

No Hassle Pet Bird Travel Tips Page 2

Tips for traveling with pet birds on short trips, long trips and airplanes.

Airlines have specific size requirements for carriers. Check with your local airlines for what size carriers they accept.

Flying With Parrots

When Jen Silva recently relocated her brown-headed parrot and two cockatiels from Texas to Japan, she learned how complicated it can be to coordinate such a move. Her first piece of advice?

"If someone is only going overseas for a vacation, I recommend finding a good bird sitter," she said. Assess the difficulties and expenses to you as well as the stress on your birds, especially if the country you are visiting imposes a quarantine period.

Nevertheless, Silva had some good tips for domestic and international flights:

1) Talk to the airline, and make sure you understand their regulations for traveling with birds. Airlines differ not only in their policies, such as whether birds are allowed to travel in the cabin, what size birds are allowed and any extra fees. Silva learned that no pets are allowed in the cabin for international flights, and there is a limit to the number of hours the birds can stay in the cargo hold. Also, make sure your travel plans do not involve switching planes to another airline, with a whole new set of regulations and fees.

Check the airline's specifications for carriers. Silva was able to adapt Chihuahua-size crates by outfitting them with wooden perches, spill-proof water bottles and a supply of food.

2) Obtain a health certificate from an accredited vet no more than 10 days before your flight. For international travel, you will need the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, (APHIS) (www.aphis.usda.gov/travel/pets.html) form 7001, signed by both the vet and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) person in your city; this form has a raised seal.

3) Also, if you are leaving the country, you will need a CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) permit (www.cites.org), which might take three weeks to obtain. Keep a copy of all your paperwork, Silva advised. You will need it for your return trip.

4) Make sure your birds are banded if you are traveling abroad.

5) Have your bird's wing-feathers trimmed, or have it in a secure, safe harness. Airport personnel might ask you to remove the bird from the carrier to pass through security checkpoints, and you'll want to avoid a panicked bird flying in a crowded terminal.

6) Research the types of bird food, equipment and veterinary care available at your destination. Bring enough food and supplies with you to last through your trip. If you are not likely to find an avian vet once you arrive, follow Silva's lead: have your vet perform the full battery of tests on your birds before you leave home, and keep them indoors once you arrive to prevent exposure to new diseases.

Help Your Parrot Like Its Travel Cage

1) If the travel cage resembles your parrot's regular cage in some way, things may go more smoothly. A vastly different appearance can be off-putting, especially at first.

2) Make sure the carrier is big enough for your bird, which should at least be able to turn around and enjoy some movement.

3) Leave the cage around for a few days or weeks so your parrot can get used to it and see that it doesn't pose a threat.

4) Put some tempting toys or treats in the cage where your parrot can see them and investigate; for example, most of our birds can't resist a sprig of millet.

5) Avoid dangling toys to prevent your bird from getting knocked around when the carrier is in motion.

6) Avoid a water dish in the carrier; your parrot probably won't appreciate a sudden bath. Water bottles can be a great alternative as long as you are sure your parrot knows how to use one. Jen Silva, who recently relocated with her parrots from Texas to Japan, found investing in non-spillable bottles well worth the price. Juicy pieces of fruit can also provide liquid on short trips.