



Vacations are a lot more fun if you share them with your best friend! If you plan to take your dog with you, careful planning and safety precautions will make travel more enjoyable for both of you. Please visit the **ASPCA® Virtual Pet Behaviorist** at [www.aspcabehavior.org](http://www.aspcabehavior.org) to find any of the articles mentioned below.

### SAFETY FIRST!

- It's a lot safer for everyone if your dog is securely fastened or confined during car trips. A large dog in your lap or a small one bouncing around the accelerator pedal can be distracting and dangerous—and should you have an accident, your unrestrained dog might be thrown about the cab. Popular options for safe dog travel include dog seat belts, crates and car barriers. If you use a seat belt, be sure to put your dog in the backseat. When riding in the front, dogs can be injured or even killed if you have an accident and an airbag deploys.
- Don't forget to microchip your dog before leaving home, and attach an ID tag with your cell phone number to his collar. If you're traveling to multiple places during your trip and you don't have a cell phone, you can buy inexpensive temporary ID tags to use along the way.
- Never leave your dog in a hot or cold car unattended. Doing so isn't just uncomfortable for your dog—it can be life threatening.
- Identify emergency animal clinics close to locations you plan to visit during your trip. This is an especially important precaution if your dog is enjoying his golden years.

### THINGS TO BRING

Pack a spill-proof water bowl, your dog's regular food, any medications he takes and his favorite toys for playing fetch or tug. Bring some long-lasting edible chews and durable chew toys, too. Hollow toys you can stuff with food are ideal for quiet time in the car, campsite or hotel. It's also a good idea to bring along something you can use to safely secure your dog for brief periods, such as a crate or an exercise pen.

### RIDING QUIETLY IN THE CAR

Road trips can be a lot less fun with a shrieking, quaking, barking or vomiting dog in the backseat. Here are some tips to help your canine companion travel more calmly.

### DOGS WHO DISLIKE CAR RIDES

Although some dogs gleefully bound into the car, others seem to hate car rides. If you have a dog who seems afraid, anxious or uncomfortable during car trips, you'll need to help him get over his fear or discomfort long before you take a road trip.

- The first thing to do is speak with your dog's veterinarian. Your dog may suffer from carsickness. Even if he doesn't vomit in the car, he might still feel nauseated. Watch for drooling, trembling or a hunched posture. A vet can tell you about medications that may remedy this problem.
- If your dog is fearful of car rides, you'll have to do some exercises to change the way he feels. The key is to start small. Feed at least one meal a day in the car. At first, keep the car turned off for the whole meal. Over a period of a few weeks, work up to short rides. If the rides end at a fun destination, like a hiking trail or dog park, your dog may get over his fear quickly! Please see our article on **Fear of Riding in Cars** for more detailed information.

### EXCITED, UNRULY BEHAVIOR IN THE CAR

If your dog gets overexcited and whines, barks or paces in the car, try the following strategies to encourage calm behavior:

- Stuff a stuffable toy with delicious food and top it off with some peanut butter or soft cheese. If your dog is lying down in the backseat, happily working on a tasty food puzzle toy, he can't also be barking and circling in the car!
- Consider crate training your dog. Resting in a comfy crate covered with a blanket or towel may cut down on his excitement and barking. Please see our article on **Weekend Crate Training** to learn how to introduce your dog to a crate.
- If your dog only whines and barks until you reach your destination but rides quietly on the way home, try driving him to the dog park or a hiking trail before setting off on a longer drive.

### ELIMINATING ON CUE

Some people don't know until their first road trip that Fluffy will not use the bathroom anywhere but the backyard. Teaching your dog to eliminate in different places and on cue will speed up your trip and allow faster bathroom breaks at rest stops. To teach your dog this skill in preparation for an upcoming journey, try the following steps:

- When your dog is about to eliminate—when you see him sniffing, circling or sidling up to a tree—say your new cue, "Hurry up!" Aim to say the cue right before your dog starts to urinate.
- As your dog relieves himself, praise him quietly and, after he finishes, give him a treat.

Repeat these two simple steps for a few weeks. It may help to visit the same spot at first. After two or three weeks, try saying your cue right after you take your dog outside. If he immediately does his business, praise him enthusiastically and deliver his reward. If he doesn't, pause for a few seconds and then try again. (If he still doesn't respond, practice the steps above for another couple of weeks.) With practice, your dog will get better and better at relieving himself right after he hears the "Hurry up" cue. At this point, start practicing in different places and on different surfaces.

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## NIGHTS ON THE ROAD

- Make sure the hotel, bed-and-breakfast or campsite where you plan to stay allows dogs. You can search for places that allow dogs online. When making reservations, ask about specific pet policies. Some hotels don't allow guests to leave their dogs in hotel rooms, even if they're kept in crates. Others ask for a pet deposit or charge a non-refundable pet fee.
- At the end of a long day, it's great to relax with a calm dog in your hotel room or at your campsite. If you and your dog have been hiking all day, he should quiet down naturally. If you've been driving, take time to let your dog stretch his legs before settling in for the night. A nice jog, game of fetch or a visit to a local dog park will help expend pent-up energy.
- If your dog barks at sounds outside your hotel room, he may disturb other guests—and you may be asked to leave. Try some white noise. Leaving a fan on may help muffle the sounds of footsteps in the hallway.
- Give your dog something to chew before bedtime. Offer him a stuffable toy stuffed with something delicious. Chewing and licking are very soothing to dogs and may help yours get to sleep.

## DISCLAIMER

The ASPCA® Virtual Pet Behaviorist specializes in the resolution and management of pet behavior problems only. Only licensed veterinarians can diagnose medical conditions. If you think that your pet is sick, injured or experiencing any kind of physical distress, please contact his veterinarian immediately. A delay in seeking proper veterinary care may worsen your pet's condition and put his life at risk.



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