

I am going to be spending my summer on the west coast and want to take my cat with me. I'm planning on flying but nervous about how he will do on the plane ride. Do you have any advice about traveling with him that might make the trip less stressful for us both?

Traveling with pets can be stressful for everyone involved and it is great that you are asking these questions early. Airlines transport animals in two places; in the cargo compartment and in the cabin as a passenger carry-on. Carry-on pets must be small enough to fit comfortably in a small, hard or soft-sided kennel under the seat. The kennel must meet minimum standards that may vary between airlines. When looking for an airline approved kennel for your cat, look for ones that with adequate ventilation. Approximately half of the ventilation should be on the top half of the kennel. If your cat cannot sit, stand and turn around inside, it is too small. The kennel should have a leak-proof floor lined with absorbent material. It should be comfortable for you to carry or should have wheels for easy transport. Keep the carrier out in the house and encourage her to go into it so he feels comfortable when the time for the flight arrives.

Try to avoid flights with layovers, but offering him small amounts of food or water during a layover will help keep his feeding routine. If he is taking any medications, have these with you at all times. You should try your hardest to stay with his normal dosing schedule.

Your cat should have a wellness exam with a veterinarian to assure it is safe for him to travel and up to date on vaccinations. Ask her about options available to reduce your cat's anxiety during the flight. You should receive a completed health certificate. The certificate generally needs to be dated fairly close to your departure, usually less than 2 weeks. Check with the airline about their specific requirements.

Many airlines have a limit to the number of pets that will be allowed on each flight. Be sure to reserve a spot for your cat on the flight before you pay for your ticket. When you get to the airport, remember that you will have to take your cat out of his carrier to go through security. Having him wear a harness will help you have a better hold of him in the event he becomes scared and tries to jump.

Have a safe trip and fun summer.

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