

# Traveling With a Dog

*A little planning goes  
a long way toward  
a successful  
adventure together.*





by Clarke C. Jones

**D**ogs have always been there for me. They were my childhood friends during those lonesome times when, growing up in a rural neighborhood, my only other companion was my imagination. They were a comfort after my father taught me as a child that a branch from the forsythia bush had uses other than in floral arrangements. For other people, dogs have been there to protect the homestead, tree squirrels, chase rabbits, and flush quail. They help mend broken hearts and can sometimes bring people together. Mongrel or pedigree: Once they have bonded with you, their loyalty and affection seem limitless and, as we age, we realize how rare those traits are.

Separation anxiety is not just a dog trait. More and more people find it difficult to leave a dog home when taking a vacation or hunting trip. Many hotels and B&Bs have recognized a growing trend of those who want to travel with their best friend. Thanks to the internet, finding such places has been made relatively easy. If that is part of your plan this year, here are some tips to make traveling with your pet easier.

## A Crate is Key

Planning is the key to any successful trip, so make sure your pet is crate trained and likes to ride in a car—long before you take your dog on a vacation or hunting trip. This is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that, while hotels may accept pets, most will expect your dog to be crated when it is left unattended in your room. Imagine you are the cleaning person who opens the door to your suite only to have a 90-pound bundle of chocolate love come bounding up and plant a big kiss on you!

Some people are put off by that.

It is also much safer for your pet to travel in a crate, because it protects your animal from being thrown



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*Crate training your dog at a young age will open the doors to long-distance hunting trips and the possibility of a hotel stay.*

around should your vehicle have to make a sudden stop. If you are hunting with your dog, more than likely it will return wet or muddy. A crate helps ensure that other luggage and food items stored in your car will not be compromised. Your pup should be trained to *willingly* go into a crate at a very early age. Teach it that a crate is a place where it may find a treat and that a crate is its own secure space. If your car does not have room for a crate, there are covers designed to protect your seats and harnesses that will protect your dog.

## Car Travel

Some dogs are not fond of riding in a car. Again, try to get your pup to enjoy the experience early on by praising and rewarding it when it gets into the vehicle. Make your first

trips in the car short ones that end with a pleasant experience—such as a walk in the park followed by treats when it re-enters the car. If a dog's only experience is riding to the vet's office or the kennel, it will soon learn the car leads only to something unpleasant. You would feel the same way if your only car rides as a child were to the dentist. Always reinforce with praise when your dog behaves in a manner you like. It is so simple, but it is often overlooked.

Remember that in summer the temperature inside your car can heat up rather quickly, even when the windows are cracked open. Park in the shade and make your stops very short ones. If you have to make a stop and you are traveling with someone, one of you should stay in the car to monitor the car's temperature.





Don't forget the First-Aid kit when packing up dog food and other necessities. And a little courtesy to staff and other guests helps ensure that a hotel remains pet friendly.

## Airplane Travel

Perhaps you are like a friend of mine, Alec Woolfolk from Powhatan, who flies with his dogs to faraway hunting locations. He notes that advanced planning is important and reminded me that, "The choice of air carriers that will fly a dog are limited..." and, "With smaller planes, if the airline will take a dog they sometimes are limited to one dog in the cargo area of each flight." Alec advises that, since 9/11, you should, "Make sure your dog crate is washed and clean before the flight." He points out that if you have shotgun residue on your dog crate from handling spent shells, you risk getting unwanted attention by TSA officials.

## Boat Travel

Some people travel with their dogs on a boat. If your dog is naturally drawn to water, it won't be long before you will see it paddling around *next to* you. You had better have a plan as to how you are going to get

your dog *back in the boat* once it is out of it. Putting around with your dog in a jonboat on one of Virginia's lakes or streams is one thing, but if you are on a sailboat of some size in big water, you could have a problem. Be aware that your dog will require a break periodically. You need to do some planning ahead of time before you and your pooch take to the highways or the high seas. Plan for stops along the way at 3- to 4-hour intervals or make other appropriate arrangements.

## Do Your Homework

Let's assume your dog is crate trained and wants to go with you on trips. The next thing that is essential to know is something about where you will be going. Hunting the rough wheat stubble of the Dakotas or the rocky terrain of other western states is very different from hunting the soft, sandy bottomlands of southeastern Virginia. Make sure you take along foot and chest protection for your dog when hunting these desti-

nations. Nothing is more disappointing than taking a trip far from home, only to find your pup foot-sore or bloodied and unable to perform for the rest of the time because it was not prepared for the terrain it had to work.

Not only should you know something about the terrain where you are hunting, know something about *what else* lives in that territory. Keep in mind that having your dog perform a water retrieve in a quiet pond in Virginia is a *little* different from waters found in other southern states, where alligators may be looking for an easy meal.

It is always a good idea to know the location of the best veterinarian's office when traveling to a particular destination. Accidents do happen, and there is nothing that adds more excitement to a hunting trip than running around in a panic trying to find a vet when your dog has been injured. Whether going hunting or on a vacation with your pooch, always carry a First-Aid kit. Some vets will



also board your dog if a kennel is not nearby or a hotel room is not dog friendly.

Nevertheless, most places that board dogs will require up-to-date inoculation records of your pet. If they do not, you may want to think twice about leaving your dog there. Even if you are smart enough to fax your dog's shot records to the kennel or vet ahead of time, it is a good idea to carry them with you on your trip.

## Hotel Expectations

There are a number of websites that make finding dog-friendly locations much easier. Expect to pay an extra fee for allowing your dog in a room. I have found the charge could range from zero to as much as seventy-five dollars. Because a hotel is listed as pet friendly, does not mean there will not be a size or weight restriction on a dog they will allow in the room. You should also remember that just because one hotel in a hotel chain is pet friendly does not mean *every* hotel in that chain is pet friendly. When booking your reservations,

make those types of inquiries. Policies can change with new management.

When you stay in a hotel with your dog, request a first-floor room near an exit. This makes it easier on everyone moving the dog crate into and out of the room and also accommodates the likely need to go outside in the middle of the night. It pays to be courteous to the rest of the guests and to the people cleaning your room. Not every guest is a pet lover and wants your dog to give them a friendly sniff. Keep tight control over your dog when walking through the halls or on an elevator of the hotel. Bring your own towels with you to dry off your dog and wipe its feet after you have been hunting or at the beach. Don't embarrass yourself or your dog by leaving a pile of muddy hotel towels lying on the floor for someone else to deal with. This only raises the extra charge for a dog-friendly room for your next visit. Brushing your dog before bringing into the room also helps keep it comfortable and the room a bit cleaner.

## Final Tips

Traveling to new places with different landscapes and game species makes hunting fun. Losing your best friend is not. Make sure *your* dog has a collar with your name and phone number on it. If there is room for your vet's information, add that as well. Better yet, have your dog micro-chipped with all the pertinent information. ***Never put your dog's name on the collar.*** If someone steals your dog, they now have the dog's name—and knowing the dog's name gives someone more control over your dog.

Pack a leash, your dog's normal food supply, plenty of water, and refillable plastic bottles. A collapsible dog bowl is a great item to carry along. It takes up very little room and is lightweight. If you drink bottled water, occasionally save the plastic bottles and their lids. You can refill them in the hotel room or service station. And be a good neighbor or tourist whenever you travel by carrying clean-up bags with you.

Finally, if you are going to be doing a lot of hard hunting, spend the time to get your dog in shape. Nothing is more disappointing than to drive for a few days to get to that hunting destination and find your retriever or bird dog is worn out after the first day in the field and will need a couple of days of recovery before it can go out again.

Make a note to get yourself in shape as well. Dogs may be man's best friend but they are lousy at CPR. □



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Clarke C. Jones spends his spare time with his black Labrador retriever, Luke, hunting up good stories. You can visit Clarke and Luke on their website at [www.clarkecjones.com](http://www.clarkecjones.com).



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