Pet Travel Checklist: USA

Flying, taking the train or staying in a hotel with your dog or cat. Tick each box; every rule links to the page where we cite the official source.

1 Documents

- [ ] **Vet health certificate.** Airlines may require a health and acclimation certificate signed by a licensed vet **within 10 days of travel** (USDA APHIS).
- [ ] **Leaving the US?** The destination country sets the rules. A USDA-accredited vet prepares the health certificate and submits it to **USDA APHIS for endorsement** (VEHCS). Follow the destination's timing.
- [ ] **Rabies vaccination certificate.** Some states and countries require one; each state's rule is in our state table.
- [ ] **Microchip.** Dogs entering the US need one readable by a universal scanner; Japan and South Korea require an **ISO** microchip.
- [ ] **CDC Dog Import Form receipt** (free) for every dog entering the US, including US dogs coming home. The dog must look healthy, be at least 6 months old and be microchipped. Dogs from CDC high-risk rabies countries need extra forms.
- [ ] **Cats entering the US:** no federal proof of rabies vaccination (recommended); state and airline rules still apply.
- [ ] **Destination extras** (pointers only, read the guide): Hawaii (two rabies shots + passing OIE-FAVN test to avoid quarantine of up to 120 days) · Japan (rabies titer, 180-day wait, notice 40+ days ahead) · South Korea (FAVN titer, blood drawn within 24 months) · Guam.

US federal and state rules: petpolicycheck.com/countries/usa.html#federal

2 Flying: cabin or hold, and carrier size

- [ ] **Cabin or hold depends on the airline.** Cabin only: JetBlue, Southwest. Baggage compartment/hold option: Alaska, Hawaiian, Air Canada; Air France and Lufthansa over 8 kg. American, Delta, United: no checked pets for the general public (cargo only for active-duty US military / State Department on orders). British Airways: no pets in the cabin.
- [ ] **Carrier must fit under the seat in front of you.** A common limit is about **18 × 11 × 11 in** (American soft-sided, Delta recommended); Alaska and Hawaiian 17 × 11 × 9.5 in; JetBlue 17 × 12.5 × 8.5 in; United soft-sided 11 × 18 × 11 in (max 10 in tall on the 737 MAX). Not stated? **Check your airline.**
- [ ] **Weight limit:** many airlines state none for the cabin; Air France and Lufthansa allow 8 kg pet + carrier. Otherwise, **check your airline**.
- [ ] **Reserve your pet's spot with the airline** before you buy the ticket: pet space is limited per flight. Check fees and breed or route restrictions on our airline page.
- [ ] **Security:** you may be asked to take your pet out of the carrier at screening; a carrier tether helps.

Airline pages: American · Delta · United · Alaska · Southwest · JetBlue · Hawaiian

Carrier size by airline: petpolicycheck.com/products/under-seat-carrier-size-by-airline.html

3 Train: Amtrak

- [ ] **Dogs and cats only**, at least 8 weeks old, vaccinations current; one pet per passenger.
- [ ] **20 lb max**, pet + carrier combined. Leak-proof, ventilated carrier, max 19 × 14 × 10.5 in, under your seat (counts as a carry-on).
- [ ] **Trips up to 7 hours** including connections. Coach and Acela Business only.
- [ ] **Reserve** your pet's spot (fee varies by route), sign the Pet Release online and **check in 45 minutes** before departure at staffed stations.
- [ ] No pets on Auto Train or to Canada on the Adirondack, Maple Leaf and Amtrak Cascades.

Amtrak pet rules and source: petpolicycheck.com/countries/usa.html#train

4 Hotels

- [ ] **Confirm the pet policy directly with the hotel** (call or message) before you book: fees, weight limits and number of pets are set by each brand and often by each hotel.
- [ ] **Check the weight limit** (per pet or combined) and how many pets are allowed per room.
- [ ] **Check the pet fee** (per night or per stay) and any deposit.
- [ ] **Declare your pet at check-in**; some chains do not allow pets left alone in the room.

Pet policies of US hotel chains: petpolicycheck.com/hotels/#chains

5 Departure day

- [ ] Ask your vet when to **feed** before the trip; pack the pet's usual food for the whole trip, plus a little extra.
- [ ] Water and a travel bowl.
- [ ] Collar or harness with **ID tags**; microchip details up to date.
- [ ] **Leash** and harness.
- [ ] **Absorbent pad** (puppy pad) or towel to line the carrier.
- [ ] Poop bags, or travel litter for cats.
- [ ] Medications and your vet's phone number.
- [ ] **Copies of documents** (paper + phone): health certificate, rabies certificate, CDC receipt, bookings.
- [ ] Something that smells like home in the carrier.
- [ ] **Arrive early**: Amtrak check-in is 45 minutes before departure; for flights, **check your airline**.

Packing lists: Cat travel checklist · Dog road-trip packing list · Plan the whole trip

Service animals follow separate rules; see each airline page and Amtrak's rules. Destination rules (Hawaii, Japan, South Korea and others) can take months to meet; start early.