

International Travel Check List

GUIDE
DOGS



This checklist outlines all the things you need to think about before travelling out of the UK with your recognised guide or assistance dog. This is only a guide to support travel, so it is strongly advised that you contact the relevant people and organisations, so that you can ensure you have done all you need to do, to travel successfully with your guide or assistance dog.

This is an active guidance document, so if you think there is guidance missing from this check list, which would be of use to guide or assistance dog owners when travelling out of the UK, please do let us know.

You can navigate to specific sections of this guidance using the links in the table of contents at the start of the document. Sections are denoted by level 2 headings, and questions are denoted by a level 3 heading. (Q) denotes the question, and (A) denotes an answer.

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Before You Travel with Your Dog

Q Do you need to take your dog with you to support your mobility, impairment or medical condition?

A Many people now take their guide or assistance dog out of the UK to support them, but do not always think about how their trip may impact on their dog's welfare, or if there is some other way of getting the support on the trip that their dog normally provides for them. This is something you should consider before travelling.

Q Are you aware of the access rules that apply to you and your dog in the country you are visiting?

A In comparison with many other countries, the UK is very accessible, especially in providing access to people with a guide or assistance dog. However, there are many countries, even with formal access regulations, where use of a guide or assistance dog will be limited.

Q Are there any cultural issues that might impact on your dog, and your use of it in the country you are visiting?

A There are places around the world where dogs do not have the status and public acceptance we have in the UK, so it is worth keeping this in mind when booking things like hotels, restaurants, leisure activities and taking your dog out and about in the country you are visiting.



Are there any health or disease control issues you need to be mindful of about your dog, and its welfare in the country you are visiting?



The European PETS passport scheme and the associated Rabies Vaccination and Tape Worm treatment does not protect your dog from other endemic diseases which affect dogs in other countries. It is important that you check with your vet, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) pet travel website and other sources of information as to what potential health problems could affect your dog in the country you are thinking of visiting.



Are you aware of how the weather and climate may impact on your dog's ability to work?



The UK has a temperate climate for dogs to work in, however, dogs do take time to adapt themselves to significant changes in temperature, and may not be fully effective in supporting you if the climate in the country you are visiting is significantly different than the UK, and you do not give your dog time to adjust.



Do you have a strategy in place if your dog falls ill or injures itself when you are travelling, and the cost you may incur?



Travel health insurance cost for a guide or assistance dog could be significantly greater than travel health insurance for a pet dog. You should be mindful of the veterinary costs that you are likely to incur if your dog falls ill on your travels, and the potential cost of medical repatriation of your dog back to the UK.



Do you know what you will do with your dog if you fall ill or injure yourself when travelling and how much this might cost you?



As you are legally responsible for the welfare of your dog, you need to be aware that your dog may be treated as a pet dog, not a guide or assistance dog, if you are unable to look after it. This may incur additional cost for things like repatriation to the UK.



Do you know what support you could obtain, and how much it would cost, if you are looking for assistance for you and your dog in the country you are visiting?



There are training organisations around the world who are members of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI), who may be able to support you and your dog with your visit to another country. However, they may charge you for any services provided, and may need notice that you require their assistance before you travel.



Are you familiar with the accommodation you plan to stay in and how your dog will be accommodated?



Not all accommodation and hotels, even if they are listed as being accessible, are equipped to support you with accommodation for your dog. It is worth checking to establish if the location is a dog friendly environment and that you are not restricted to where you can walk your dog, or take it for recreation.



Have you looked at the accessible routes and transport providers who can take you and your dog throughout your journey?



Whilst there are regulations in place around the world to support you and your dog on various types of transport, it is worth checking that all the transport routes you plan to take, can take your dog as well, and if so, what they expect you to do with your dog on the transport they provide.

Preparing to Travel with Your Dog



Have you informed travel agents, transport providers and any other relevant people that you are planning to travel with a guide or assistance dog?



It is vitally important that you inform transport operators and the associated travel services on your trip, that you are travelling with a guide or assistance dog. Failure to do this may stop you from completing your journey, especially if you do not provide them with the relevant documents they might request before you travel.

It is probably a good idea to take a note of who you spoke to in each organisation and the department they work for, just in case any element of your travel plans is affected by the organisations you spoke to and you need to speak to them again to remedy any issues.



Are the people you have informed making adequate provision for your dog, and its comfort and welfare?



Failure to inform transport providers that you are travelling with a guide or assistance dog, might mean that there is not adequate space for your dog on the transport provided. As you are legally responsible for the welfare of your dog, you need to be aware, as much as possible, that your dog has been factored into any travel arrangements and the transport provided.



What are your plans for you and your dog if any part of your arranged travel or transport goes wrong?



It is important to be aware of what you can do, if any part of your journey is changed. This is especially important to ensure that the alternative transport provided is suitable for your dog, and that alternative places you may be visiting do not affect your dog's health and wellbeing. Also, that any alternative plans prior to returning to the UK take into consideration the requirements of the European PETS Passport.



Do you know the amount of dog food you are permitted to take with you for your dog, and the rules in the countries you are visiting about the importation and exportation of dog food?



There are restrictions as to what dog food you can take out of the UK, and what you can take into countries you are visiting. Therefore, it is important to check what the export and import rules are, for your dog's food, in the destinations you are visiting. Also, your airline may restrict the amount of food you can take, or may charge you to carry it, so check with your airline what their policy is regarding food for guide or assistance dogs, both in the cabin and in the hold of the aircraft.



Are you able to obtain the appropriate food for your dog in the countries you are visiting and the impact on your dog's diet of using alternative dog foods, if you are unable to use your dog's usual food?



If you are unable to take food with you, or the food you are permitted to take is not your dog's usual type, you will need to look for alternatives when you are travelling, or adjust your dog's diet before you leave. It is worth seeking advice from your guide or assistance dog training organisation or your vet about this topic, before you travel.



Your Dog and its Health before Travel



Do you know about the European PETS Passport Scheme and what you must do with your dog to travel successfully under the scheme?



Travel out of the UK with your guide or assistance dog is made possible by the European PETS Passport, which gives you relatively unrestricted access to countries in Europe with your dog. However, the processes and procedures associated with the scheme are slightly complex and need to be followed correctly, so do ensure you know what they are, and how your dog must comply with them.



Are you aware that different rules apply in other parts of the world outside Europe when travelling with your dog, related to its health and the documentation needed to support it?



The European PETS passport will support you with your dog in other countries around the world, but please do bear in mind that many countries have their own animal health and importation/exportation regulations, and additional paperwork and health checks may be required before travel or on your journey, to comply with their animal health regulations.



Have you been in touch with your vet practice, and obtained from a qualified Official Veterinarian (OV) a PETS Passport and any relevant health checks for your dog, plus the import and export licences that are needed for some destinations?



The best source of advice and help prior to travel with your guide or assistance dog's health, and the associated paper work is your vet. Each vet practice should have an Official Veterinarian (OV) who is qualified by DEFRA to carry out all the necessary processes and procedures to ensure your dog is fit for travel outside of the UK.



Transport and Travel Preparation

Q **Have you obtained and provided all the relevant paperwork for your transport provider, about your dog and its legitimacy to travel?**

A Transport providers have a right to ask you for evidence that your dog is trained by what is known as a Recognised Training Organisation. These organisations are members of the International Guide Dogs Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI).

The Yellow Assistance Dogs UK branded ID book should be sufficient for your dog's identification, if requested, your training organisation may also be able to provide information that clarifies the standards to which your dog is trained prior to travel.

Transport and travel providers may also ask for additional information about the health of your dog and its fitness to travel. This you should obtain after a health check from your vet.

Q **Have you contacted all the relevant animal processing agencies, who will process your dog at ports on each leg of your journey?**

A It is advisable to check with your transport and travel operator if they will pass on your dog's details to the relevant authorities in each air or sea port, or rail terminus you visit, or if they require you to do this yourself ahead of time. Failure to ensure that your dog has been cleared for each part of your journey may restrict your access in some countries, may delay your departure through some ports, or may place your dog in quarantine until the relevant paperwork and vet's checks have been completed.

Q **Are you aware of the time lines with regard processes and procedures related to the processing of your dog throughout your journey?**

A There are requirements with processes related to the European PETS passport which require you to provide treatment through a qualifying vet for your dog, prior to your return to Europe or the UK. There may also be comparable requirements for entry into other countries, so it is vital you are aware of these processes and the timelines for them before you depart.

Q **Have you given yourself enough time, prior to departure, on each leg of your journey for the extra processing time needed to manage your dog and its paperwork?**

A Transport and travel providers may recommend or require you to turn up some time before the scheduled time of departure, to ensure that they have time to process your dog. It is advisable to follow this guidance, as it gives you or the operator of the service time to rectify any issues, in time for you to travel.



Do you know who to contact if there are problems with travel arrangements or your transport provider on any leg of your journey, to resolve any unexpected issues?



It is advisable to obtain contact details of organisations who can support you, if you have problems with transporting your dog on any part of your journey with a transport or travel provider. If you can, taking a note of who you spoke to, who they work for, what process they were supporting you with and what advice they gave.



Have you thought about how your dog will be accommodated on each mode of transport throughout your journey, and considered your dog's welfare and the physical space that it will be provided?



It is important for your dog's welfare and comfort on your journey, that you check where your dog will be accommodated on the transport provided. Ideally, your dog should have enough space to lie down, sit up and turn around, with the ability to take a short walk on longer trips. If your journey is going to take more than 4 hours, it is also worth thinking about breaking your journey up, so that your dog gets a rest between legs of your journey, if possible.



Rules Related to the UK



Do you know the rules specifically related to the UK, and the processes your dog will need to go through to leave the country, and more specifically and importantly return to the UK?



It is important to check with your travel or transport provider and your Official Veterinarian (OV) in your vet practice what is required of you to successfully leave and return to the UK with your dog. It is advisable that you know what processes your dog will go through, and what will happen if any of the processes fail, and who you will need to speak with to resolve any issues.



Are you aware of the veterinary requirements of the European PETS Travel Scheme as they relate to your re-entry back into the UK?



There are specific processes that your dog will need to go through when returning to the UK. It is essential you know what these are, and that you ensure your paperwork and treatments for your dog have been completed correctly and in the time required.



Have you found a veterinary practice who can process your dog, prior to returning to the UK, who can administer the relevant PETS checks and treatments needed to comply with the European PETS Travel Scheme, in the time permitted?



Your dog will need to be treated before you return to the UK by a qualified vet. It is important that you plan for this ahead of your return, and ensure that the vet is qualified to administer the treatment and process your dog's European PETS passport.



Do you know what the procedure is once you return to the UK, about PETS checks at the air or sea port or rail terminus you arrive into?



Your dog will need additional processing on your return to the UK which may delay your departure from your arrival port. This will be a check of your dog's microchip and any relevant paperwork associated with your dog, including the European PETS passport.



Have you thought about what you will do if there are any issues with your dog if it fails any element of the PETS checks, who you will contact and how you will help to get it resolved?



Unfortunately, some problems do occur for guide and assistance dog owners returning to the UK. This is usually because there are inaccuracies with the paperwork needed to process a dog, or that the European PETS passport has not been filled in correctly.

You will need to do all you can to support the relevant authorities to help them resolve this issue, including having contact details to hand for your vet practice, and the vet practice you obtained your treatment from for your dog prior to your return to the UK, and contact details for the organisation who trained your dog.

PETS checks are a legal requirement to protect public health, and should not cost anything additional to you if your dog's paperwork and health check is in order, so do check before leaving the UK that your dog's PETS passport and any other relevant documentation are in order. However, if there are any problems which cannot be resolved by contacting your vet, the vet who processed your dog prior to returning to the UK, or your training organisation, it is strongly advisable to pay any additional processing charges, if they occur, and not to use your status as a guide or assistance dog owner or your disability, to avoid mandatory or processing charges if your dog fails any part of the process on your return to the UK.



Get in touch

If you have ideas for this Q&A guidance which you think should be included, please e-mail:

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