

Cat: Traveling



Going on vacation? Cats are creatures of routine, so as much as you can keep your cat's lifestyle stable. Ideally, keep your cat at home as cats feel safest and most comfortable in their familiar environment.

Do not leave your cat alone for more than 12 hours without someone to check on them. This is to ensure attention to medical emergencies, make sure your cat is eating, and provide your cat with much needed affection and mental stimulation. If you are going away for more than 10 days, it is best to have someone who can spend the night at least a few times a week while you are away.

How to Find a Cat-Sitter

- Ask friends or your veterinarian for recommendations in your area.
- Contact the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters (800-296-PETS) or Pet Sitters International (336-983-9222).
- Always ask for references.

When Hiring a Cat-Sitter

- Have your cat-sitter meet your cat(s) and understand the personality and routine as well as any preferences such as grooming, treats, affection and interactive play.
- Discuss all tasks to perform while you are gone in detail and leave carefully written instructions.
- If special foods or medications are needed leave careful instructions and notes.
- Provide plenty of food, litter, and medications (if needed), and note where extras are located.
- If your sitter can only stop by the house once a day add additional litter boxes to ensure your cat always has a clean box even if a scooping is missed to avoid litter box aversion and consequent inappropriate elimination problems.
- Make sure your cat has an ID tag and microchip. Have current photos available in case she gets lost while you are gone.
- Have a friend who has a back up set of keys and is willing to be an emergency contact.
- Give your pet-sitter your veterinarian's contact information, as well as the phone number and address for the nearest emergency vet services.
- Have a written letter authorizing the pet sitter to approve emergency veterinary care in your absence.
- Call your veterinarian ahead of time to let them know you will be gone and provide information as to any directives. Leave your credit number on file at the vets office to provide emergency coverage if needed.
- Leave your contact number at the vet's office.

Boarding

Sometimes there is no choice but to board your cat. Boarding can be stressful for any cat. Plan ahead. Make sure room is available.

- Many vet offices and animal hospitals also do boarding.
- Many kennels require proof of up-to-date vaccinations, so inquire ahead of time about which vaccinations are required and if your cat is up-to-date.

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- Ask if you can bring along familiar items for your cat – bedding, something with your scent, toys, and whatever food they currently eat. Also bring along any medications your cat needs.
- Give the kennel detailed information about your cat's preferences and needs, as well as your contact and emergency veterinary information.

Your Cat at Someone Else's House

Confine the cat to a "safe room" preferably away from loud unfamiliar noises and other animals. Some cats will need to stay confined to one room for the duration of the visit, depending on how outgoing (or shy) your cat is and how comfortable she is with strangers, other animals, and new environments. Security is key so make sure there is no chance for your cat to escape through open windows, cat doors or other doors left open. If she does escape she will be lost and far from home.

Traveling with Your Cat

Prepare ahead of time. Is your cat comfortable in a crate for the duration of the trip? Does your cat need any health certificates or vaccines before the trip? It is always a good idea to talk to your veterinarian about any vaccines or other medications. Bring enough food, litter, and medications (if needed).

Finally, have a great trip! You can relax knowing that you have prepared properly and can either travel with your cat or leave her at home in safe hands, where she will be comfortable until you return.