



Before deciding to bring your feline friend into the air with you, first check with the airline. Get all the current requirements, such as paperwork, cost and confinement during travel. If you have the option of carrying the encased cat with you on your passenger seat, that's the least traumatic for both of you.

First, some practice. For days before the flight, put the carrier in plain sight inside your house where the cat can see and sniff it frequently. Put bits of food treats inside, so the cat will come in and out the opening comfortably. Add some catnip-scented toys. If the cat is on meds, check with your vet about taking and applying them during the journey. Of course, if you have the money to buy an extra seat for the cat carrier, that's the best way to fly. Although most airline regulations forbid letting the cat out of the carrier during flight, many people allow it for a bit of freedom. Keep the cat on a leash during the time it's out of the box.

Take all necessary safety and health precautions. Visit the vet before the flight to be sure the cat has all necessary shots, along with required paperwork. Attach an unbreakable ID with your name, address and phone number to the cat's collar.

Use a comfortable cat carrier, with soft flooring and screened openings all around for the cat to get plenty of air, and to see what's happening outside. The carrier should have an unspillable fresh water container and some dry food.

If you must check the cat carrier, paste a large message, "this way is up" with up-facing arrows, prominent words "live animal" and your complete personal information. Be sure the airline attaches a tag with flight schedules on the carrier.

Some savvy senior cat owners also paste a large color photo of the cat on the cage, with the cat's name in large letters, so there is no mix-up when other cats are traveling on the same aircraft.