

Traveling With Your Kitty

Only one cat in a hundred will curl up contentedly on the car seat next to you while on a trip. Nobody knows for sure why the other ninety-nine totally lose it when they travel. Accept the fact that traveling with a cat may require a few preliminary preparations in order to make the experience at least tolerable for you and your little feline friend.

Fir, invest in some sort of crate or fabric containment. If you can get your cat into one of these portable products the cat will be much more secure physically and psychologically. Cats go into a sort of “I’m safe in here” mode when they find themselves enclosed within a crate. They still may yowl and cry but if that does occur, at least they won’t be able to use your forehead as a springboard to the ceiling of the car!

Once you have a travel crate, place it in the house with the door open, put a little treat and a small litter box in it, and then ignore it. Do not put the cat into it because the kitty will immediately understand what you are up to and won’t go near it again. They’re not dumb!

On the other hand if you allow the cat to discover this neat little den/crate right in its own house, you may find the kitty hanging out in it. Then someday when you need to capture the feline trickster to transport it to the veterinary hospital all you’ll have to do is keep an eye out for when the kitty is inside the crate and slam the door on your way by. Now a trip in the car will be safe for you and the cat.

Do some occasional trial runs prior to any long trip you need to take so that you know what to expect when you have to be your cat’s driver on a cross-country escapade. If your cat really seems uncomfortable and cries like a banshee for any longer than twenty minutes, you may need to contact your veterinarian about using a tranquilizer prior to a long trip.

It can be difficult to discern whether your cat is displaying Hyperactivity or is in the throws of Motion sickness. Describe what your cat is doing in the crate (quiet and drooling or going bonkers and screaming) and your veterinarian will be able to prescribe appropriate medication to allow the kitty to be comfortable.

For you folks who are really opposed to medicating your pet, be assured that the medications are very helpful in providing the least amount of stress on your cat while it is going through an experience it finds horrific and unexplainable.

A terrified cat is probably thinking along these lines...“Thunder!!” when the engine turns on. “Earthquake!!” when the car starts to move or bounces over bumps. “Hydrocarbon fumes!!” when it smells auto, bus and truck exhaust. “I’m falling sideways!!” when it glances out the window and those trees are whizzing by. Can you blame the cat for feeling disoriented? Medication may be a very humane choice for your kitty.

Never open a crate with a cat inside unless you are prepared for the cat to spring out of the crate and make a dash for freedom! One of the most dangerous and embarrassing events you will encounter with your cat is trying to retrieve it from the rafters of the

building you are in. And the odds are overwhelming stacked in favor of someone innocently opening the front door of the animal hospital just at the moment your kitty spies the tallest pine tree across the parking lot of the animal hospital. It can be dangerous, too, in the enclosed exam room when the veterinarian opens the crate or travel container. Some cats are wound as tight as a miser just waiting for their chance to escape.

The natural tendency is to climb to safety... and injury will result if the kitty uses a person for a tree. You need to go slowly when removing the cat from the container; let the cat orient a bit before trying to get your hands on the kitty. It may be best to open the crate or container and allow the cat to amble out on its own. Be careful.

A healthy cat may not move an inch for six to eight hours at a time. Allow a little food and water but don't expect the cat to even glance at the feast you've provided.

At your motel sometime during the night, when everyone is sound asleep, the kitty will use the litter box and have a private banquet on its own terms. Your cat may use the litter box once, eat once and drink once every twenty-four hours when on a long trip. The odds are you will be worrying more about these behaviors than the cat.

Never, ever, let your cat loose when on a trip. It makes no difference how "good" your cat is at walking with you at home. On a trip you and your cat are in a different world and if your cat, for any number of reasons, "takes off" you may never see it again.

ON THE ROAD

The very first rule of traveling with your cat is to have an ID tag or other means of identification securely affixed to the kitty. Thousands of dogs and cats end up in shelters simply because the owners never dreamed the pet would get loose or become lost while on a trip. There are few disasters in a person's life that are worse than having to drive off without a pet because all means of locating and recovery have failed. This kind of tragedy will haunt you for the rest of your life; don't let it happen.

Get an ID tag or microchip!

Before you leave make sure you consider the option of leaving your cat in a hometown boarding facility or in home care. Cats just don't do well on the road. The best way is to keep them at home and bring in a petsitter (there aren't too many cat boarding facilities). Visit the local boarding facility and see what goes on. Also there may be a Pet Sitter in your area who would tend your pets in your own home. With a Pet Sitter you can even call home and tell your cat how much fun you're having.

TRAVEL CRATES

These inventions are very handy. Your cat, if happy and comfortable in a crate, will be safer and you will have the peace of mind knowing it is secure when you must leave your friend alone for short periods.

PLAN AHEAD

Plan ahead... well ahead. If you know you will be staying overnight somewhere, be sure to have reservations at an establishment that welcomes pets. A handy list of "Pet Friendly" motels/hotels can be found if you do a little searching. Don't even think about it if you hope to hide your cat in your.

And don't forget to bring along some disposable "Scoop n Toss Bags"; you must be socially conscious about where your kitty chooses to relieve itself. Your portable litter box may not be the cat's first choice. Be prepared!

FOOD AND WATER

Bring along your cat's own food and drinking water from home and you will be better off. A few old towels or rags will make good cleanup. Emergency first aid kits are very handy for you and the cat if a sudden cut, sliver or rash intrudes upon your day. Anti-itch medication, bandages, and antibiotic ointments may save the day when you least expect something will go wrong. It is a good idea to have your veterinarian give you a copy of the cat's medical history to take with you just in case a visit to a veterinarian along the way becomes necessary.

LEASHES

A harness is much more secure, especially the ones that will adjust according to the amount of tension placed against it. The harder a cat pulls the tighter and more secure the slip harness becomes. Travel crates human versions of dens, make great containment devices and many cats enjoy hiding out in them while traveling.

HEAT STROKE!

Leaving a pet alone in a car has a number of potential risks. Always be conscious of the effects of heat buildup in a parked car. It only takes a few minutes for the internal heat to build up forty degrees above the outside air temperature especially if direct sunlight bakes the car.

Even the cat's body heat (expired air in the cat's breath is 102 degrees!) will act like a heater inside the car. Leaving windows open slightly at the top surely helps IF there is a breeze. Be very cautious about leaving pets unattended in parked cars. Heat stroke is a dire emergency and one from which many pets do not recover. And you'd be shocked to find out just how fast it can happen.

HAVE FUN!

Don't forget to bring along some fun toys and tasty treats... just so the kitty knows that this traveling stuff is really fun!