Well darn...*

Some US airlines don't allow pets to travel in the cargo hold at given times (like during summer), so that option may be off the table entirely. Ditto if you have a short-nosed cat or dog, which could have difficulty breathing in the baggage compartment.

Does Fluffy count as a carry-on?

As always, it depends on the airline – but a pet in the cabin usually counts as your carry-on luggage. There's nearly always a pet fee too. Boo!

What about service animals?

Fortunately, service animals are often exempt from fees, cabin rules, and other policies. Just don't expect to pass your iguana off as an "emotional support animal," because airlines have already done away with that option.



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/beautiful-color-iguana-nice-pet-children-1837823266>

Alt: Orange iguana staring at the camera

Caption: *What do you mean I'm not "trained" as a "service animal"?!*

Choosing a carrier

Check the airline's requirements for pet carriers, which can vary between the cabin and cargo area. Some airlines, like Southwest, may even require you to use their own carrier.

Besides fitting within the airline's maximum dimensions, the carrier should be **lined with absorbent material** (accidents will happen!), it must be **well-ventilated** (not just holes punched in a jar lid), and your pet should be able to **stand up and turn around inside**.

For a small animal traveling with you in the cabin, a flexible or soft-sided carrier is best. Even though my cat's carrier fit the size requirements, I still had to smush it down to fit it under the seat.

Keeping Spot comfy

Let's be real, this isn't going to be fun for either of you. But you can help your pet stay comfortable by kitting out their carrier with a pee pad (carry extras), some food and water, and their favorite toy. It also helps to **acclimate them to the carrier first**, making sure they associate it with safety.



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/opened-pet-travel-plastic-carrier-yorkshire-176755679>

Alt: Opened plastic pet carrier with Yorkshire Terrier inside

Caption: *Gonna be honest, I'm not loving this for me*

I carried a collapsible travel bowl and some dry cat food with me to avoid a mess in the carrier, and for water, I rigged up a little hamster bottle. I'm glad I had all of that available, but as it turned out, I could have saved myself the trouble: during a 30-hour trip, my cat refused any food or treats. The poor bub was way too anxious.

To tranquilize or not?

And that's another problem. Some people recommend sedatives to help ease your pet's anxiety, but **only vet-prescribed tranquilizers should be used, and even they are discouraged**. They can cause health problems or make your pet appear sick to customs officials.

What might help instead? Bring a familiar-smelling blanket or toy, and be sure to exercise your pet and let them use the little puppies' room before the flight. My cat couldn't do either of the latter when I departed from JFK, but just talking to him and petting him through the carrier seemed to put him at ease.

Consult the [Humane Society's website](#) for more tips on safer travel, whether Spike travels in the cabin or the cargo hold.



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/funny-photo-shiba-inu-dog-pilot-1096142147>

Alt: Shiba Inu in a pilot costume sitting in front of a plane

Caption: *Doggo International: by pets, for pets*

Finding a pet-friendly plane

When researching the best airline for you and Mittens, consider multiple factors.

- Will your pet be allowed at all, based on its breed and size?
- How easy is it to book your pet for the cabin?
- How much will it cost?
- Can you get a refund for the pet fee?
- How many pets can you bring?
- And (as hard as it is to think about) what are the airline's stats for injuries, deaths, and lost pets?

Once you find an airline that matches your needs, you can **filter your flight search on** [WayAway!](#)

← Airlines

Select all ☐

Alliances


OneWorld ☐


Star Alliance ☐

Airlines

 Alaska Airlines ☒

 American Airlines ☐

 United Airlines ☐

 Screenshot_20230526_150617.jpg

Alt: Screenshot of WayAway airline filter options

Flying international

Just as with domestic flights, requirements for international travel will vary by airline – and also by destination.

Check out some of these popular airlines:

	Allowed in cabin*	Cargo ("the hold") an option?	Fee (each way)	Carry-on kennel dimensions (in)
British Airways	Service dogs only	Yes (only option)	Varies	n/a
Air Canada	Cats, dogs	Yes	\$50 US & Canada; \$100 international	Hard: 21.5x15.5x9 Soft: 21.5x15.5x10.5
Lufthansa	Cats, dogs	Yes	Varies	Soft only: 22x16x9

Air France	Cats, dogs	Yes (hard kennel only)	Cabin varies €70-€200; hold varies €100-€400	Soft recommended: 18x11x9
KLM Royal Dutch	Cats, dogs	Yes	€75-€400	18x11x9.5

*In all cases, cabin animals must fit under the seat and remain there the entire flight.

State and country rules

Of course, regardless of what the airline allows, countries have their own ideas about what is required to "import" a pet, even for a short visit. In some cases, like when you're flying to the UK or Hawaii (yes, still in the US!), you won't be able to have your pet in the cabin.

Some destinations ask for vaccinations and a health certificate; others, like Australia, will require a **post-entry pet quarantine** for 10 or even 30 days. Much of this depends on the prevalence of rabies in the destination country vs. the one you're leaving from. Always check for the latest information on government websites, starting with the [USDA APHIS](#) page.



<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/dog-carriers-air-travel-husky-dogs-1399285601>

Alt: Siberian huskies in kennels at an airport

Caption: *Siberia is making us go through CUSTOMS? But we're natives!*

Here are a few countries' animal import rules (when coming from the US) as of spring 2023:

Mexico	Current rabies vaccination; health and parasite screening upon arrival
Canada	Current rabies vaccination; inspection on arrival
United Kingdom	Microchip; current rabies vaccination; dog tapeworm treatment; Great Britain health certificate endorsed by USDA
France	Microchip; current rabies vaccination; EU health certificate endorsed by USDA
Italy	Microchip; current rabies vaccination; EU health certificate endorsed by USDA

Coming home...or not?

Don't forget about the return journey! It doesn't matter if your pet originated in the US; **it's subject to the same import rules as every other animal.**

Make preparations for this in advance, especially if you're going to a country with a higher risk of rabies. Depending on the rules in place at that time, you may not be able to bring Whiskers back home.

If you'll be flying to multiple countries, including back to the US, remember to follow each country's rules for imports.

Useful links

There's a lot to consider when bringing a pet, but if you can't imagine a long-term trip without your four-legged BFF, you can do it! Just bookmark these important websites, make a checklist, and take it a step at a time.

- [CDC Traveling with Pets](#)
- [USDA APHIS Pet Travel](#)
- [Humane Society pet travel guidelines](#)
- [PetTravel.com](#) (unofficial but helpful starting point for various countries)



https://unsplash.com/photos/jd0hS7Vhn_A

■ Girl sitting with dog at Little Grand Canyon.jpg

Alt: A girl looking at Utah's Little Grand Canyon with her distracted dog

Caption: *Uh, ma – is that an emotional support scorpion?*