



WHAT YOU
need to know
ABOUT



TRAVELING IN CARS WITH

YOUR DOG

Don't let your dog take the wheel — follow these 19-plus tips from car travel experts.

◆ BY TERESA K. TRAVERSE

If you're feeling lost when it comes to pet travel and pet travel products, you're not alone. When I first started researching this story, I quickly realized there simply are not a lot of resources for pet parents looking to travel with their dogs. But fear not. We've put together this guide to help you.

The most official resource out there? The Center for Pet Safety. Founded in 2011, The Center for Pet Safety (centerforpetsafety.org), or CPS, is a nonprofit that crash tests and certifies pet travel products. Lindsey Wolko, CPS founder and CEO, described her

organization as a cross between *Consumer Reports* and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

A pet owner herself, Lindsey founded the organization after her dog Maggie was injured in a car accident. Maggie's harness failed her. Lindsey said that when she thinks of the incident, it calls her back to action and reminds her why she does this work.

"We're not making any money in this effort," she said. "We're a poor little nonprofit organization trying to do the right thing for pet owners. We have no agenda other than to help pet owners."

Discover these tried and true tips from Lindsey and other car travel experts you can use next time you hit the road with your furry friend.

CAR TRIP TIPS

1 Lindsey suggested bringing your pet's medications, ID, and medical records. A list of hospitals and vets in your destination city also could come in handy.

2 Carry pictures of you with your pet. "That's proof that can help identify proof of ownership. In the pet space, because they are considered property, the laws will read differently," Lindsey said.

3 Lindsey recommended stopping every two hours to give your pet water.

4 Sergeant Mercedes Fortune, who works in the Public Affairs Bureau of the Phoenix, Arizona, Police Department, suggested carrying the name and number of a contact that officers can reach in case you are unable to talk to the officer. Try filling out the In Case of Emergency (or ICE) contacts in your phone. Or list two contacts on your pet's dog tag.



Just like a child, properly restrain your dog in the back seat with a crash test-approved car safety harness.

5 Heather B. Loenser, D.V.M., and a veterinary advisor, professional and public affairs for the American Animal Hospital Association, said that AHAHA has no formal statement on riding in cars with dogs. But as an emergency vet for a decade, she has seen a lot. Above all, restrain your dog.

"Even if they are really nimble dogs, if you stop short and swerve, it can be easy for them to fall out," Dr. Loenser said.

7 "For puppies, between 6 and 12 weeks is a great time to habituate them, to teach them how to be in the car," Dr. Loenser said. "You've got this great window with really young dogs where you can teach them that the car is fun. That we don't bark at people. That we sit in our seat."

6 Talk to your vet if you think your pet might need a sedative to make the trip.

Dr. Loenser said that giving sedatives is a last resort. She suggested gradually putting your dog in a crate or harness and then taking little trips until she adjusts. Try going from your home to the grocery store. Start early.



CPS-APPROVED TRAVEL PRODUCTS

The Center for Pet Safety crash tests products — the organization has tested hundreds — and the top performers set the bar for the industry, which is largely unregulated, according to CPS. The organization then publishes the safety standards. If the manufacturer voluntarily complies with that standard, their products are CPS certified.

Products that are CPS certified have the nonprofit's logo. Pet parents can reach out to CPS if they have specific questions they'd like addressed.

"Those are the safest products on the market," said Lindsey Wolko, CPS founder and CEO. "Right now, all we can say is that it will give your pet the best possible chance of survival."

The program is voluntary, and CPS anticipates other brands vying for certification in 2017.

The following three products recently received a 5-star crash test rating: **1. Gunner G1 Intermediate Kennel with strengthened anchor straps.** (CPS used the performance of this product in

testing as the baseline for its crate standard.)

2. Sleepypod Clickit Sport Harness.

3. Sleepypod Mobile Pet Bed with PPRS Handilock.

4. Sleepypod Mini with PPRS Handilock

(The Sleepypod Atom pet carrier has received a 4-star crash test rating.)

Lindsey advised that car barriers do not prevent ejection or escape in the case of a crash. CPS has also tested wire crates and, in its opinion, they should be considered "distraction prevention devices." (See

study on CPS website.) As for pet travel seats, CPS advised against them last year largely because of the "poor connection quality and that some brands were recommending connection to the dog's collar or walking harness." Some brands are working on development to improve those items, and CPS will revisit the pet travel seat testing in the future.

NOTE: At this time CPS only certified harnesses for dogs who weigh up to 90 pounds.

8 Laws about dogs in cars vary by state. For example, in Hawaii, it's illegal to ride with a dog in your lap. "You can always be ticketed whether your state has a law or not," Lindsey said. "Drivers who have unrestrained pets in vehicles can be ticketed in any jurisdiction under the distracted driving laws."

9 "You never want to put a pet in the front seat," Lindsey said. Not only

does that distract the driver, but airbags might deploy with enough force to hurt or kill a dog.

10 CPS advises against putting two dogs in one crate. The dogs could slam into each other and injure themselves.



11 Lindsey also told us that it's best to leave toys out of your pet's reach. "Those things can become very dangerous," she said. "They can cause a lot more damage than you can even think about." The same goes for treats, food, and water.

MORE TIPS: BEST CARS



Subaru Forester



Volvo XC90



Chrysler Pacifica

TOP: GEORGE RUDY/SHUTTERSTOCK; MIDDLE LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY SUBARU; COURTESY VOLVO CAR GROUP; COURTESY FIAT CHRYSLER AUTOMOBILES

One car brand comes out on top when it comes to making vehicles ideal for traveling with dogs: Subaru. "We love the Subaru products because they do think about the dog as the passenger," Lindsey said. (Full disclosure: Subaru sponsored CPS testing in 2013 and 2015.)

Brian Moody, the executive editor of online auto marketplace Autotrader, also recommends Subaru to pet owners.

Other car tips: He suggested searching for cars that have enough cargo space to accommodate a crate. His organization recommends SUVs, station wagons, and sport utility vehicles. Two seaters are a no-go here.

When it comes to specific makes and models, Brian recommended the following:

- » SUBARU FORESTER
- » JEEP CHEROKEE
- » CHRYSLER PACIFICA
- » VOLVO XC90
- » 2017 HONDA CRV

Jennifer Burklow, a copy editor with Cars.com who covers pet travel safety for the online auto marketplace, suggested that pet owners looking to crate their dogs buy cars with the metal hooks or anchor points attached to the back of the car so you can properly secure the crate. The industry term for this is "strength-rated cargo tie-down."

Try searching for a car that makes it easy for the dogs to get in and out. "Low jump-in heights at the back of the vehicle, especially if you're getting an SUV," Jennifer said. "If it's really high off the ground, that becomes an issue as dogs get older."

Jennifer also recommended getting a car with a back door that opens to at least 180 degrees. That will make it easier for you to

get a crate in the vehicle or use a ramp to help your dog get in and out of the car.

"Take your crates with and see if they'll fit," she said. Feel free to bring your harness to ensure those will work with the model you're considering.

Lindsey said that seats that fold flat will give crate users the most stability and space.

Lindsey and Brian told us to search for cars that have air vents in the cargo area to ensure your dog is comfortable.

If you're not in the market for a new car, don't fret.

"Most cars can be outfitted in such a way to make it somewhat safe," Brian said.



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