

When You Can't Take Them With You...

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When you travel, find the right person to care for your pet.

There are plenty of options for those of us who must leave our pets for a day or for two weeks. Every year the choices become more numerous. Which alternative is right for your situation? First you must decide whether you want someone to come into your home or whether you want to board your pet elsewhere. Then the choice will come down to who you want caring for your pet.

Here are a few options:

In your home.

Do you want someone to stay in your home all the time, or will it suffice to have him/her come one to three times a day to feed, water, exercise and spend some time with your pet? This will probably depend on your pet's temperament and if you want someone to be in your home while you're away.



Friends, Neighbors or Family

- *Pros:* Reliable (if you're careful) and inexpensive to free (although it's courteous to bring back a souvenir or present from your trip).
- *Cons:* If they are not reliable, you usually have no recourse - after all they are family or friends.
- *Tip:* Make sure whomever you pick has experience with your pet and knows what to expect.

Pet Sitter

You can ask friends or coworkers, or your veterinarian for suggestions or look in the Yellow Pages under "Pets."

- *Pros:* Pet sitters usually have references from satisfied clients and are insured. They also usually have experience with lots of different animals.
- *Cons:* Some will not stay in your home and if you want your pet to go out more than twice a day, they can be expensive.
- *Tip:* Since you are inviting a stranger into your home, make sure you get reliable references.

Veterinary Staff or Students

Ask your veterinarian's office if they have someone on staff who will come into your home.

- *Pros:* Experience, love of animals and someone you know. And, if your pet should get sick, these people will know what to do.
- *Cons:* Usually booked far in advance.
- *Tip:* Ask for references.

Boarding your pet elsewhere.

Will your pet be comfortable in a strange place?

Veterinarian's Office

Many veterinarians have facilities for boarding.

- *Pros:* Your pet will be able to get medical care when he needs it and will be with experienced, caring animal people.
- *Cons:* Your pet will probably be in a kennel most of the day and a veterinarian's office is often busy.
- *Tip:* Ask if your veterinarian has someone who stays or checks on the animals at night.

Boarding Kennel

Options range from simple to downright luxurious. We know of one California "spa" that offers a Jacuzzi-like warm water bath for dogs!

- *Pros:* Experience, on-site care and socialization with other pets, if you choose.
- *Cons:* Can range from inexpensive to very expensive and your pet needs proof of vaccinations.
- *Tip:* See the facility before you decide to board your pet - make sure it's clean.

Kennel-less Boarding Services out there actually hire people to take your pet into their homes and live as their family member.

- *Pros:* Your pet will be in a home-like environment with a person that loves animals.
- *Cons:* These can be expensive.

- *Tip:* Ask to see where your pet will be staying.

Costs will vary with each of these alternatives, depending on the area. Make sure you do your homework, leave instructions, including medications and feeding. Bring your own food. If you treat choosing a boarding facility as you would choosing a daycare for your child, you can't go wrong. After all, pets are family.