

2016

Air travel with a Canine



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Air Travel with a Search Canine

Booking the Flight

- Booking directly with an agent on the phone will avoid backtracking to get confirmation in writing about traveling with a search dog
- Booking on line may be less expensive, but there is no option for including a search dog, so call the airline directly after booking to have that information placed onto your itinerary and ask for e mail confirmation to have with you at the airport
- Some airlines will make the notation in their files, but not have a documented statement for you to travel with when flying. Airline employees have access at the computers.
- There are 2 recommended seat option: the bulkhead (first row) and the last seat.
 - Being in front allows for minimal contact with other passengers, and a quick exit off the plane, and there is more room on the floor.
 - If front seats are taken, the last seat will give you an early boarding; no bother to people on the way and assured of room above for your carry-on bag
- Get a window seat so your dog is not in danger of having a tail or leg in the aisle
- Some agents will move others and place you in the bulkhead once you arrive at the gate
- Early flights are nice - less people traffic, skip feeding breakfast and feed K9 after arrival
- Non-stop or direct flights are highly recommended

Documentation - Always better to have more than you need

- Check airline policy for specifics
 - Health Certificate from veterinarian
 - USDA Interstate Certificate of Health Examination for Small Animals
 - Vaccinations, especially Rabies Certificate
 - Official letter from Task Force with FEMA logo
 - FEMA ID - you and your canine
 - License and/or Passport
 - Ticket and itinerary confirmation of travel with search canine
- Airlines vary as to their acceptance policy of SAR canines
 - Delta has a SAR dog policy that can be accessed. Rule 55 B) refers to SAR specifically: http://www.delta.com/content/dam/delta-www/pdfs/legal/contract_of_carriage_dom.pdf
 - Other airlines are very vague with SAR dogs but others have flown United, American, Continental, US Air without any problems.
 - Jet Blue allows SAR as of November 2013
- Service dog does not equal working dog. Under the US Dept of Justice, The American Disabilities Act defines service animals: http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

Packing Tips

- Pack a backpack plus a roller carry on with essential things: helmet, boots, knee pads, gloves, dog food, treats, toys, minimal changes of clothes and toiletries so if checked bag is lost you can still work
- In the checked bag are extra clothes, one set of civilian clothes to go to dinner at night and extra rain gear depending on the forecast
- If you need a crate there are soft sided crates that fold down; and if you can fit it in your checked bag or even carry-on you can avoid another check bag fee
- If renting a vehicle, bring a sheet to put down on the seat in the rental car and a towel to wipe off a wet/dirty dog. Some handlers have been charged a lot for the company to clean the car after having a dog in it

The Day of Travel

- You must be in uniform for official travel, and your canine in an ID vest
- Don't feed your dog the day of travel if in the morning but carry a meal of kibble just in case in your carry-on backpack
- Walk them at home, before car travel, and at the airport if possible; have bag in pocket! Some do not have a dog walk area for departure sites but often do at the arrival airport
- Use the restroom before you board, as it may be impossible to use one in-flight; the handicap stall has room for you both
- A special leash that has multiple rings and clips on either end so it can looped over your shoulder like a purse leaves hands free to pull my carry on and roller checked bag

Security

- An agent may escort you and your K9 to the employee line for TSA security check. If not, enter this line on your own.
- Remove all items from canine.
- TSA officer will direct you to the metal detector frame rather than the x-ray booth
- Have your K9 sit, stay, go through, have K9 come at the direction of the TSA officer
- You can always request a personal screening if you prefer
- Some recommend having your dog on a non-metal line at all times

Boarding and Deplaning

- If you have a first row seat then last on and first off is the best way to have the least contact with other passengers, but first on assures enough room above for carry on
- If you have the last seat, then first on and last off works the best
- Some agents will escort you to the plane first

Miscellaneous

- After arrival, go to the store and get a couple gallons of water to have in the car. Sometimes the hotel water is fine but may taste odd; have water they will drink.
- Consider disposable Tupperware containers as bowls, they are light weight, pack small and you can throw them away when done. There are also collapsible bowls available.