

Come! Sit! Stay!

Leave No Dog Behind—
Travel Tips from The Pros

By Phil Tripp

With the dollar down against overseas currencies, our own economy struggling and families considering holidays closer to home, it's now more likely that Fido or other pets will be taken along on driving holidays with pet-friendly hotels & motels, holiday homes, B&Bs, farmstays, campgrounds and caravan parks the destinations of choice.

For the past four years we have given advice, highlighted our finds, gotten tips from our readers and accumulated a lot of information on taking your pet on holiday. So we thought it time to give some handy ways to make the most of your trips over the coming months.

In our last issue, we reviewed a number of Internet sites that facilitate hooking up pet-friendly operators and those seeking suitable properties. There have been several books on this, but they go out of date and some properties change hands or close.

The most consistently updated titles with a variety of options are published through 'Life Be In It' www.holidayingwithdogs.com.au.

There is a new edition of "Holidaying with Dogs" at \$24.45 that has over 2000 places to stay, while companion book "Holidaying with Cats" has more than 500 at \$17.50. They are available at most bookstores and some pet shops or call 03 9329 3003 info@holidayingwithdogs.com.au.

Tourism authorities may be able to help, especially local or regional ones, but their information is not always up-to-date. The best sources may be as close as your lead. Your dog-walking mates can be a wealth of information, as can your local pet businesses such as behaviouralists, pet shops, vets and vet nurses, and dog day-care operators.

Though the destination is important, it's the journey that is often the most daunting aspect. How well will your pet travel, how accurately can you plan stops and activity and what sort of vacation will your pet enjoy? Are they active hikers or household layabouts? Do they love the surf and sand or are they more content to loll around the yard?

Make sure you check that their microchip information is up-to-date (have you moved since they were chipped?) and have a separate collar tag for the holiday made up with mobile phone contacts as well as home number in case your pet strays. Have a strong lead and perhaps a harness for better control and take a spare lead and collar in case one breaks or gets poo-rolled.



Make sure your car is up to the journey, or maybe you should rent a vehicle for a long trip. You can do as we did, buying a new car five years ago that was chosen more on the basis of fur and feather kid functionality for our two parrots and Dalmatians than our own luxury.

We checked the layout for long trips—dogs in the back end with harness restraints and parrots in their cages strapped in the back seat with covers if they got screechy. Lisa went ahead and bought a Thule aerodynamic roof rack carrier for our gear while I got a new bike rack for the back door.

But the main things you need to do for summer trips are to make sure your airconditioning works, especially if you are stuck in traffic, or that there is adequate ventilation without the pet being able to jump out. It is not a good idea to allow him to poke his head out the window. Although he may enjoy this, the rush of air can be harmful and he could be in danger of being hit by objects. Ask yourself - would you allow your child to travel in your car with his or her head out the window?

One thing we did was get plastic bird netting and flyscreen to wrap around the rear windows and close the car door over to seal. And finally, think of the vehicle and how your pet will be properly restrained during the trip as well as planning food and water dishes, bedding, toys and treats. A harness is a must and if there is room, a properly sized crate can be used in the car and at the destination. If you intend using a pet carrier to transport your pet, ensure he is familiar with it prior to departure. Take a number of smaller trips to familiarise him with it. Ensure it's the correct size and he has adequate room to turn around or stand up.

Your holiday should be as enjoyable for your pet as it is for you, so take time to make sure you have packed adequately for him. If you and your pet are the active sort, bring plenty of old towels. If your dog swims, they are there to help dry him off or if your dog gets wet and cold camping. Not only will they help keep the car clean, they will be handy when your pet romps through mud and goop at your destination.

Plan on bringing some extra old sheets or blankets to use as cover slips on furniture, in addition to your dog's familiar house bedding for the floor.

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Water is always necessary and the best way to carry it is by freezing a half full and a near full bottle of water overnight, filling the remainder of the half full one in the morning before leaving. That assures adequate chilled water, with the fully frozen bottle in a cooler to keep your bevvies cold. Also, get one of those dog dishes that have a wide lip and a floating anti-slosh bottom that keeps the water accessible but not liable to spills.

As for feeding, you might want to hold back on treats during and before the trip, leaving the big feed for the end. Some pets can get easily carsick, even our birds—and they're used to rocking on branches! Be ready to mop up some drool too.

Keep your pets cool. Never, ever leave your pet in the car. Dogs are particularly susceptible to heat stroke. Cars can bake like ovens in a matter of minutes. Leaving the windows open or a bowl of water will make no difference. Dogs can die from heatstroke in less than 20 minutes.

Bring familiar toys and treats. You should also make the trip special by having some new chewing and mauling toys, but ease back on new treats or those that might cause tummy distress, especially if they are grain intolerant. Those treats filled with artificial colours might make them as active as an ADD kid on cherry cordial and you don't want to give greasy pigs' ears either in the car, nor messy bones.

Try to arrive at your destination in daylight so your pet can become familiar with the surroundings and sounds. Be prepared for a long walk before feeding, a few trots out at night for a pee or poo (don't forget the bags!) and an early awakening as the new noises wake your pet up.

Check ahead for daycare or pet sitters before you travel. This can be done through local pet stores or vets. You may want to take in an event or have a special day trip in a national park where pets are not allowed. Don't leave him in the room alone unless he is kennelled or crated. Even then, it's probably not a good idea unless he sleeps all day and you know he won't bark constantly. A strange place brings out strange behaviour and many hotels do not allow you to leave your pet unattended for any reason, kennelled or not.

And if you do plan to put your dog in care on the road, make sure you have his health records and that he is up to date on vaccinations, including kennel cough. He may not be admitted without it and you can't rely on your vet to fax records during the holidays. If your pet is on any medication or has had special treatment, have a record of that and have an extra supply just in case.

Aside from preparing your pet with flea and tick treatments in advance of your trip—checking with your vet on the best method and products—check out where you are going and where the vets are in the area, their hours and contact numbers. Your vet may be able to recommend an associate, or their vet nurse, but you can also call destination pet stores to check. You may want to note if they are closed during holiday periods and you should also ask if there are any pest problems such as paralysis ticks, venomous spiders and snakes.

Take along a pet first aid kit and know how to use it. Remember that human antiseptics and ointments may not be appropriate for pets. Know the symptoms of paralysis tick bites and other serious problems including poisoning from plants or food. You should check your pet for ticks daily and know the proper way to remove them.

Being prepared for a long holiday makes it leisurely and fun without unexpected or unplanned dramas. We wish you the best over the summer and will come back February 15 for reviews of new places to go.

Search Til Found

Our front cover dog model is Yoda (Scentitout Selfaware) from "Search Til Found Man- Trailing Hounds" (formally NSW Search and Rescue Dogs Inc). Search Til Found is a volunteer organization which trains bloodhounds to search for the scent of missing people in urban and wilderness areas. www.searchhounds.org. Proudly sponsored by Eaglepack pet food. For more information phone 4729 2235 or email chsyred@hotmail.net.au



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