

If you're planning a long winter flight to warmer climates, or just a week away from home, you may want that special family member, your cat, to go along with you. Get valuable how-to tips about cat air travel from the many websites that offer that information.

Before you make any plans to take your feline flying, know some of the requirements. Most airlines restrict animals to 22 pounds, and a limit of two per human passengers. Your cat will need a vet's note listing recent required inoculations.

You may also want to consult with your vet if you have fears that noise in the airport and while in flight will be too much for your cat's nerves. Some medication could keep kitty calm.

You can't just show up at the airport with your cat. You must call ahead to try to book her because some airlines restrict the number of animals aboard per flight to ten or less. Prices, depending on individual airlines, range from \$65 to \$200, whether your cat rides in the baggage compartment or in the cabin with you. In today's modern airliners, pets in cargo travel as safely as humans in pressurized and climate controlled air.

Your cat will need a roomy cage, equipped with a padded bottom, and small containers of fresh water and dry food. If in the passenger seat with you, the cage should be able to fit under the seat ahead of you, or if you can get a seat facing a bulkhead, some airlines have strong, mounted hooks for mothers to hang baby bassinets.

During the flight, you can hang the cage there in front of you, where your cat can see you through the wires of the cage, as well as enjoy a wide range of vision. Some occasional cat snacks and soothing words through the wire could help make the trip more bearable. If kitty decides to curl up and sleep, cover the cage with a coat or piece of cloth, leaving some space open for fresh air flow.

If you decide or must send your cat in the cargo hold, you should be assured that airline employees know what to do for safety and comfort of your pet. However, you may want to attach a note to the cage with the cat's name, to pet or not and ask them to check food and water.

Provide a collar and leash with the cage, so that if it is a long flight, your note can ask some out-of-cage walking time on the leash, and maybe some above-and-beyond cage cleaning.