

Driving in Cars with Canines

Q We are planning a three-day drive with our two dogs. We've booked Fido-friendly hotels, but what advice can you offer regarding potty breaks, mealtime, and unexpected bad weather to keep them safe?

● Arden Moore ● Steve Brooks

AFTER JUST COMPLETING A 1,400-MILE ROAD TRIP from Dallas to San Diego with my two dogs and a cat, I am happy to steer you in the right direction. For daylong or cross-country trek, make sure your vehicle is equipped for the unexpected.

Must-have items should include:

- Spare leash and collar (with your dog's name and your phone number embroidered for easy readability) and roll-up doggy bed.
- Pet first aid kit along with a thick bath towel you can use as a sling or safety restraint to stabilize an injured or ill dog en route to the nearest veterinary clinic.
- Small duffel or canvas bag to stash treats and food, collapsible bowls, favorite toy, spare bottled water, cleaning wipes, needed pet medications, doggy disposal bags and other pet accessories.

I fit my dogs, Kona and Cleo, to harnesses with sturdy tethers clipped to their D-rings and snapped into seatbelts in the middle seat. They can move about but can't reach the front and accidentally shift my gears. Always clip on your dog's leash before you unfasten this tether or open the crate to let your dog out for a potty break to prevent a possible dash out the door.

If possible, time your dog's potty breaks when you need to fill up the gas tank, say every two to four hours. Never let your gas tank dip below a quarter-filled because you don't want to run out of gas in the middle of nowhere (and trust me, the southern route from Dallas to San Diego has stretches of many miles between gas stations).

Weather permitting, take a daily five-minute walk with your dog at a safe rest stop to give you both the chances to stretch your legs. Always check their paw pads for any burrs or debris that can lodge between toes. Not all states allow dogs inside rest stop bathrooms, but if you're traveling solo in hot weather (as I did), keep your dog on a short leash and escort him into your stall. Explain you are "breaking the rules" because it only takes a few minutes for a dog to develop heat stroke inside a parked car when temperatures rise above 80 degrees.

To reduce the chance of an upset tummy, strive to feed your dog about an hour before departure to give time for the meal to digest. Offer water at each stop and give them a bigger meal once you get settled in the hotel at night.

Kona and Cleo are ideal travel mates because they never ask "Are we almost there?" and sport happy smiles that make the miles go by easier. 🐾

ARDEN MOORE hosts the *Oh Behave* weekly radio show on [Pet Life Radio.com](http://PetLifeRadio.com) and is founder of the www.petfirstaid4u.com program.

CHECK YOUR RESERVATION TO DETERMINE SIZE OR BREED RESTRICTIONS, if your dogs have to be confined to a crate when unattended, and if the hotel supplies a "Caution: Dog in Room" sign.

Pack a *doggy suitcase* with essentials: first aid kit; vet contact and emergency pet hospitals; medications; vaccinations; food; treat pouch; collapsible water bowl and water; towels; blankets; favorite toy; potty bags; Martingale-style soft, non-slip collar; properly-fitting harness or head halter; 6-foot leash; and, if necessary, a crate and a muzzle for an emergency. Make sure microchips and tags are current. Check the forecast ... pack booties (warm and cool temps), life vest, doggie sunscreen, and even shades!

Research crash-tested doggie seatbelts and car seats or use a cushioned crate secured to not tip over. Make sure your dog has gone potty before you depart!

For travel stress, try these to calm your pup:

- Anxiety Wrap or Thunder Shirt: acupressure points help dogs relax.
 - Calming Cap: reduces vision (but they can still see).
 - Canine Appeasing Pheromones: relaxes puppies and adult dogs; Dog Appeasing Pheromones (DAP) are synthetic pheromones that mimic those released during lactation and give puppies a sense of well-being and reassurance.
 - Lavender oil: dabbed on the collar to reduce anxiety.
 - Windows: reduce anxiety by *not* letting Fido see out the side window.
 - Drive calmly and play "spa" music in the car.
 - Peppermint, ginger, fennel, dill, cinnamon, and Coconut oil (use as directed) can soothe the stomach. True motion sickness is physiological, so talk to your veterinarian about any concerns.
- Travel and road trips can throw off mealtime, so if you end up at a fast-food joint, share just a few bites. Order a *plain* burger or grilled chicken sandwich "*hold everything*" or bring tasty travel treats to share with Fido:
- Carrots
 - Blueberries
 - Hard-boiled eggs
 - String cheese
 - Homemade yam, kale, or banana chips... to name a few!

When giving your pups a roadside potty break, keep distractions low and encourage sniffing and circling, as they are more likely to do their business. Most importantly, before entering your Fido-friendly hotel, find an appropriate potty area. You don't want your first impression to be your pooch watering the lobby! 🐾

STEVE BROOKS (CPDT-KA), Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT/KA), Canine Behavioral Expert and author of *DOG BITES* with STEVE BROOKS, shares 20 years of training techniques using "dog bites" as rewards for good behavior. SteveBrooksK9U.com