

Therapy Animals

Travel with Therapy Animals and Comfort Animals:

Comfort and Animal Animals differ from Medically Certified Service Animals because Service Animals fall under the protective rules as established by the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and the United States Department of Transportation (DOT). Because their services help those with physical disabilities, they may accompany the people they serve in places where other animals would not be permitted such as in the cabin of an aircraft even when they exceed carry on requirements.

Comfort Animals are used in Animal Assisted Therapy to improve the physical, social, emotional and cognitive condition of the patient. Most Comfort Animals are dogs and cats, however this therapy can also include parrots, horses, elephants, lizards, and monkeys. These pet animals are now recognized as providing a valuable service to the elderly and to others with a medical disability and have recently reached the status of Service Animals.

There have been some problems with people abusing the system and many of the airlines no longer permit comfort animals in the cabin. Therefore, when you travel with Comfort Animals (or Therapy Animals), you will need to speak with the airlines in advance.

International - Air France, British Airways, Japan Airlines, and Virgin Atlantic

These airlines have signed the DOT agreement relating to Comfort Animals, but you should still speak with them prior to making your reservation. Other foreign carriers may also follow the new rules, but they are not obligated to do so.

The key to acceptance is a strongly worded letter from a medical professional stating that the well being of the pet's owner is at risk if they are separated from their pet. The most common reason is mental anxiety or depression and a letter from a psychiatrist will generally suffice. However, individuals with a heart condition may get a letter from their physician stating that the pet calms the pet owner and therefore reduces the risk of a stroke or heart attack.

Recent research suggests that people with psychiatric disabilities can benefit significantly from assistive animals, too. Emotional support animals have been proven extremely effective at ameliorating the symptoms of these disabilities, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, by providing therapeutic nurture and support.

THERAPY ANIMAL DEFINITION

A THERAPY animal is normally a dog that has been obedience trained and screened for its ability to interact favorably with humans and other animals. The primary purpose of a therapy dog is to visit people in hospitals, care homes and retirement centers who enjoy being visited by a friendly dog. They are generally handled by volunteers who both train the animals and then take them on visitations.