POOCHES AT PLAY

A PAWSOME GUIDE FOR TRAVELLING WITH YOUR DOG

By Lara Shannon - Pooches at Play Creator, Dog Trainer and Behaviourist



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With one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world, it's no surprise there is a growing demand for pet-friendly travel options. Who doesn't want their furry friend to be able to join in the family holiday fun?

Not only can taking your dog away with you help to reduce the emotional distress that leaving them behind can cause, for both you and your pet, it can also open up a whole new world of travel and adventure that you may not have otherwise experienced.

Whilst it does take some extra planning, it provides a great reason to get out and about on foot more to explore the local area and connect with nature, keeping both you and your dog healthy and happy.

It's also a great way to meet new people or simply share a smile and a "Hi, how are you?" with strangers, something that is often missing in today's society. As most owners would have experienced, having a dog at your side can be a great way to meet and talk to people in your local community, or on your travels. Whilst visiting a new area, it can also provide a great opportunity to ask for some tourism tips from a local at the same time.

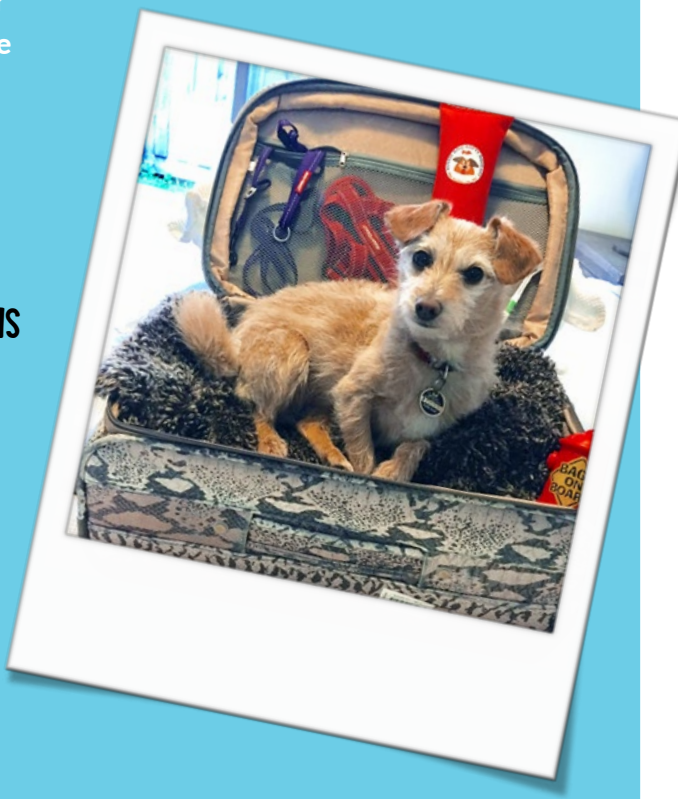
So, if you're heading off on a long-stay caravanning or camping adventure, or just a simple weekend getaway with your pooch, I've compiled some of my top tips for ensuring your holiday is a safe and enjoyable one for the whole family, including your furry friends.

Read on for more information about these and other useful pet-friendly travel tips:

- RESEARCHING PET-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS
- PACKING YOUR DOG'S TRAVEL ESSENTIALS
- PREPARING YOUR PET FOR CAR TRAVEL
- KEEPING YOUR DOG HEALTHY AND SAFE
- OUT AND ABOUT
- TRAINING AND BEHAVIOUR









THOROUGHLY RESEARCH YOUR PET-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

CARAVAN & CAMPING GROUNDS

Whilst many caravan parks and other accommodation providers report to being pet-friendly these days, it's important to ensure you plan your journey well ahead of time and do your research into how pet-friendly they actually are, and any individual rules and restrictions they may have in place.

- **There may be limits on how many or what type of pets are allowed. Some holiday parks may only allow dogs in one or two cabins, or for people with their own caravan only.**
- **Many of the holiday parks in popular tourist areas often have a no pet policy during busy holiday periods, whilst dogs are not allowed in most National and State park camping grounds all year round.**
- **Research the local off leash beaches, parks and places to eat and check if the park provides doggy day care, or can recommend a pet sitter in the area for when you can't take them with you on an outing. Many holiday parks won't allow you to leave your dog unsupervised.**

For tips on camping with your dog, click HERE.

HOME-STYLE ACCOMMODATION

When it comes to home-style accommodation, again they will have their own rules regarding where pets are or are not allowed.

Even if pets are allowed indoors there may still be restrictions around them being on furniture or beds, so keep this in mind as you may be charged extra or lose a bond if you break the rules.

- **Check the accommodation has a fully fenced yard. Even the most obedient of pooches can be tempted to take a look around the new neighbourhood when they're away from home, so choosing a place with an enclosed yard is a must for truly pet-safe holidays.**

- **Secure balconies. Just as a secure yard is a good idea for holiday accommodation, if you are staying on multi-levels, make sure balcony areas are safe and secure and there is nothing your dog or cat can use to climb up and over.**

- **Are pools and spas fenced and secure? It's not just kids who need the safety of a pool gate, so check that any pool or spa areas are fenced, and the safety gates are working properly. If in any doubt, keep your dog indoors or in other yard areas where they can't gain access.**

HOTELS AND MOTELS

There is also a growing number of hotels and motels that are providing dog-friendly rooms.

Again, it is important to check their individual rules as to where dogs are allowed within the complex and what access they have to outside areas or court-yards, as they will all have differing degrees of pet-friendliness.

TIP:

Book your pet-friendly accommodation well in advance as supply is still far below demand!



PACKING FOR YOUR POOCH

You can help your dog to feel safe and comfortable in new places by taking along their familiar belongings on your trip such as their bed, blanket and favourite toys.

Crate training your dog has many benefits and is particularly useful when travelling, both for the car journey and for providing your dog with their 'safe place' in unfamiliar surroundings. It is also useful for keeping injured or sick dogs safe. You can find out more about crate training your dog here.

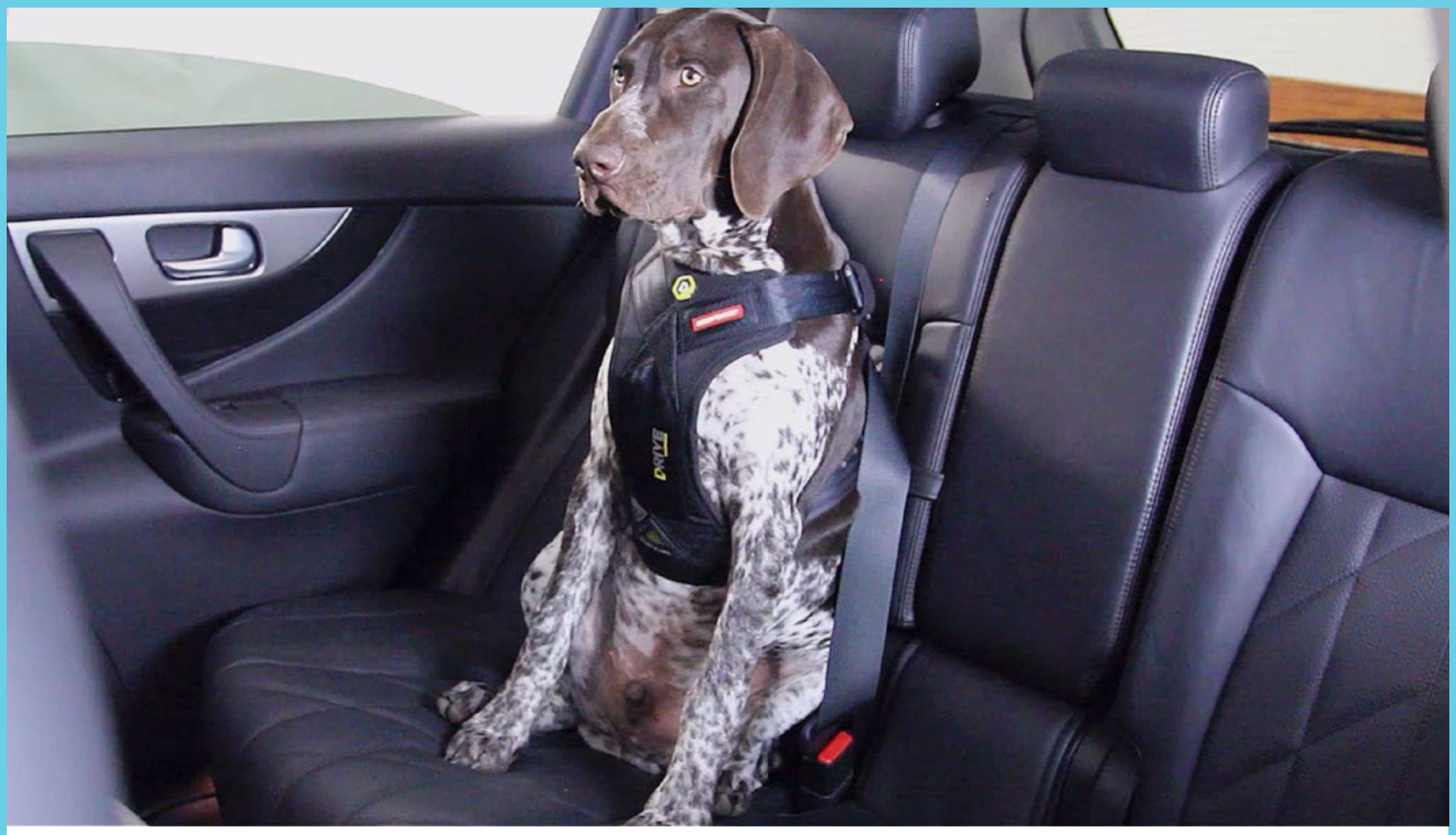
Don't forget their lead and collar, food and drink bowls, poo bags, grooming tools and any other necessities, including their medications.

Also make sure you take enough of their food away with you to last the trip. Or, if you are heading off on an extended holiday, know where you can stock up on your usual brand along the way.

Remember, it's important that if you are running low and/or will be changing your dog's diet whilst away, that you gradually transition them across to any new food or brands over 7-10 days (i.e.: starting with introducing small amounts of the new food with the previous food, then slowly increasing the new and decreasing the old), to avoid stomach upsets.

CHECKLIST:

- **Leash & collar with ID tag**
- **Bed / blankets**
- **Travel or wire crate**
- **Favourite and interactive toys**
- **Food and water bowls**
- **Food and treats**
- **Poo bags**
- **Wipes for mess**
- **Grooming tools – shampoo, towel, brush, nail clippers**
- **Toothbrush & dog-specific toothpaste for daily brushing**
- **Pet sunscreen / insect repellent**
- **Medications**
- **Pet first aid kit**



CAR TRAVEL

SAFETY

When heading off on a road trip, make sure your pets are as safe and comfortable as you are.

Nationally it's illegal if a pet is on your lap or deemed to be a distraction, so always ensure your pet is restrained in the back seat with a harness, ideally with a car crash tested one like the Ezy Dog Drive Harness. If pets are seated in the front they can be injured or killed by the airbags if they are deployed in an accident, so always secure them in the back.

Alternatively, get them comfortable in a secured travel crate in the backseat, or in the cargo area if it has a barrier installed. Keep cats in an enclosed, but well ventilated and secured cage.

Never leave pets to travel in the caravan, or tie them up by their collar or to the door handle, as this can injure or kill them should you stop suddenly. Dogs on Utes should be restrained with either a suitable length tether or cage, so they can't fall of or be injured when the vehicle moves.

There is also state specific legislation about travelling with pets, so make sure you familiarise yourself with the local laws before heading interstate.

MOTION SICKNESS

Just like us pets can get carsick too, so only give them a light meal before the trip, but plenty of water. Stop every couple of hours for exercise and toilet and make sure the car is well ventilated or the window is down.

If your pet has motion sickness you might notice them looking listless or uneasy, licking their lips or drooling, or it can even develop into vomiting or diarrhoea. However, these signs and others, such as shaking or whining might also indicate they have anxiety.

ANXIETY

If your dog is still a puppy or hasn't done a lot of car travel, it's important to create a positive association by taking slow, short and frequent trips in the car to fun places, gradually increasing the length of the rides and rewarding calm behaviour with treats or praise.

If your adult dog is stressed or anxious about car travel, then it is important to go back to the basics and re-introduce them to car travel in very small steps, to help overcome the negative associations. This is called desensitisation.

You might even need to go as far back as just having them sit in the car whilst it is stationary, leaving the door open and giving them treats and praise without moving. Do this for as long as needed until they start to feel comfortable.

Then gradually step-by-step start the car and get further down the road, stopping frequently, making it fun and rewarding, and building on this over time to change their association with car travel.

It takes time and patience, but it is really important you don't force them or move too quickly to cause them to feel anxious again, as again, as this will simply reinforce the fear. This is really important for both the safety and comfort of you and your pet on your travels.

It may also help to give them a special toy they like just for car trips or their favourite blanket.
A pheromone calming spray such as Adaptil for dogs or Feliway for cats may also help keep them calm during car travel.

The spray releases pheromones that mimic the chemical that a dog naturally produces, like a mother dog does to her puppies, to provide a signal of security and comfort.

Read the steps on how to get your dog used to car travel in a positive way **HERE**.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Before heading away, make sure you know the local Vets and emergency centres along your route.

MICROCHIPS & ID TAGS

Ensure your dog or cat's microchip details are up to date. Even if they are up to date, ALWAYS put an ID tag on your pet's collar with your mobile number so they can be returned immediately should they wander off or get lost. Sadly, many dogs and cats end up in pounds and shelters and never find their way home due to details being out of date and no ID tag.

FIRST AID KIT

Before going on any road trip or holiday with your pet, make sure you have a First Aid Kit in your car or caravan that is suitable for both yourselves and your pet. Ideally order a dog or cat pet specific First Aid Kit, or add any of the missing items below to your own.

- **A pet-specific first aid booklet**
- **Pet-specific bandages**
- **Iodine based antiseptic**
- **Disposable gloves**
- **Tweezers**
- **Tick remover**
- **Pet sunscreen**
- **Hydrogen peroxide to clean wound**
- **Salt paste to induce vomiting**
- **Vet approved pain relief**
- **Sterile eye wash**
- **Skin and paw balm**
- **A muzzle (should you find an injured dog, or your dog is reacting aggressively due to pain)**
- **Towel or blanket that can be used to carry them in**
- **Any medications your dog may be taking**



You can check out some common injuries and tips from Pooches at Play resident Vet, Dr Melissa Meehan here.

VACCINATIONS

Ensure your pets' vaccinations are up to date and relevant for the areas you are travelling to. You will need to take a copy of your vaccination certificate, as it may be requested before entry to a holiday park or camping ground. Should you need to make use of a pet sitter or doggy day care, they will also need to sight this. Learn more about vaccinations **HERE**.

FLEAS, WORMS & TICKS

When going travelling it is vital your pet's flea, worm and tick treatments are up to date and you are familiar with what parasites and ticks may be found in the areas you are travelling to.

There are three types of ticks in Australia: Bush, Brown and Paralysis. The most dangerous parasite for dogs is the Paralysis Tick, which can affect both dogs and cats. Whilst ticks are mostly found on the eastern seaboard of Australia, fleas are found everywhere and there is nothing worse than a flea-infested caravan or tent should you miss your treatments.

If you are heading to known tick areas during tick season, avoid taking your dog into bush or long grass areas and your dog's fur should be inspected daily and thoroughly for ticks.
It is important not to leave any part of a tick in your dog, so if you do find or suspect one, play it safe and take them to a vet for removal.

There may also be other parasitic risks in the areas you are travelling to, so worming is also vital. Heartworm is mosquito transmitted and all pets are at risk, especially dogs, but cats can also be infected. Heartworm disease can lead to great suffering, causing weight loss, coughing and even sudden death.



SNAKES

Snakes can be out at any time of day or night, so if you are travelling to new areas and particularly in warmer weather, be mindful of where snakes like to hide and keep away high risk areas such as rivers and dams, long grass and shrubs, and stay on open paths. Keep your dog on a leash and away from high grass and rocks where snakes like to rest. Do not let the dog explore holes or dig under rocks or logs.

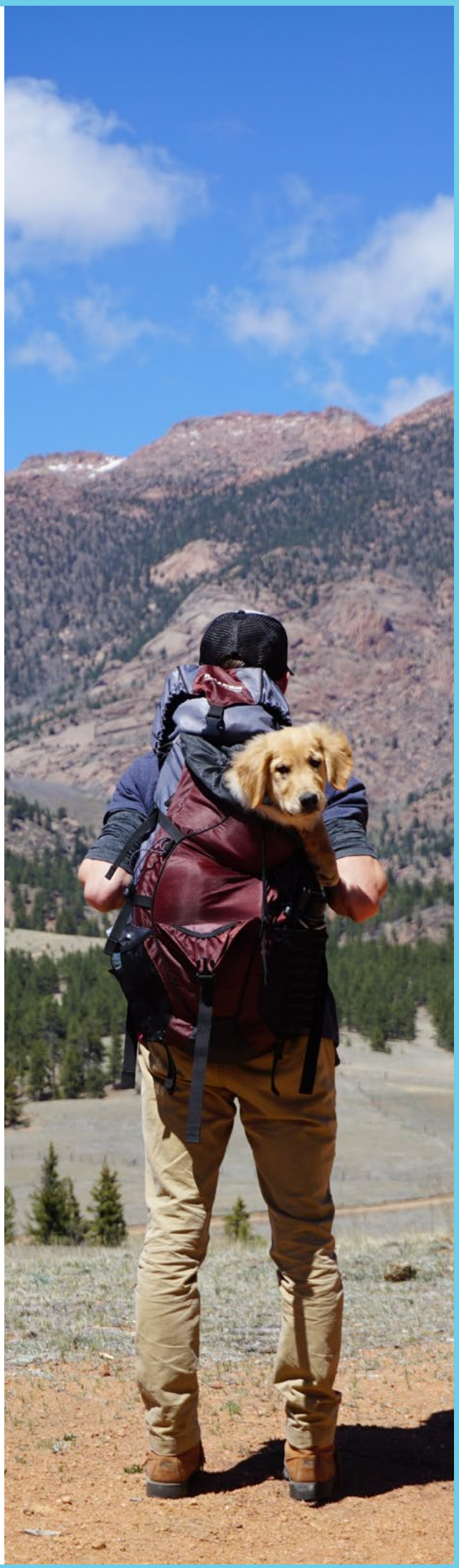
Remember most snakes don't wish to interact with us or our pets. If you see a snake, restrain your pet and simply give the snake time to move away, slowly walking back the way you came. Having a good recall is one of the most vital obedience tools any owner should have. For tips on improving your dog's recall **click here**.

If you do suspect a snake bite, keep calm and get them to a vet immediately. For more information about the signs and symptoms and what to do, **click here**.

TOXIC FOOD AND PLANTS

When travelling your pet may be at an increased risk to toxic food or plant poisoning, as they explore their new surroundings and other holiday makers get lazy with food scraps. The communal BBQ is a prime target for foraging dogs with fatty drippings and onion left overs posing a threat.

There may also be unknown toxic plants in the area, so research this before you go so you can identify them and keep your dog away. Wild mushrooms can also pose a great threat to your dog and have been responsible for some recent deaths in dogs. For advice around keeping your dog safe from toxic mushrooms, and the general signs that your dog may have ingested something toxic, **read here**.



HEATSTROKE AND SUN SAFETY

Heatstroke is a major threat to our pets when hot weather hits and can lead to multiple organ dysfunction. Unlike us humans, dogs can't sweat to cool themselves so they can heat up very quickly if left inside a car or caravan in warm weather, or are taken out on long walks or runs in the heat.

If you are heading to warmer climates, ensure your accommodation has air-conditioning and your dog has plenty of shade and water outside the caravan or house so they can find protection from the sun.

Another common mistake people make is to take their dogs out for a walk in the middle of a hot day when the pavements and roads are hot. This can easily lead to severe burning and blistering of their paw pads. Walk early mornings and evenings during hot weather and check the ground with the palm of your hand. If you can't hold it on there for 10 seconds without it hurting then don't walk your dog on it! Use pet-specific sunscreen too on exposed areas like noses, ears, bellies.

You can find out more about the signs and symptoms of heatstroke and tips to help keep your dog cool **HERE**.





OUT AND ABOUT WITH YOUR POOCH

DINING

Fortunately, there are many cafés and restaurants that are now recognising the need to cater for our pooches. From dedicated dog cafés totally themed and catering for the pooches, to others providing treats and puppaccinos on the menu. Make sure you ask your accommodation provider for their tips, or do some research before you go to find out where you are able to eat out with your dog, so that you aren't restricted when it comes to dining out whilst away.

PUBLIC SPACES

It's important to remember that dogs must generally be leashed in public places as required by legislation or local laws, so read up on any local council dog laws in advance. Know the local off lead parks and beaches and any restrictions they may have during the year.

Always make sure you pick up after your dog and respect other people and pets around you.

DOG BEACHES AND PARKS

One of my pet hates, excuse the pun, is the amount of tiffs or fights between dogs that I see at local dog parks or beaches that are due to poor owner leadership. If your dog is reactive or overly-excitable then make sure you have a good **recall** and that you are mindful of how your dog is behaving towards others.

Likewise, watch for other owners who are letting their dogs get too rough or excitable during play, or who are standing around in a group chatting, or on their mobile phones not paying attention to the dogs and their interactions. This is where and how dog fights break out, as what may start out as a bit of fun can quickly escalate into a full blown dog fight as their adrenaline rises.

On that, never put your hands in to grab fighting dogs. Instead try throwing something in between them such as a lead or water from a bottle to break their attention and, if successful, then both owners should quickly grab their dogs and take them away. If it was simply a case of escalating adrenaline, the dogs should shake it off pretty quickly once everyone has calmed down. Ideally you will allow them to still be able to see each other and calm down in each other's presence (but at a distance), so it doesn't leave a lasting negative impression.

WALKING TRAILS

One of the great things about heading away with your dog is that you have the perfect excuse to get out and get active. Make sure you do check any restrictions on dogs joining you on local walking trails and ensure your dog is healthy enough to make the distance. Take along plenty of water, treats and your first aid kit, and be mindful of bush and other areas that may pose a threat to your dog's safety as discussed earlier in the health section.





ADDRESS DOG BEHAVIOUR ISSUES BEFORE YOUR TRIP

There is nothing worse than a barking or reactive dog when on holiday, so start addressing any dog behaviour issues well before your trip with the help of a qualified trainer.

Boredom and anxiety are the biggest causes of most dog behaviour problems I see. Most trainers would agree that the majority of dogs we encounter that are deemed reactive or aggressive to other dogs or people are acting out of fear, poor socialisation and poor owner/handler leadership that may reinforce the dog's anxiety.

It is up to you as the owner to understand why this may be occurring and your dog's triggers, so that you can put measures in place to avoid them, or seek the services of a professional to help you address them.

Territorial barking is also a common problem for dogs in new surroundings or holiday parks, so for some general tips on addressing barking issues click here.

Keeping your dog mentally and physically stimulated by taking along interactive toys or puzzles, and making sure they get their required daily exercise, will also help keep your dog calm and quiet on holidays.

If your dog does suffer from anxiety, unfortunately there is so simple fix. There are many different reasons for and reactions by an anxious dog that need to be identified and treated carefully. So again, seek the help of a qualified dog trainer or vet behaviourist, well in advance of your holiday if you feel this may impact on the whole family, fur-kids included, having fun.

Most of all, enjoy the magic of being able to take your dog away with you on holiday.

For more pet-friendly travel, training and behaviour tips visit Poochesatplay.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - LARA SHANNON



Lara Shannon is one Australia's leading animal welfare advocates and canine experts, reaching millions of Australians each year through her education work, books and TV shows to help improve the lives of companion animals.

A certified dog trainer and pet food nutrition specialist, Lara created, and is the Executive Producer and Host, of Channel 10's Pooches at Play and The Dog Down Under , and 7TWO's Animal SOS Australia.

Lara is also the author of World of Dogs and Eat, Play, Love (Your Dog), and is a sought-after MC and speaker. She is also the editor of poochesatplay.com and runs her own dog training business in Melbourne.

Lara's mission is to help reduce the needless euthanasia of adoptable shelter animals to zero. She sits on the Animal Welfare League SA Board Sub-Committee for Animal Welfare, and is an Ambassador for Companion Animal Network Australia, Pets of the Homeless and MacKillop Family Services Paw Pals program. Her cheeky rescue dogs 'Dynamite Darcy' and Vindi are never far from her side.

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