

Traveling Big

For some establishments, bigger isn't always better.

By Jon Provost

Summer has arrived and you know what that means: it's time for your annual vacation! Time to pack the bags, load the kids and Fido into the family van and head off to those pet-friendly hotels or resorts you researched and booked for your trip. But just how well did you do your homework? Sure, you found pet-friendly establishments all along your route, but did you know that most, if not all, of them impose weight limits on dogs? Restrictions vary from place to place, but the majority of them limit a dog's weight

to between 20 and 30 pounds—unless it's a service dog, which are allowed anywhere.

The reason for the weight limits is the assumption that big dogs are more trouble and more of a bite risk, even though statistics don't support that reasoning. So your German Shepherd, Collie, Labrador or even a larger Beagle are out of luck, but your neighbor's Yorkie, Miniature Poodle, Boston Terrier or Cavalier King Charles Spaniel are "okay." In my opinion, that's downright discrimination, and it's based on ignorance. Any size dog can be a problem; it's all about socialization and training. Small dogs can be little hooligans; a friend of mine jokingly refers to his Jack Russell Terrier as his "terrorist." Besides, big dogs need a vacation, too.

So how do you know if the hotel you selected will take your big dog? Help is a click away thanks to a couple named Amy and Rod Burkert who travel extensively with their dogs, Ty and Buster. The Burkets created a travel search engine with up-to-date pet policies for thousands of hotels, RV parks, campgrounds, resorts, Bed and Breakfasts and much more across the US and Canada. The site has a feature called "Roadtrip Planner" that makes planning any Fido-friendly vacation a piece of cake.

Professional travel agent Leila Coe created another site catering to humans with pets. It's Professional travel agent Leila Coe created another site catering to humans with pets. It's a full-service agency specializing in pet travel. Both sites offer advice and tips for traveling with Fido as well as links to other helpful sites.

And if you agree that big dogs deserve the same rights as small dogs, there's something you can do. Amy, Rod and Leila have joined forces to launch a nationwide campaign called "Operation: Give Big Dogs a Break" to persuade pet-friendly establishments to lift weight restrictions. I encourage you to sign their petition. All dogs, big and small, deserve the same vacation. **f**

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Leila Coe's pet travel agency.
www.andasmalldog.com

Sign the size anti-discrimination petition!
www.givebigdogsabreak.com

Read stats on dog bites, your rights
and responsibilities.
www.dog-bite-law-center.com

Amy and Rod Burkert's website
www.GoPetFriendly.com

Find more resources online at www.FIDOFriendly.com/features/large-dogs