

Traveling With VIPs (Very Important Pets)

La Jollans Carrol and Don Russell reflect a growing travel trend: unwilling to leave their adorable Maltese at home, the avid globetrotters have learned the ins-and-outs of taking Keli with them.

“It takes time to get comfortable with the idea,” Don tells me, “but it’s worked out really well for us.”

They experimented with a few domestic trips before flying to France, where they all had a great time staying at Le Méridien Montparnasse, dining in the city’s wonderful restaurants, and shopping in chic boutiques. Keli also rode the Paris Metro and loved walking along the Left Bank.

The Russells’ VIP was welcome in most restaurants — in fact, one maitre d’ in Mont Saint Michel insisted they take her out of her carrier and brought her a bowl of water. Keli’s favorite hotel was the Trianon Palace in the village

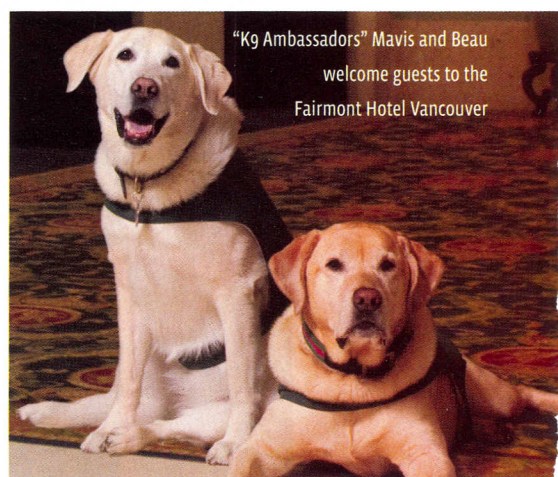
of Versailles, where she enjoyed watching a nearby flock of sheep from the balcony and didn’t seem to mind that she wasn’t allowed in the palace.

The Russells prefer American Airlines for domestic trips and flew Air France to Paris. Carrol pointed out that each carrier has its own regulations and that compliance is critical. They highly recommend the Sherpa Pet Group Web site, which includes the policies of 115 airlines ranging from Aer Arann to WestJet. (www.sherpapet.com/travel)

Sherpa also has a money-back Guaranteed on Board program that ensures your pet carrier will meet airline regulations and you won’t be turned away at the gate. The durable soft carriers for small dogs or cats fit under airline seats. Sherpa even offers carriers specifically designed to meet the requirements of certain

airlines. (www.sherpapetgroup.com/guaranteed_on_board)

It’s also very important to be aware of the regulations for traveling with pets. The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides information on the requirements of various



foreign countries and U.S. states. France requires a European microchip for “dogs, cats, and ferrets.” (Ferrets? Really?) Hawaii imposes a quarantine of up to five days for newly-arrived pets. (www.aphis.usda.gov/regulations/vs/iregs/animals)

The Russells also consult Keli’s doctor at La Jolla Veterinary Hospital, where the staff research international and state regulations on a case-by-case basis, provide ID chips, and supply required vaccinations.

Many experts suggest that if your pet is too big for an under-seat carrier and you are flying to your destination, it’s best to leave him or her at home. That’s why Moses, Keli’s black lab roommate, doesn’t go on vacation with the rest of the family — unless it’s a road trip. ☛



Carrol Russell with Keli on the hotel balcony at Mont Saint Michel

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DON RUSSELL, FAIRMONT HOTEL VANCOUVER, ADVENTURE MEDIA, WILLOWS LODGE, AND KERRICK JAMES

➤ Edie Jarolim, author of *Am I Boring My Dog?* (Alpha/Penguin, 2009), also points out that many hotels listed as “pet-friendly,” actually have weight limits that preclude large pets. Before checking in, it’s important to clarify what size animal is allowed and what fees will apply. She travels with Frankie, her ten-pound Terrier mix, and advises that Loews and Kimpton hotels have the most liberal pet policies. By the way, Jarolim’s blog is both very entertaining and informative. (www.willmydoghateme.com)

If you’ve never traveled with a pet, Loews Coronado Bay Resort would be a good first experience. The Loews Loves Pets program applies to any domesticated household pet, regardless of weight or breed. Room service includes roasted salmon for fussy felines and grilled filet and rice for canines. You and your dog could learn to surf at the hotel’s Su’ruff Camp, while kitty enjoys in-room amenities including toys, catnip, and a scratching pole. (www.loewshotels.com)



Best friends rafting the Rogue River Canyon

When you’re ready to venture further afield, Carmel has plenty of pet-friendly hotels, restaurants, shops, and galleries. In addition, dogs can run freely on the community’s mile-long beach. At the Cypress Inn, man’s best friend is provided blankets, beds, bowls, and biscuits. The Forge in The Forest restaurant offers a Dog Pound menu (as well as great food for humans), and at Porta Bella waiters bring pups water in a Champagne bucket. (www.seemonterey.com)



A visitor walking his dog in Carmel-by-the-Sea

In Oregon, adventurous dogs and their people raft the Rogue River Canyon and camp riverside on a three-day Paddles and Paws program offered by Rogue Wilderness Adventures. Life jackets are provided for dogs, as well as humans. (www.wildrogue.com)

In Washington’s beautiful Woodinville Wine Country, 25 minutes from Seattle, Ruthie the “Am-Basset-Dor” greets guests when they arrive at Willows Lodge. Here, doggie bed turndown service includes a rawhide pillow

treat. (www.willowslodge.com)

North of the border, “K9 Ambassadors” Mavis and Beau welcome guests to the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. These Labrador Retrievers have personally taste-tested the hotel’s Pet Menu, and they think VIP Keli would really like the “turkey-and-spinach paw stickers.” (www.fairmont.com)

For resources and suggestions on more pet-friendly hotels, see www.ranchandcoast.com.

ELIZABETH HANSEN



Doggie bed turndown service at Willows Lodge includes a rawhide pillow treat