

# Is Your Pet Truly Safe When You Travel?

Unveil how a groundbreaking partnership will revolutionize your vacations with your furry friends, offering unparalleled pet-friendly accommodations and tips.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Pet food manufacturer Mars Petcare and travel site Tripadvisor have joined forces to launch a digital hub where pet parents can connect with pet-friendly communities across the platform
- The new site will feature a consumer hub offering a one-stop resource for pet-friendly travel that includes an AI Trip Builder, along with a hub for businesses to learn about the benefits of welcoming pets
- If you're planning a trip and thinking about bringing your pet along, for the sake of your animal, it's important to honestly assess how stressed he or she might be away from home, and whether it's a risk worth taking
- Traveling by car with animal companions is all about developing a plan that ensures they'll be safe and comfortable while on the road
- Traveling by plane also requires extensive planning, with the understanding that air travel is inherently stressful for the vast majority of cats and dogs

If you're a pet parent who always brings your furry family member along on trips, or you'd really like to but feel limited by the lack of pet-friendly travel accommodations, a major pet food company and a major travel site have teamed up to make getaways with animal companions a much easier, more pleasant experience.

Mars Petcare and Tripadvisor have formed a partnership that is launching first in the U.S. market and will eventually go global. The two companies have built a cobranded digital hub where "consumers will be inspired by and connected to pet-friendly communities across Tripadvisor's platform, while businesses will be encouraged to realize the cultural, well-being and financial benefits of becoming pet-friendly."<sup>1</sup>

## Together Is Better

A majority (73%) of U.S. Tripadvisor users are pet parents, while less than 1% of U.S. restaurants listed by Tripadvisor are pet-friendly, demonstrating a need for more businesses that welcome animal companions. The goal of the collaboration between Mars and Tripadvisor is to improve the experience of traveling with pets at every step along the way.

According to a Mars press release announcing the partnership, travel is a frequently researched topic for today's pet parents. In the U.S., the phrase "pet travel" is searched on Google over 19 million times a year, "yet it remains one of the biggest pain points."<sup>2</sup>

Pet parents take vacations only “once every few years” or less because of their animal companions, and 33% have actually altered travel plans because of difficulty traveling with furry family members. As mentioned above, of the 746,000 U.S. restaurants on Tripadvisor, only 5,000 — less than 1% — are listed as pet friendly. According to the press release:

*“The partnership serves to help bridge this gap, using digital technology to connect consumers with pet-friendly options, helping to guarantee a better travel experience for pets, their parents and the businesses that want to support them.”*

Features of the partnership include:

- **A new consumer hub**, available online or through Tripadvisor’s mobile app, offering a one-stop resource for pet-friendly travel. There will be city guides featuring pet-friendly travel tips and attractions in BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™-certified U.S. cities, including Miami, Austin, Nashville, Phoenix, and Palm Springs, with plans to expand globally. The site will also feature an enhanced **AI Trip Builder** for users to create a pet-friendly trip in minutes with a personalized itinerary guided by traveler tips and reviews.
- A hub for businesses to learn about the benefits of welcoming pets, including how to become pet friendly on Tripadvisor, how to accommodate pets, and how to ensure consumers know they can visit with their animal companion.

From the press release:

*“We know our travelers love their pets and are looking for hotel and restaurant recommendations to make sure they can enjoy every part of their adventure together,” says Christine Maguire, Global Vice President of Sales & Partnerships, Tripadvisor. “Through this partnership, we’re streamlining the journey for those who want to bring their pet along, helping them create lifelong memories — while encouraging and supporting the growth of pet-friendly businesses.”<sup>3</sup>*

## 10 Tips for Safe Road Trips

1. Make sure your dog or cat is wearing a collar with a current ID tag. If your pet is microchipped, make sure the information is current in the microchip company’s database.
2. Put together a travel kit for your pet. Include appropriate paperwork, food, fresh bottled water, bowls, treats, a harness and leash, and any supplements or medications your pet is taking.
3. A **pet first aid kit** for emergencies is also a good idea. You can include a comb or brush, some toys, and bedding. It’s also an excellent idea to include some recent pictures of your pet from various angles that would show any unique markings or characteristics about her in the event she gets separated from you while traveling.
4. If you plan to feed fresh or raw homemade food during the trip, obviously you need to pack an ice chest or some way to keep the food frozen. If you opt to switch to canned food for your journey, it’s important you make the dietary transition at least a week before you plan to leave, so you don’t encounter any unexpected bouts of diarrhea during your trip.
5. Have clean up supplies on hand. Sometimes, there are potty accidents or vomit episodes that need cleaning up.

6. Most cats won't use a litterbox in a moving vehicle. If you make stops along the way, you can try to entice him to use the box at rest areas. It's important to have a litterbox available when you make stops, but it also means that you'll need a litter scoop and some plastic bags for used litter if your cat does decide to take advantage of the litterbox.
7. Never open your **cat's carrier** while there are any car doors or windows, even a sunroof, open. It's a precaution you should always follow religiously when traveling with your cat, because most kitties, given an opportunity, will try to escape to find their way back to their "territory" (home).
8. If you're traveling with a dog, make sure his leash is attached to his harness or collar before allowing him off his travel harness or out of his travel crate.
9. Don't try to feed your pet while the car is moving. It's best to offer a light meal a few hours before departure. If you're traveling some distance and will be staying at a hotel in the evening, feed a second meal once your dog or cat has settled down in your room for the night. In the morning, feed some breakfast a couple hours before you get back on the road.
10. Try to never leave your pet unattended in your car for any reason. If you're traveling with family members, someone should remain with your dog or cat during all stops. If you're traveling solo and stop to use the restroom, park in a shady spot, if possible, and crack the windows just enough to let air in. Get back to your car as quickly as possible.

## Traveling by Air With Your Pet

If your vacation plans involve air travel, the level of difficulty in bringing your pet along rises dramatically. Even under ideal circumstances, flying is very stressful for animals. Airports and airplanes are strange and often frightening places full of unfamiliar humans, sights, sounds, and smells.

Air travel makes most humans a little anxious, so it's easy to imagine how much more taxing it can be for a dog or cat with no choice in the matter and no idea what to expect. For example, human passengers can anticipate pressure changes and the sensation of not having their feet on the ground.

Your animal companion can't, so the experience is emotionally and physiologically **stressful**, and as you might expect, the stress increases exponentially for pets that fly as "air cargo" in the belly of the plane.

Since flying with a dog or cat carries inherent risks and stressors, I recommend leaving your furry family member safely at home with a trusted caretaker if possible. Unless she's a seasoned air traveler, in my opinion putting your pet on a plane, especially in the cargo hold, should be an option of last resort.

## Tips for Safe Air Travel With a Dog or Cat

If you do decide to bring your pet on a flight, here are some tips to help keep her safe and relatively comfortable:

1. Make sure she's fit to fly. Very young animals, elderly pets, ill pets, pets with a chronic health condition, pregnant animals, and brachycephalic (flat-faced) breeds are among the types of pets for whom air travel is in my opinion an unacceptable risk. Talk with your veterinarian about whether your pet is a good candidate for air travel. You'll also want to get any required health certifications.

2. Make sure she's very comfortable in her carrier before heading to the airport. Long before your scheduled flight, your dog or kitty should view her carrier as a safe place. Purchase it well ahead of time and get her used to hanging out in it at home.
3. Make sure she's wearing a secure collar and a current ID tag. Also keep a photo of her on your person to help with identification in case, heaven forbid, she is lost.
4. Bring your pet in the main passenger cabin with you if possible. Whether or not she can fly in the passenger cabin will depend on her size and the airline you use. Most if not all airlines only allow dogs and cats in passenger cabins that can fit in a carrier small enough to slide under the seat.

Having her right there with you, in a climate-controlled cabin, has obvious benefits and is by far the best way to travel by plane with a pet. Book your flights as early as possible since airlines only allow a certain number of pets to travel in the passenger cabin. You won't be able to remove her from the carrier during the flight, so make sure she isn't traveling on a full stomach and has an opportunity to relieve herself shortly before you board the aircraft.

5. Avoid flying in very hot or cold weather and book non-stop flights whenever possible. In warmer months, book morning or evening flights so you're traveling during the coolest part of the day. In cold weather, try to fly during the warmest part of the day.

Non-stop flights are highly preferable to connections, especially if your pet is flying in the baggage compartment or cargo hold. Keep in mind that direct flights are neither non-stop nor connecting but are preferable to a connecting flight. If your pet will be traveling in the baggage or cargo area, retrieve her as quickly as possible when you land at your destination.

6. If your pet will be traveling in the baggage compartment or cargo hold, invest in a good-quality carrier. Defective or inappropriate carriers are behind most of the problems with escaped or injured pets during air travel. A suitable carrier will be TSA approved, have secure construction (for example, locking bolts), metal doors (not plastic), metal rods that fasten the door to the container, a strong and effective lock mechanism, and no wheels.
7. Reduce your pet's anxiety with natural remedies. I'm not a fan of sedating pets for travel except in the most extreme circumstances, and only in consultation with a veterinarian. If your dog or cat is so anxious that she needs to be tranquilized to fly, she really shouldn't be put through the experience if it can be avoided.

If it's necessary to sedate your pet for travel, she must be in the cabin with you so you can monitor her throughout the flight. Never, under any circumstances, sedate a pet that cannot be supervised. Natural calming agents that may be beneficial include ashwagandha, holy basil and rhodiola.

To help reduce her anxiety during a trip, consider giving flower essences such as Holistic Solutions orally before, during and after travel, and mist her carrier with specially blended pet-friendly essential oils such as those from the Earth Heart line. I also recommend homeopathic aconitum for extreme fear, if warranted. CBD oil and ashwagandha can also be very effective at reducing stress. Try out the protocol prior to travel to make sure you're happy with the results.

Most major U.S. airlines have restrictions on the types of pets that can be transported as "air cargo," and most, if not all major air carriers have information about traveling with pets on their websites. If you're thinking about flying with your dog or cat, contact the individual carrier as a first step. Find out what pet restrictions apply, approved carrier or kennel dimensions, and other critical information you'll need for planning purposes.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [PetfoodIndustry.com, May 22, 2024](#)

<sup>2,3</sup> [Mars Press Release, May 21, 2024](#)

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