

Globetrotting With My Dog

If you're a dog lover (and you probably wouldn't be reading this if you aren't), you may have considered traveling outside the US, or for that matter, anywhere in the world with your pet. Why not? Research studies have shown that having a dog lowers blood pressure, calms us, and improves our overall health and well-being. Our dogs listen to all our frustrations, our secrets and ambitions, and they never tell anyone. My Westie listens avidly and occasionally gives me a nod indicating he agrees or disagrees. On the other hand, he might be listening for the sound of me getting his dinner. Still, all dogs really want is someone to love them, give them attention, and feed them. A pretty good deal and I wouldn't give up mine for anything. Let's face it, our dogs are family to those of us who own them.

I've had dogs almost all my life and been all over the world with them—most recently, moved my Westie pal from Israel to the US. Of course, I had to pick Hawaii, the hardest state to import a dog, but yes, it can be done and yes, you can avoid quarantine. The key to all of this is to **plan well in advance**.

Coming to America or other places around the world

Whether human or canine (or feline for that matter), travel requires forward planning. As soon as possible, you should assess the situation. Are you coming for a year or so? Is it worth the effort and expense? Only you as the owner can determine whether or not to bring the dog. I would, no matter what, but certainly the dog's temperament is part of the decision. One of my previous dogs was getting a bit old and was not the most laid back animal. After a lot of soul searching and tears, I decided not to take the dog to Australia where she would have to enter quarantine. I did take another one who was younger and had a more easy-going temperament. Instead, a very good friend who breeds dogs offered to take the older one, assuring me, she would have "an honorable retirement." As hard as that was, it was the best thing for the dog. The younger dog had to undergo quarantine since there is no rabies in Australia (and a lot of other places, primarily island countries where they can control their borders). The temperament and character of the younger dog enabled her to go through the quarantine experience with no problems. She came through the experience with flying colors.

Coming to Israel, where rabies is endemic, as it is in many other countries, my Westie had to be immunized and have a blood test to assure the import authorities that he had antibodies to rabies. Since there is no rabies in Australia, I had to locate a vet who could give a rabies shot (they are not part of regular immunizations Down Under). It took time, but I found one and faxed all the results to the authorities in Israel prior to arrival. You can start to see that all of this takes time and the decision cannot be a last minute whim.

The same applied to Hawaii. Don't let anyone tell you that you cannot bring a dog into Hawaii without quarantine. Not so, I just brought my Westie over, and he had no quarantine at all. I sat at the airport with all the other dog owners awaiting our pets, most of whom had leis to greet their dogs! Honest.

Okay, you've made the decision—the dog goes with you. The first thing to do is investigate what is required and work out how long it will take. Wherever you go, there is a considerable amount of paperwork which will include proof of all current immunizations, and for Hawaii, proof of rabies immunization with a blood test. Once cleared, the dog must wait 4 months before entry to avoid quarantine. I got around this by deciding to bring the dog to the Mainland and let him stay with my family until we passed that date. I knew he would be safe and happy with them. My Mom wanted to keep him—that's how happy they both were so I had no cause for concern.

Read the requirements carefully because they will vary from country to country and even within the US. Almost everywhere, there will be a requirement to provide a certificate of health issued by a veterinarian and most importantly, **THE CERTIFICATE EXPIRES IN 14 DAYS AND MUST BE SIGNED IN INK—NO FAXED OR PHOTOCOPIES ACCEPTED**, so leave that until the very last minute. All immunizations including rabies must be up to date and a blood test is normally required. Again, not hard but it does take forward planning. Most often, you will need to provide proof that the dog is free of ticks and fleas. Your vet can provide that documentation. **KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING!**

Finally, you might need to get an import license, so again, check and double check all requirements.

First Class, Business, Economy or Cargo?

You're now getting ready to decide how the dog will travel. I have always chosen to have a reliable agent who deals with moving animals take over that part of the job. It is expensive and you have to weigh that up for yourself. I have been very happy with those arrangements because they make sure all documentation is in order prior to flight, have the dog checked by their own vet before boarding, and make sure the dog is the last cargo to board---literally half an hour before take off. If the dog is traveling on your flight, you should know exactly where to go on arrival to get him or her. In Israel, we received our dog at the overweight baggage counter after our luggage arrived. He just rolled in his crate up the ramp and there he was. Dogs in cargo have heating and a pressurized cabin, the same as people. They are not with the luggage and there is a limit to the number of dogs allowed per flight. (In the US and Europe, small dogs might be allowed in the cabin with you, but not on flights to Hawaii—they must be crated and fly cargo). Again, another reason to plan well in advance to be sure you get the flights you prefer.

In Hawaii, you wait at the quarantine office at the airport with all the other owners anxiously awaiting the dog (or cat, for that matter) and they roll them out in their crates one at a time, calling out Ginger's family, (or Daisy's family) or whatever your dog is named. They bring the crate right to the car because you **cannot** uncrate pets in Honolulu Airport. The staff are great, they have real Aloha spirit and understand they are dealing with anxious families who just want to be reunited with their pets.

Now then, about those crates. As soon as you know your dog will be traveling, your pet travel agent should supply a crate or you can buy one that gives the dog plenty of room to move around and stretch out—a lot more than you will get if you travel economy class. Most importantly, the crate should have a drip water arrangement with ice that will melt so the dog always has a source of water. Feeding a pet before

travel is not recommended in case they get airsick—they won't starve in one day but the water is important. All their travel documents should be secured to the top of the crate (You still have copies, remember KEEP COPIES). My travel companies also taped photos of the dog and ID, his name, my name and phone number and the dog's destination, all clearly marked on the crate.

You should get your pet accustomed to spending time in the crate as soon as possible. For the first few days, just leave the door open and let him or her sniff around this contraption. After that, let the animal spend brief periods of time in the crate until it feels safe. My dog actually likes the crate, it kind of feels like a den, I guess. Many airlines will NOT accept a dog that has been sedated and in fact, it is not recommended. None of my vets ever suggested it and they all said, "This dog? He's a trooper, he will be fine." They were right every time.

If you have flight connections with the dog, an agent will ensure that the dog goes to a facility meant to care for animals. Another reason to have an agent because they will work out a flight plan that ensures the stopover or connection has those facilities in the event of a missed flight or overnight connection. Mine had 5 hours in Newark and the agent tracked him all the way and included photos by email of him being walked in the airport facility in real time. An agent will notify you when the dog has boarded, where he or she is, and expected arrival time. All of this is tremendously helpful and does a lot to calm your nerves.

Plan, plan and plan again. These companies know owners are anxious—they deal with it every day. As for mine, now that he's in Hawaii and settled, we will start exploring together. I have seen a few people take their dogs kayaking (yes, the dogs wear a canine life vest) and a few surfing with their owners. Since my Westie is terrier who prefers terra firma, that is not likely to happen, but we will get to the beach and the dog parks. You always meet people there, not to mention dogs. Everywhere we go, people stop and say, "What a cute dog." On cue, he wags his tail and all but swoons when they pet him. Nobody has said, "What a cute owner." Oh well. I live in hope.

So, if you want to globe trot with your dog—yes you can. Just think ahead, plan and you and the dog will be fine. The dog will probably do better than you since you as the owner worry so much.

One final thing to make you laugh—yes, they sell dog biscuit leis in Hawaii! Is it any wonder I wrote a novel, **Going to the Dogs**, in which the dogs were smarter than the people?



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Aloha from the Islands.
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