

# Taking Your Pets To Europe

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Bringing pets to the European Union (EU) from the U.S. or Canada is much easier than it once was. For dogs and cats, especially, the days of long quarantines are gone, paperwork is standardized, and—once within the EU—a “pet passport” valid throughout the EU can be issued.

To start with, dogs, cats, and ferrets are the only pets for which EU-wide documentation has been standardized. If your pet is another species, national regulations apply. And in all cases, you'll want to read the pet regulations for the specific EU country you'll be living in.

Well in advance of travel, find a vet who is certified and experienced in pet relocation to Europe. (Your local vet may know of one. Alternatively, there is likely one in your state or provincial capital.) Meet with the vet for an initial session to make sure she or he is qualified and experienced in completing all the required steps within the tight timeframes. Make sure the vet has the correct form (ANNEX II) for European travel and has completed it before.

Your pet's two main requirements for entry into the EU will be a rabies vaccination and an EU-compatible microchip.

If your pet is not already microchipped, this initial vet visit is an ideal time to do it. For the EU, the chip must be an ISO 15-digit microchip, either 11784 or 11785. Very important: Your pet must have a rabies vaccination after the chip is placed and at least 21 days before your flight departs. This is the case even if your pet already has a valid rabies vaccination.

The vet must fill out the ANNEX II form about 12 to 15 days before your departure. That form has to be mailed or taken by hand (make an appointment) to your local USDA office for certification. Then you have to enter the EU country within 10 days of the USDA certification. This is a very tight timeframe. So it's a good idea to schedule the final vet exam and paperwork in the morning, so you can get the completed paperwork to an overnight mail service. Make sure to check the USDA website for your region's mailing address and

for the mandatory fees to include. Also be sure to include a self-addressed, return-overnight mailing envelope in the package.

Meanwhile— and again, well in advance of travel— research your travel arrangements. Most airlines have specific pet-transport policies, which you can find on their websites. Airlines that allow pets in the cabin have specific size and weight limits. Larger pets must travel in the climate-controlled cargo hold.

Airlines generally require you to make a flight reservation for your pet. They will also charge you a fee for transport, frequently \$200 for one-way travel to Europe. In addition, airlines generally will not accept pets in cargo from May 15 to September 15, due to the hot summer weather. So be sure to take this into account.

Some airlines will not accept certain breeds of dogs for travel. Short-nosed breeds that are prone to breathing problems, such as pugs, English bulldogs, and Boston terriers, may not be accepted. Likewise, many airlines refuse to transport breeds with a reputation for aggression, such as pit bulls and Rottweilers.

If your pet will be in the cargo hold, make sure his carrier meets the airline's regulations. Carriers or crates must allow the animal to move around, and typically have an absorbent cushion or rug and are well ventilated. A carrier with wheels will make moving your pet through the airport far smoother. The crate should also be equipped with a potty pad, water dish and toy to keep him entertained as you cross the Atlantic.

Book your flight as soon as possible to guarantee a spot for your pet. If you will be using other ground transportation once you arrive, such as a train, bus, or car rental, check their pet transport policies.

If your pet is traveling in-cabin, you may want to consider having your vet prescribe a slight sedative. (Pets traveling in cargo should not be sedated.) For instance, since my dog Pepper was flying in the cabin, I felt it would be in his best interest to be sedated, since he would be in his carrier for 12 to 15 hours. Twice I gave him a trial of the sedative before departing to make sure there were no adverse side effects.

Arrive at the airport at least three hours before your departure. About four hours before checking in, feed your pet and get him well hydrated for the flight ahead, then play with him to get him tired.

At the airport, let the pet relieve himself one more time before putting him in his crate. Make sure the crate door is securely closed. Keep the paperwork handy in the pocket of the in-cabin pet carrier, or for a checked crate, somewhere else easily accessible.

Be sure to check the pet-importation guidelines of the European country you'll be moving to early in your planning. If you're coming from the U.S., check the USDA APHIS site. (the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service.) For Canadians, see the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website.

**From Uncharted Dreams Travel:** For more information about traveling with your pets please visit our website: **[uncharteddreamstravel.com](http://uncharteddreamstravel.com)** info under RESOURCES.