



Road trips with your dog can be a pleasant or troublesome experience. It all depends on how you prepare and conduct your own and the dog's behavior throughout the trip. Here are some helpful tips that can make the journey pleasant for both the driver and the dog.

1. For at least a week before the long trip, give the dog familiarization rides of an hour once a day. Prepare a comfortable sitting area in the passenger or rear seat area. If the dog is nervous, leans out the window or wanders throughout the car during your test drives, firmly put the dog back in the intended seat. When the dog complies, speak cheerfully and do some reassuring petting until the dog knows to stay in place during the long ride.
2. If the dog is extremely nervous and jumpy in the car, and trial runs don't calm the dog down, consider using a cage. This will not only prevent the dog from distracting the driver and passengers with nervous moves, but will also prevent the dog from jumping out an open window while the car is on the road.
3. Bring plenty of dog food and fresh water, enough to last the number of hours or days you'll be on the road. Bring along the dog's regular food and water dishes. Take dog biscuits and other reward snacks for times when the dog needs praise and reassurance. If the dog has a favorite toy, that can help calm down the on-the-road nerves.
4. When you need to stop for gas and meals every three to four hours, be sure the dog has potty time, preferably in a grassy area. If the dog needs more frequent stops, look for appropriate sides of the road for the dog's need. As a courtesy to others, always use a pooper scooper and plastic bag to clean up after your dog.
5. No matter how gentle and well-trained the dog is, keep a leash on throughout every stop. Dogs traveling among unfamiliar sights and sounds can be extra nervous. In such a situation, other dogs and crowds of people could cause your dog to run or attack, unless it's tightly controlled by the leash.
6. If your trip involves overnight stays, always call or email ahead to make sure the motel/hotel where you plan to stop accepts dogs. Some will not allow dogs in the rooms and require dogs to be kept in kennels on the hotel grounds. Be prepared to pay an extra fee for your dog's lodging.

When you're driving long distances with your dog in the car, be sure you're making it a safe, pleasant and comfortable journey for both of you.