

ARK & TENT



Uniting people & animals...through travel

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FLYING WITH FIDO*How to Travel with the Greatest of Ease***By Dawn Becerra**

My husband Manuel and I fly to Mexico with our two small dogs, Chuy and Roxy, about twice a year. It is one of the best (and worst) scenarios possible: best, because it beats a five-day drive with them; worst, because it is not a bit relaxing - at least for me. However, it does get better every time we fly since I've made it a point to learn a few tricks to ensure a modicum of peace during our flights. The following are some of those hard-earned tidbits I'm willing to share with my fellow dog owners, and travelers:

When you book your initial reservation, make sure the flight hasn't already reached its limit in terms of in-cabin pets. The worse thing you can do is make all your reservations and then find out your dog can't come, so coordinate the two together. (Some airlines have made this easier during the on-line booking process by asking if you'll be bringing a pet.) The upside is that if something happens and your pet can't make the flight, the ticket price is refundable.

Remember that you are only allowed one pet per passenger. Additionally, you have to follow the specifications for weight, height and width of carrier. I personally like to bring a good name-brand carrier. I got a cheap one once and "Chew-dini," our escape artist, was found (luckily by my husband) begging for food about 10 seats behind us after he'd chewed his way through the zipper on the cheap carrier. Manuel, being 100% calmer than I am, looked around after I'd discovered Chuy had disappeared and declared that he "couldn't have gone far." Funny now, terrifying then...

You'll also want to check on the regulations regarding immunizations and laws about animals for the country you're going to. We got to Mexico last year and found out they now require the label off the rabies vaccination to assure the dog is really vaccinated. It was touch-and-go in taking the dogs into Mexico, but fortunately they know us at the airport customs office. Make sure the vet visit isn't too many days before you leave home: Often you must get an animal checked within ten days of

your flight departure, and I've even seen a three-day limit.

We also always visit a vet while in Mexico and get another certificate to come back. It is worth the effort. The specific laws regarding this are available on-line, but we go somewhat overboard in order to avoid problems.

Ask your vet if you can give your pet a tranquilizer (or some sort of medication that you try before you fly) so that he/she can sleep during the flight. Be sure to get it for the flight home, too (and bring the written prescription with you). This is so very important if you don't know what your pet's reaction to flying will be. Remember that if you have to change flights, or spend a lengthy amount of time in an airport, it's very stressful for an animal. They have to be carried, and aren't used to anything that they will experience either in-flight or in the airport.

If you have connecting flights, double the lay-over time you think you'll need. During your layover, you'll most likely need to get outside to find some grass (or a suitable place for your animal to relieve itself), encourage them to do so, and get back through security and to your gate before your connecting flight takes off without you. You'll find some people at the airports are very understanding, while some (who I assume are not "pet people") are very crabby and not helpful. It is hit-and-miss.

And if you have to take your pet out to a grassy area, be sure to tie a piece of ribbon or cloth around his/her neck because you both will have to pass through security again and you're going to have to remove his harness or collar in order to do so. This way, you can send the collar, harness and leash through security on the conveyor belt while you hold your pet and carry him/her through security.

On the flight, your pet's carrier must be all the way under the seat in front of you or the attendants will remind you (remember that *was* considered your leg/foot room before--forget about it now). We also have to put a sweater on our little one since she



gets very cold on the floor. But if you follow my directions (see meds), they'll be sleeping and comfortable. I do offer water at some point, and I also bring along a small treat in a plastic wrapper so that if I have to give another pill, or want to give them a little snack, I have something they like to eat.

Do not take them out of their carrier! I now have carriers that have a 5-inch window zipper that I can open so I can reach in and give them a reassuring pat, but they can't get out.

The decision to bring a small pet in the cabin is a bit difficult, but if you follow these few hints you'll be ahead of the game.

Yappy Travels!

FAST FACTS

*For more detailed information on air travel with small pets go to:
www.bringfido.com/travel*

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