How To Travel Internationally With a Dog
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Dog

There’s a lot to think about when travelling internationally with a dog, and we understand the process can feel overwhelming. To travel with your pooch, you’ll need to make sure they’re healthy, have up-to-date vaccinations, and have the right documentation. Once you’ve got this all in check, you can focus on making sure your dog is safe, comfortable and at ease throughout their journey.

Booking with a pet travel specialist

First things first, all pets travelling to or from Australia must be booked through a pet travel specialist. They will be able to guide you through the process to make sure all necessary paperwork and vaccinations are in order, and that you’re complying with license and quarantine requirements. They can also help you choose the best airline and flight options for your dog's comfort and safety.

Your travel checklist

If you’re planning to travel long distance with a dog, you’ll need to make sure they’re fit for the journey. They’ll also need the right documents, which there are quite a few of! But don’t worry, this checklist will help you plan ahead and get ready for your adventure.

Health checks

Before you set off, it’s important that your pooch is in good health. Talk to your vet, who will ensure your dog is fit and ready to travel.

Vaccinations

Your local vet will be able to help you make sure your dog has received up-to-date vaccinations, as they won’t be able to travel without them. Your vet will consider the vaccinations your dog has already received as well as the vaccinations required in the destination country. Some vaccinations require a course of boosters, so speak to your vet well ahead of your time of travel.

Medications

If your dog is on medication, you’ll need to make sure those are ready pre-travel. A vet’s prescription and the appropriate medicines must be with your dog’s crate so airline staff can make sure your pup gets their medications.

Documentation

There’s a lot of paperwork required to take your dog on an international trip and getting it all together can be time-consuming. There are several key documents you need to be aware of, however, different airlines and countries may require different things, so do your research in advance and speak to your pet travel specialist for guidance. Don’t worry, you’ve got this!

International health certificate

Your pup will need an International Health Certificate, confirming they fulfil all the pet import requirements of the country you’re heading to. You’ll need an authorised vet to attest the certificate, and most countries need this issued within 10-15 days before you travel.

The health certificate will include your dog’s:

- vaccination details
- name
- age
- breed
- weight
- microchip number
- owner details
- relevant medical information

Vaccination certificate

Some countries also require a vaccination certificate, which should include details of all your dog’s jabs, along with the date they were administered and when they’ll expire. You can get this certificate from your vet.

Import permit

An import permit is issued by the country you’re travelling to, and without one your dog may not be allowed to enter the country. You’ll need to get this seven to 15 days before you plan to travel, and they’re usually available on the country’s government website. You’ll also need this to bring your doggo back home to Australia as well.

Travelling by plane

Thinking about flying with a dog? You’ll need to plan ahead to make sure you’re both ready for the journey.

Preparing your dog for the flight

On the day of your flight, do your best to keep calm, your dog can pick up on your mood, so take a deep breath and remember you have each other! To prepare your dog for the flight, you'll need to:

• Get a suitable crate with plenty of room. Many airlines will only accept containers that meet international guidelines for animal welfare.

• Give your pup plenty of exercise before heading to the airport so they can use the flight to relax.

• Make sure they have plenty of water before the flight.

Don't feed your dog for at least four hours before take-off – you'll have to resist those puppy dog eyes! It can be uncomfortable for your dog to fly with a full stomach, and this will allow them time to go to the toilet before the flight rather than during.

Flying with you or in cargo

You can only take your dog as checked baggage if you're taking a domestic flight, so make sure to choose an airline that is happy to accept pets.

If you're flying internationally with a dog, you'll need to book your pup's crate as cargo. You can check with your airline to find out their recommended shipping partner and any further information you may need.

Additional considerations for travel

To help make travelling internationally with a dog as easy as possible, you'll want to make sure your dog is acclimatised to their crate, properly socialised, and able to travel without anxiety.

Crate training

Most airlines will require you to have an IATA-approved crate, which needs to be large enough for your dog to sit and stand normally, turn around, and lie down comfortably. You'll want to crate train(open in new tab) your dog ahead of time to make sure they are used to and comfortable being inside it. If they aren't already crate trained, start a few weeks before you fly, using their favourite treats and toys so they can form a positive association with the crate.

Socialisation

Airline staff may need to handle your dog or administer their medication, so it's vital to

ensure your dog is properly socialised and used to meeting new people. It’s only fair to your dog, and those interacting with them, that they’re comfortable with strangers, so observe their behaviour in social settings ahead of the trip to decide if they’re up to it.

Pick up and drop off

Once everything is in order, it’s time to drop your doggo off. Most airlines recommend you drop your pup off 90 to 120 minutes before the flight is scheduled to depart. Don’t be late, as this could result in your pooch missing the flight. When you’ve safely arrived, pick your pup up around 45-90 minutes after landing. Be sure to check with your airline to find out their specific requirements.

Returning to Australia

Did you know that, as soon as your dog leaves the country, they won’t qualify for their Australian health status(open in new tab)? This means your pup will need to quarantine to get back in – which can take a while. Your dog can only re-enter from approved countries(open in new tab), so be sure to check this ahead of time and start preparing early.

There’s a lot to think about when it comes to travelling internationally with a dog, but with the right preparation you’ll be jet-setting together with confidence. For more tips on taking care of your pup, check out our blog.

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