Dogs and the RV lifestyle are a natural fit

Most RV owners tend to have a love of the outdoors, which goes hand in hand with being a dog owner. Since dogs are natural companions to take on adventures, most of them are able to adapt to the RV lifestyle quite easily. This guide is for dog owners who are ready to start RVing with pets to help you prepare to hit the road for the first time with your canine best friend.

1 Benefits of RVing for Dogs and Humans

The RV lifestyle is a pet paradise on earth! Dogs are social creatures and have been ever since dogs and wolves started to become friends approximately 20,000 years ago. Not only do dogs and humans get to experience life together while RVing, they also experience the health benefits of being outside.

Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Dogs and Humans Spending Time Together

Dogs and humans experience health benefits – both physical and mental – when they spend me together. Science has proved that both humans and dogs experience an increase in the "love hormone" oxytocin when we spend me together. Increased oxytocin reduces stress and promotes better sleep, which both lead to an improvement in overall health. Some studies have even shown that oxytocin reduces pain and helps wounds heal more quickly.

Health Benefits of Dogs and Humans Spending Time Outside

Dogs want to be where their humans are, and that time together is even better when it is spent outside. In fact, researchers found that spending time in nature increases serotonin, oxytocin, and dopamine, all of which are associated with improved mental and physical health. The combination of spending time together and doing things outside together is a win-win combination for dogs and humans.

The RV lifestyle is ideal for people who love to spend time outside but also want modern comforts like kitchens, bathrooms, a climate-controlled place to sleep in a real bed, and shelter when the weather is not cooperative.

When it comes to leisure time while RVing, most dogs are happy to go on long walks, hikes, or simply hang out in outdoor living areas. After all, the outside is where they really, truly get to be dogs.

Dogs experience the world largely through scent, and the outdoors offers up a continual array of new smells. Smelling new scents is a great way to provide mental stimulation for your dog as well as health benefits.

Two French scientists found that the activity of sniffing their environment lower's a dog's pulse rate. Lower pulse rates are usually associated with better heart health.

Behaviorists also claim that sniffing makes a dog feel less stressed and more connected to their world. When dogs are living the RV lifestyle, they are able to sniff new things on a regular basis, which is what their noses were made to do.

Simply being outside has health benefits all on its own. Fresh air is good for blood pressure, your heart rate, your lungs, your immune system and more. The same holds true for your dog.

> "According to Animal Wellness Magazine, being outdoors, "is vital to your dog's happiness and well being" and helps with weight control, reduces boredom, anxiety and depression, and may even be rejuvenating as they connect with the earth's electromagnetic field."

2 RVing Provides a Familiar Home on Wheels for Dogs and Humans

Although dogs love to go and explore with their humans, they are also creatures of habit when it comes to daily things like sleeping, eating, and going to the bathroom. RVs provide a familiar home on wheels for your dog no matter where your journey takes you.

RV Lifestyle Keeps Your Dog's Schedule Consistent

When you travel with your dog in an RV instead of staying at hotels, motels, or vacation rentals, you can keep the same habits no matter where you go. Dogs learn through repetition, so having consistency in how you do things for them is helpful, reassuring, and reduces their stress level. Although your dog loves to sniff a new trail on a walk, they want their dinner at the same time in the same place.

Most dog owners know that their dogs can pinpoint the exact me that they are to be fed or taken to their daily potty-breaks. Many dogs can also recognize their humans' gestures and movements that lead up to a meal or trip outside. When you travel via RV, you can maintain those same procedures, so your dog does not have to relearn the process every me. Your leashes can be stored in the same place, and you can enter and return through the same door. Their meal can take place in the same location.

Home Away from Home for Your Dogs

Your RV is your home on wheels, and it is entirely your space. As a dog owner, this eliminates the worry that your dog will have a potty accident or chew something in a hotel room out of nervousness. You also eliminate the worry of housekeeping staff entering your room and having an encounter with your dog or risk someone accidentally letting them out.

RVs are a much safer op on when traveling a long distance than an airplane. Large dogs must travel in the cargo area of a plane, which is unpleasant, lonely, and poten ally hazardous. Dogs have died from long, unexpected layovers or have been sent to the wrong destination.

One dog was even mistakenly sent from Oregon to Japan instead of Kansas because of an airline error.

In fact, most responsible breeders will no longer allow their puppies to travel to their new owners via airplane because of the hazards involved.

3 What to Consider When RVing with Your Dog?

Choosing an RV as a Dog Owner

There are several key features to look for when purchasing an RV or camper to share with your dogs. Although these are not must-haves, they will make life more comfortable for both humans and canines.

The top 5 things to look for in a dog-friendly RV or camper include:

1. Space for crates or kennels:

When dogs are correctly introduced to crates, they view the crate as a safe haven or a place for naps and quiet me. Crates also offer protection for dogs when you must run an errand so that they do not get into trouble by chewing something they should not or breaking out and becoming lost.

2. Dog-friendly flooring :

Having fun outdoors usually comes along with plenty of mud and dirt. Dog-friendly flooring allows for easier cleanup from dirty paws as well as occasional vomiting or potty accidents.

3. A dog-friendly floor plan:

Since RVs come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and floorplans, look for one that has enough space for your dog to find a spot to nap when all the humans are inside. Slide-outs can help increase the available space as well as furniture that is removable.

4. Outdoor shower:

Since RVs come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and floorplans, look for one that has enough space for your dog to find a spot to nap when all the humans are inside. Slide-outs can help increase the available space as well as furniture that is removable.

5. Storage for dog supplies:

When shopping for your RV, make sure you have space to store your puppy's food, leashes, crate, bed, outdoor fencing, and everything else that you need to live life with a dog in an RV.

What to Take on Your Road Trip with Your Dog?

In addition to your regular RVing supplies, there are some must-have items that will make life easier when camping with your dog.

1. Travel bowls:

Although collapsible bowls are smaller to store, stainless steel bowls are easier to clean and sanitize between trips.

2. Food storage container:

Pests like ants and mice are frequent problems when staying in a camper. An air-tight food storage container will help keep pests out of your pet's food.

3. Toys and chews:

Your dog will feel more at home with their favorite toys and chews and have something to do during any downtime when humans just want to relax. A Kong stuffed with a banana and some peanut butter placed in the freezer or cooler is a good distraction for an energetic dog.

4. Waggle Pet Monitor:

A temperature monitor is a must-have device if you need to leave your dog in your RV camper to run errands, grab dinner at a restaurant, or go on an excursion that does not allow pets. Waggle Pet Monitor 4G sends you periodic updates so that you know if your camper is at a safe temperature while your dog is alone.

5. Dog bed or blanket:

A dog bed or blanket will give your dog a spot of their own for bedtime when you just want to relax.

6. Treats:

Treats are a great way to reward good behavior and help your dog associate time in the RV with good things. You can even treat your dog when they are doing everyday things like resting calmly in the camper when you are cooking or reading. Giving a treat and telling them “good dog” will reinforce that their calm behavior is something you view positively.

7. Waste bags:

Picking up after your dog is a must whether you are in a populated campground or boondocking in the wilderness. Because of the ingredients in modern pet food, pet waste contains phosphorus and nitrogen, which can lead to bacteria and algae in natural water sources.

8. Pet Activity Monitor

Traveling outdoors doesn’t mean that your dog’s fitness routine has to stop. A Pet Fitness & Activity Monitor, like Furbit, can help you monitor your pet’s activity and ensure he gets sufficient amount of exercise to be fit and healthy. It also comes handy whenever you lose sight of your escape artist.

Introducing Your Dog to Your Camper

If your dog is new to staying in a camper or RV, it is important to take the time to introduce him or her to their new environment before you leave your driveway.

Whether you park your RV in your own driveway or take your dog to where you store your unit, we suggest you take your dog on a pre-trip tour of the camp. Let them enter at their own pace and allow them to sniff this new world for as long as they want. You can bring a few of their toys, their water bowl, and even hang out together for a brief period of me just to let them get used to the idea.

Bring plenty of treats, and when they react positively, give them treats and praise them so that they understand this is a fun and safe place to hang out with you.

After the initial introduction to your RV unit, plan on a short overnight trip to a local campground. This will give both of you a practice run so your dog can see what it is like to stay in the camper. You can also use this time to make a list of things you would like to purchase as well as modifications you would like to make to make life more comfortable for both you and your dog.

The more fun you make your first camping trip, the better, so plan on taking a hike or long walk with your dog.

Not only will your dog associate camping by doing fun things, but it will wear him out so that you can both sleep better in an unfamiliar place.

Training Commands Every RVing Dog Should Know

Although every dog should go through at least one obedience class as a puppy or after they are rescued as an adult, there are some training commands that you can brush up on before traveling with your pet.These are important for your dog's safety and to be a good neighbor to your fellow campers.

Stay/Wait :

This command is crucial for dogs to know so that they do not bolt out of the open door of the RV, especially if you are not able to create a small fenced area outside your unit. It is also important if you are walking on a narrow path and need to step to the side to let other dogs and humans pass by.

Come/Here:

A rock-solid recall is important all the time, but particularly when you are traveling to strange places. This could be lifesaving if your dog darts out of an open car or camper door or slips out of their collar or harness while outside of your camper.

Off/Leave-It :

When living in a small space like an RV unit, it is important for your dog to know the off or leave-it command. This is useful if you drop something like an item of food or a medication that could be hazardous to your pet if eaten.

In close quarters like a camper, your dog can get to the medica ons much more quicker than if you were at home in a larger kitchen or bathroom.

Emergency Planning While RVing with Your Dog

Although nobody likes to think about something bad happening while traveling with their pet, there are some precautions you can take so that you are prepared for worst-case scenarios.

Before leaving home, it is important to create a folder or binder that contains informa on that you need if your pet were to be lost or injured.

We suggest making copies of the following information to include in your emergency kit:

- Vaccination records or titer test results
- Medication name, dosage amounts, and instructions
- Most recent annual or bi-annual checkup report, including heartworm test and fecal results

- Microchip information
- Information on all chronic or recurring issues
- Your dog's allergies
- Your veterinarian's contact information
- Your emergency contacts
- Recent photos of your dog
- Pet insurance plan information

Your pet first aid kit should minimally include the following:

- Canine first aid manual
- Bandages and medical tape
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Medications
- Cotton balls and cotton swabs

For additional information on creating a pet first aid kit and other steps to take to plan for emergencies when on a road trip with your dog, check out our guide, **Preparing for Veterinary Emergencies While RVing.**

How to Safely Transport Your Pet on a Road Trip?

The most common methods for restraining your pet while traveling in a moving vehicle are the travel crate and the pet seat belt.

Travel Crates:

Travel crates can fit in a variety of vehicles. If you are pulling your RV with an SUV or a pickup truck with an extended cab, you may have enough room for a travel crate. Travel crates can also be used in Class A or Class C motorhomes.

A travel crate can be a comfortable option for your dog and offer some protection during an accident. However, there is still potential for your dog to bounce around within the crate in the event of a crash, which could result in injuries.

Pet Seat Belts:

Several manufacturers offer pet seat belts that have been crash-tested for safety. These seat belts work with the regular seat belt system of your vehicle. It is important only to secure a dog to a seat belt using an approved, appropriately sized harness and never by their collar.

Regardless of whether you use a travel crate, a pet seat belt, or choose not to use either, dogs should never be transported in the bed of a pickup, a travel trailer, or fifth wheel, or any sort of camper that is towed behind a vehicle, even if they are in a travel crate. If you camp in a travel trailer or fifth wheel, **make sure you leave room** for your dog in your towing vehicle.

4 Planning the Perfect Road Trip with Your Dog

Follow a Consistent Schedule

Although dogs love to experience new things and go on adventures with you, they are creatures of habit when it comes to their food, bathroom breaks, and sleep schedule. Your dog will be more relaxed if you keep as close to their regular schedule as possible. When traveling to your des na on, make sure to stop for plenty of potty breaks to ensure that they ride along with you in comfort.

Researching Pet-Friendly Campgrounds and Destinations

Even though the RV lifestyle is extremely dog friendly, it is still a good idea to research your destination to review all the rules regarding pets before you arrive. Many campgrounds have **breed-specific laws** as well as rules regarding fencing, tie-outs, designated potty areas, and more. Even if you have made a reservation, we suggest having at least one or two back-up options nearby in case the campground makes a booking error.

We also suggest researching local parks and hiking trails to confirm that dogs are allowed on the trails. Although hiking at a particular national park may be on your must-do list, learning that your dog is not allowed to hit the trail with you will be an unwelcome surprise.

Check out All Trails for a substantial list of dog-friendly parks and hiking trails around the United States. **The National Park Service also has a website with suggestions** on how to enjoy different national parks with your dog. Bring Fido is a great resource for finding pet-friendly events all over the country. Check out their Events page and search for events near your campground.

Be Safe but Spontaneous

Doing extensive research, planning, and preparation will help your road trip with your dog to be a great experience for both of you. Of course, sometimes the best parts of a vacation are the things you do not plan on doing. As long as your dog is safe and not showing signs of distress, it is ok to try new things and take advantage of spur of the moment opportunities. The most important thing is that you and your dog are together and enjoying time outdoors together.

Wrap up by sharing your story

Whether you are a full- me RVer or just a casual weekend camper, share your moments with the **pet parent community.** A cool pic or a quick video from your trip is both a fun and a rewarding experience. It also helps other pet parents to learn and plan road trips in the future with their furry kids.