

Q: I recently boarded a flight, and was surprised to see a big German Shepherd dog stretched out on the floor inside the first row of seats. By his harness ID information, I realized he was a service dog, resting between the bulkhead and his blind master's feet. He looked very calm, as if flying for him was no big deal. I know service dogs are permitted to ride in the passenger area on U.S. flights, but what about other countries?



A: Years ago I rode in some third-world flights with chickens and goats wandering the aisles, but airlines have become a bit more sophisticated since then. However, there may be some countries where service dogs are not allowed to ride in the passenger cabin. For people who must travel with those wonderful and helpful best friends, it's necessary to check with the embassy or consular offices of the countries they'll be visiting. They'll need all appropriate information, and particularly the country's rules if they'll be flying on the native airlines.

Where service dogs are permitted in the passenger cabin areas, owners must show required documents as required by quarantine and vaccination rules. Before the flight, they should talk with the dog's doctor about health and safety concerns, as well as the dog's ability to withstand the strange surroundings and sounds. For more information, go to travel.state.gov.