

When planning vacations this summer, consider bringing your dog

by Siobhan Reilly

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Some dogs really enjoy vacationing with their families, while others will find it more stressful than fun. If you think your dog will be a good travel companion then take them along. Practicing a few skills before taking off will make the adventure more pleasant for everyone.

Most hotels require that pets be crated when left unattended. So if it has been awhile since Fluffy has seen that crate, get it out of the garage and start practicing. Put a bed and toys in there and leave the door open for a few days. Feed her meals in the crate and practice short stays in the crate with the door closed. Don't forget to practice leaving her alone. A barking dog is never appreciated by the next room over.

Many hotels have stairs or elevators, so make sure she is ready for those as well. You will look very silly if you have to carry your

Labrador up six flights of stairs because he won't walk up them or ride the elevator.

Often dogs accustomed to eliminating in their own yards, have problems on the road. Bring a flexi leash for potty outings and practice taking your dog out on it before you go. You don't want to have to stand in front of the hotel for 30 minutes waiting for him to "take care of business."

Before you head out of town, practice a few shorter trips out to dinner. This will give you an idea of how your pet will react. You may want to bone up on your leash walking or the "stay" command to make things go more smoothly.

There are books and websites on dog friendly activities, hotels, parks, restaurants, etc., available for nearly any destination. Taking your pet will require additional planning on your part but can be a lot of fun when well planned.

