

# The Travel Guide



# Holidaying with your pet

Taking your pet abroad can make a holiday complete. As your dog or cat is one of the family it makes sense that a holiday should involve them.

Taking your pet abroad on holiday has been made much easier since the introduction by the government of the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). There are countries all over the world that you can now take your dog or cat to and share in all that other cultures have to offer.

Although the ability to travel has been made easier, there are still strict rules that must be adhered to so that you can have a stress-free holiday.

This factsheet from Petplan has been produced to help you do just that, easing the journey and making sure you are prepared.

From time to time regulations do change. Always consult **DEFRA** for the latest information about travelling abroad with your pet.

## Considerations

When you have made the decision to take your pet abroad, the next decision is where to go? There are hundreds of destinations to choose from and each has its own charm. At the same time you do need to consider the welfare of your pet whilst in these countries.

### **Temperature**

The UK experiences all the seasons, but other parts of the world have very different weather. It is a good idea to check what the weather will be while you are away. It can be very uncomfortable for pets abroad if the heat is more than they are used to. It can also cause some pets to fall ill through dehydration. In the same way if you are travelling somewhere that is very cold, will your pet be able to cope? A Chihuahua would probably not be happy in the Alps, just as a St Bernard would not be comfortable in the Gobi desert.

To help you plan suitable destinations, the Met Office has details of world climates and forecasts for coming months in locations all over the world.

[www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

### **Pet Friendly**

There are many hotels and cottages throughout the world that are more than happy to accept pets. But there are also many that won't. When you book your holiday make sure you let your travel agent know that you want to take your dog or cat with you. This will help to avoid any nasty surprises when you arrive at your destination. You should also be aware that having your pet with you may restrict the activities or places you are able to go.

Make sure you know what you can and can't do at your chosen destination so you have a great holiday and you can plan your activities in advance.

### **Food & Drink**

Just as we avoid the water in certain countries, we should also do the same for our dogs and cats. They can become ill from drinking water that they are not used to. Always give your pet bottled water. This will reduce the risk of illness.

You also need to consider what food is available for your pet. Can you get your dog's or cat's favourite food in another country? If the answer is no you should find out the alternatives available. If in doubt, pack enough of your pet's food to last the duration of your holiday. This way you can be sure that your pet doesn't fall ill whilst you are away. If you are going to take your own food, you should check to make sure there are no restrictions for importing food types into the country you intend to visit.

### **PETS**

The Pet Travel Scheme can seem daunting. There are many rules and regulations you must follow in order to travel abroad with your pet. But this should not put you off. The rules are there to protect both you and other animals in the UK and abroad. As long as you know what you have to do and you are prepared in advance, your holiday will be without any problems.

**Below are the main points you must adhere to in order to travel abroad.**

***Before leaving the UK your pet must be:***

- Microchipped
- Vaccinated against rabies
- Blood tested to confirm that the vaccine has taken effect. This must be at least six months before your pet is going to come back to the UK
- Covered by an official PETS certificate confirming that all requirements have been met

***Before coming back into the UK your pet must be:***

- Treated for certain parasites and ticks by an official veterinary surgeon between 24 and 48 hours before the pet re-enters the UK
- Covered by a certificate signed by the vet to show that this treatment has been carried out

You need to check to make sure that the country you are going to, or passing through, doesn't have its own rules and regulations that you have to meet. Some may require further vaccinations or confirmation of your pet being clear of certain diseases. Your vet should be able to tell you about anything you may need for your chosen destination.

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## **Where to go**

There are many countries open to UK residents and their pets all over the world. To find out which are included under PETS you should contact **DEFRA** [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk).

There are strict rules concerning the travel companies that are able to transport pets. You can travel by ferry, rail and air, but only with certain companies that are licensed under PETS.

The travel company that you choose will look for the following when you board a plane, ferry or train. They will:

- scan your pet's microchip
- check the health certificate you have relates to the same pet
- check the certificate is valid
- check that your pet has been successfully vaccinated for rabies
- check your pet has been treated for ticks and parasites

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# Getting Microchipped, Rabies Vaccination, Health Certificates

The key to the Pet Travel Scheme is microchipping. It is simply the best way to identify pets.

Cats and dogs over 3 months old can be fitted with a tiny microchip, the size of a grain of rice, which is inserted under the skin at the back of the neck. Fitting is no more painful than a normal injection and the microchip will normally remain in place for rest of the pet's life. The microchip has a unique reference number, which is registered on a database together with the owner's details.

Using a hand-held scanner the microchip's number can be read, which allows the animal to be identified and matched to its owner. The Pet Travel Scheme uses this unique number to positively identify pets that have been vaccinated against rabies and then blood tested at a recognised laboratory.

## **Rabies Vaccination**

Once microchipped, your pet can be vaccinated against rabies. This is usually administered in two doses, two to four weeks apart. Approximately 30 days later, your vet will take a blood sample from your pet and send it for testing at a **DEFRA** approved laboratory. The test ensures that the vaccination has been effective.

If your pet fails the blood test, it will have to be vaccinated and tested again, so plan ahead and discuss your travel arrangements with your veterinary practice as soon as you have decided to travel abroad with your pet.

Following successful vaccination, boosters are required at regular intervals as specified by the vaccine manufacturer, usually every year or two years. Your vet will record the date of each vaccination and advise you when the booster is due. If you keep your pet's vaccinations up to date, there is no need for the blood tests to be repeated. If there is a break in the specified vaccination programme, a further blood test will be required after re-vaccination.

## **Health Certificates**

Once your pet has been microchipped and successfully vaccinated you will need to apply for a Health Certificate, which is available from the Local Veterinary Inspector (LVI). Your vet can help you obtain this certificate.

Unfortunately standards vary around the world and a separate certificate may be required for animals to enter some countries. The requirements may differ from the Pet Travel Scheme. Your veterinary practice will be able to tell you the requirements at the time of travel. Alternatively, you can contact **DEFRA** for advice.

### **How much will it all cost?**

The cost of preparing your pet for travelling abroad will vary from vet to vet. Ask your vet what the cost will be. You will also be charged by the veterinary practice that treats your pet for ticks and parasites before you come back to the UK.

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## Holiday Checklist

- Annual vaccinations up to date
- Microchip fitted
- Rabies vaccine administered and blood test results satisfactory
- Official PETS Health Certificate
- Any specific certification required by countries you are visiting or passing through
- Petplan pet insurance up to date
- Telephone number of normal veterinary surgeon
- Recent clinical history and known allergies
- Lead and pooper scooper or waste bags
- Supply of usual food, feed bowls and treats
- Collar and identity tags
- Water bowl and plastic bottle full of water for the journey
- Bed and blankets
- Shampoo, towels, grooming kit
- Favourite toys
- First aid kit
- Parasite control
- Travel sickness pills (if required)
- Adequate supply of any medication your pet is on
- Kaolin suspension in case of diarrhoea

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## Travelling with Dogs

Other than the toy breeds, dogs should be confined to the rear compartment of an estate car or hatchback, using a purpose-built travelling cage or dog guard. Small breeds can travel on the back seat if you use a special harness that clips into the seat belt. Your dog would probably prefer to be alongside you in the car, but a loose dog is a distraction and a potential danger. If you have to stop suddenly, a 30lb dog travelling at 70mph inside the car could cause serious injury, or worse, to itself and other occupants.

### *Keeping your travel cages cool*

The best travelling cages are made to fit the specific model of the car and make the most of the available space.

They can appear expensive, but over time they make a great deal of sense. Not only will your dog be safe and secure you will have the maximum amount of space for shopping and luggage. Most cages have secure clasps on the door to prevent your dog escaping into the road if the tailgate flies open following a rear end collision (the most frequent motoring accident).

If you decide to go for a dog guard, choose one that is manufactured specifically for your car. It will fit better and provide a more effective barrier to restrain the dog in the event of an accident. To prevent your dog escaping into the road, keep your dog on its lead with the other end securely attached to the car.

Confining a dog to the luggage area also prevents wear and tear to the seats and upholstery, which will affect the value of the car, although you can minimise damage by using seat covers, rugs and boot liners. You can make your dog's journey more comfortable by providing a beanbag, which will mould to the shape of the dog and stop him from rolling around too much. An older or arthritic dog will definitely benefit from this extra consideration.

Although younger dogs may be happy to leap in and out of cars, this may become a struggle as they become older. If you cannot lift them in and out yourself, try using a couple of steps made out of chipboard covered with a piece of old carpet to give the dog a safe grip, which will make life a lot easier for you and your dog.

### *Prevent your dog from suffering heat stroke*

Leaving a dog in a car in hot weather, even for a few minutes, could result in the dog's death and you being prosecuted.

Even if all the windows are left open, the temperature can quickly reach 35°C (95°F) and your dog could suffer heat stroke. A dog can even suffer heat stroke while you are driving. If the sun is streaming through the rear or side window of your car as you drive and you feel hot, your dog will undoubtedly be suffering. Fitting blinds can help, but you should not compromise the driver's vision or safety.

- Never leave your dog in a car in warm weather - even for a few minutes
- Avoid taking your dog on long journeys in hot weather. Leave your dog at home where he or she will be far more comfortable.
- If you have to travel with your dog, provide plenty of water and stop frequently for fresh air.
- Park in the shade to keep the car cool whilst you and your dog are not in it.
- Never over-exercise your dog in warm weather, particularly if it is large or overweight, has a thick coat or breathing difficulties.

## ***Signs of heatstroke***

- Distress
- Collapse
- Convulsions

## ***What to do***

- Seek veterinary help immediately
- Remove the dog from the car into a cool area
- Wrap wet towels around the dog
- Gently spray water on the dog (particularly the head and neck)
- Give your dog as much water as it wants. NO ICE but add a pinch of salt.

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# **Travelling with Cats**

## ***The right carry case***

Choose a carry case that is the right size for your cat. They should have plenty of room to stand up, turn around and be able to see out easily. Plastic or fibreglass cases are ideal for long journeys; they are draught proof, easy to clean and will last for years.

Line the bottom of the case with some absorbent material, such as newspaper, to soak up any accidents. Cover this with a familiar blanket or an old piece of your clothing to make your cat feel at home. Adding a favourite toy also helps. Let your cat get used to the carry case by getting it ready and leaving it around the house for a few days before you travel. You can also try feeding the cat in the case once or twice and shut it in for short periods.

## ***Cats in cars***

Unless you have a car with air conditioning, a cat may overheat in the luggage compartment of a hatchback or an estate car, so place the carrying case on the floor of the car or strap it securely on the rear seat.

Never let the cat out of the container during the journey, even if it appears anxious, in case it tries to escape or distracts the driver. The noise and motion of the car will eventually calm it down and it will usually fall asleep. If your cat is a particularly nervous traveller, your vet may be able to provide you with a sedative to administer before departure.

Place a small dish of fresh water in the carrying case and carry a spare bottle with you for topping this up. If your cat suffers from motion sickness, do not feed it within an hour of departure.

If you take a break during the journey, make sure there is no danger of the cat overheating if it is left in the car. Park in the shade and leave a window ajar. Once you have parked, you can let your cat out in the car, but make sure that any windows are only slightly open and there is no chance of the cat escaping.

## ***On arrival***

As soon as you get to your destination check that all windows and doors are closed before letting your cat out of the carry case and only allow access to one room at a time. Set up a litter tray and, after giving your cat some attention, give it a good meal and a comfortable place to sleep. It will soon overcome any anxiety about being in a strange place.

If you are only visiting for a short time, it is best not to let your cat out at all. When you go out, confine your cat to a room with at least two doors between it and the outside world. Settle it down with water and a litter tray and it will be happy until you return. When you come back, make sure that you close the outside door before you open the door to the room where your cat is. That way there is little chance of the cat escaping. Be careful not to leave any windows open.

If your cat is used to being on a collar and lead, you can take it out in the garden, but make sure that there are no dogs around! If you are staying for a month or more, you may decide to allow your cat out on its own. To start with, starve the cat for twelve hours before allowing it out and then call it back inside after 10-15 minutes using food as an enticement. After that, it should only be let out once a day, using the sight and smell of a meal each time to encourage back inside.

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