

Lifestyle > Shopping All These Pretty Things

10 Best Airline-Approved Carriers for Traveling with Your Fur Baby

They'll be flying first class even if you're in coach.

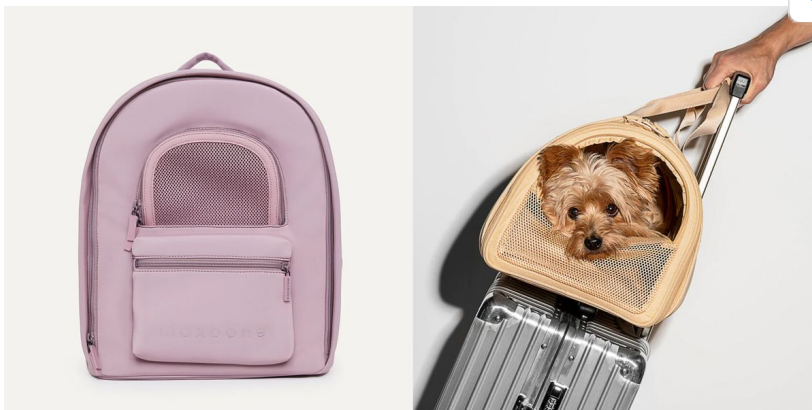
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Courtesy | Cristina Coppin

Pets may be great at lowering stress levels (see: [emotional support animals](#)), but when it comes to [travel](#), they can actually be pretty anxiety-inducing. Trust me, a woman who has taken five cross-country flights with her cat in the past six months. But one thing that seriously cuts down on my pre-flight anxiety is having the right airline-approved pet carrier.

Most small cats and dogs can travel with you in the cabin on domestic flights as long as you've alerted the airline and have a [cat carrier](#) or [dog carrier backpack](#) that will fit under the seat in front of you. Size restrictions for pet carriers vary slightly among airlines—[American Airlines](#) and [United](#) guidelines recommend 18" x 11" x 11", [Southwest](#) has a max of 18.5" x 13.5" x 9.5", and [Jet Blue](#) recommends 17" x 12.5" x 8.5". However, as long as your carrier is roughly the right size, odds are it'll fit under the seat in front of you. It's also recommended that you bring a soft-sided carrier with plenty of ventilation, but don't worry, I've rounded up the very best airline-approved pet carriers that check all the boxes for you.

Our top picks for the best airline-approved pet carriers of 2024:

1  **BEST OVERALL AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER**
Sherpa Original Deluxe Travel Pet Carrier
[read more](#) **\$49 AT AMAZON**


2  **BEST AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER BACKPACK**
Maxbone Go Everywhere Backpack
[read more](#) **\$230 AT MAXBONE.COM**

3  **BEST-SELLING SOFT-SIDED PET CARRIER ON AMAZON**
Vceo Pet Carrier
[read more](#) **\$20 AT AMAZON**

4  **BEST AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER FOR SMALL DOGS**
Wild One Travel Carrier
[read more](#) **\$125 AT WILDONE.COM**

5  **BEST EXPANDABLE AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER**
Petsfit Expandable Pet Carrier
[read more](#) **\$52 AT AMAZON**

6  **BEST AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER FOR 10+ LBS PETS**
ROVERLUND Pet Carrier
[read more](#) **\$174 AT AMAZON**

7  **BEST WATER-RESISTANT AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER**
Sleepypod Air
[read more](#) **\$200 AT SLEEPYPOD.COM**

8  BEST BUDGET AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER BACKPACK

PetAmi Backpack Carrier

[read more](#) **\$39 AT AMAZON**

9  BEST DUFFLE-STYLE AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER

Away The Pet Carrier

[read more](#) **\$225 AT AWAY**

10  BEST BRIGHT AIRLINE-APPROVED PET CARRIER

Violet Pet Carrier

[read more](#) **\$80 AT VETRESKANYC.COM**

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As you shop, remember that pet carriers don't just have to fit airline restrictions, they also have to fit your pet. "A cat needs to be able to stand up and turn around, lay down comfortably, and sit comfortably," says Tammy Sadek, DVM, DABVP. The same is true for small dogs. In other words: it's not enough for your pet to fit in the carrier, they have to be able to move around in it, too.



1

best overall airline-approved pet carrier

Sherpa Original Deluxe Travel Pet Carrier

Now 31% Off

\$49 AT AMAZON

PROS

- ➕ Specifically designed to comply with most major airline requirements

CONS

- ⊖ Three mesh panels without covers can be overstimulating for nervous pets

I've had a version of this Sherpa travel carrier for three years, and it's never let me down. The mesh panels allow for sufficient airflow, while a removable cozy base liner provides a comfortable travel bed for my fur baby. It's a pretty no-frills carrier, with one pocket in the back panel, which also has a flexible spring wire frame that can be pushed down to fit under the seat.

- **Dimensions:** 17" L x 11" W x 10.5" H
- **Pet weight limit:** 16 lbs
- **Colorways:** Black lattice, black, charcoal
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** Faux lambskin liner is machine washable

THE REVIEW: "We moved 1200 miles and I had to fly with my indoor cat who had never liked to be in a car or in any other carriers. I bought this carrier two weeks before our move and left it out for her to explore. She loved the mesh walls that kept her informed of her surroundings, and she started taking naps in it every day," one reviewer writes. "The floor, handles, and the shoulder strap were sturdy and made it easy to carry her around the airport. The carrier fit perfectly under the seat in the plane."



2

best airline-approved pet carrier backpack

Maxbone Go Everywhere Backpack

\$230 AT MAXBONE.COM

PROS

- ⊕ Two sherpa linings help your pet feel cozy no matter what position they're in

CONS

- ⊖ It's a bit bulky

I would 100% make this neoprene backpack my everyday bag if I could, it's just so stunning. Aside from its good looks, this pet carrier backpack has all the standard features you want: mesh for ventilation, a safety hook to attach to a dog or cat collar so they don't escape, three extra pockets for travel necessities, a sturdy shape, and removable comfy lining, which can be hand washed between uses.

- **Dimensions:** 16" x 12.5" x 9.5"
- **Pet weight limit:** 17 lbs
- **Colorways:** Black, dusty mauve
- **Entry:** Front
- **Machine washable?** No

THE REVIEW: "This bag is perfect for traveling with my puppy. She's 7 lbs and had plenty of room to move around while riding under the airplane seat," a tester writes. "It also has great pockets for your phone ID, and other in-flight essentials."



3

best-selling soft-sided pet carrier on Amazon

Vceoa Pet Carrier

\$20 AT AMAZON

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➕ The fleece lining has a zipper to easily get on and off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Very motivated cats have been able to claw through the mesh, per some reviews

This small pet carrier is the number one bestselling soft-sided cat carrier on Amazon, probably because of its clean look and affordable price point. Like the Sherpa, this carrier has three mesh sides for ventilation, top and side entry, and a zip pocket to keep travel documents or treats for the trip. It also has a hard bottom insert for stability and a removable, machine-washable fleece cover for comfort.

- **Dimensions:** 17.5” L x 11” W x 11” H
- **Pet weight limit:** 16 lbs
- **Colorways:** Gray
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** Removable fleece bed is machine washable

THE REVIEW: “This carrier was much sturdier than we hoped it would be considering we have a Maine Coon mix who weighs in at around 15 pounds. Even though she is a plus size girl, she still had room to circle around and get comfortable, and my son reported it fit perfectly under the seat in front of him,” a reviewer writes. “The pad is removable, which was a plus since she urinated on it before the flight and we had to toss it.”

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4



best airline-approved pet carrier for small dogs

Wild One Travel Carrier

\$125 AT WILDONE.COM

PROS

- The detachable crossbody strap can double as a leash

CONS

- ⊗ A few reviewers noted that the zippers can be tricky to maneuver

It's rare to find a pet carrier that is comfy for your fur baby and looks cute, but this one from Wild One nailed it. Not only is the design super sleek, it's also multi-functional. Two mesh panels can be covered to give your pet some privacy, and you can open the top to lay flat on the ground and use the interior cushion as a travel mat or bed. (The carrier also has a clip inside to attach to a pet collar to ensure they won't escape.)

- **Dimensions:** 17.5" x 11" x 10"
- **Pet weight limit:** 16 lbs
- **Colorways:** Tan, black, spruce, cocoa
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** Travel mat is machine washable, carrier is hand wash only

THE REVIEW: "Wild One has created the Mercedes of pet carriers. So many pros to mention, from design to quality to function," writes a tester. "It's well made, sturdy, and stylish. The flexible material can adjust to fit any aircraft type under the seat compartment."



5

best expandable airline-approved pet carrier

Petsfit Expandable Pet Carrier

\$52 AT AMAZON

<p>PROS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Waterproof coating protects the carrier and your pet 	<p>CONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Not as much ventilation as other carriers
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If you're a frequent traveler who spends a lot of time at the terminal between flights, an expandable pet carrier is a must. The Petsfit carrier has one expandable mesh side to help give your fur baby more room to stretch before, after, or between flights. When you're ready to board, just zip that side back up and the carrier should be able to fit comfortably under the seat in front of you.

- **Dimensions:** 17" x 11" x 11"
- **Expanded dimensions:** 20" x 17" x 11"
- **Pet weight limit:** 15 lbs
- **Colorways:** Light gray, black, brown, green
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** Plush mat is machine washable (some reviewers also report having successfully put their carriers in the wash)

THE REVIEW: "This carrier was great for my first airline traveling adventure with my kitty," one reviewer writes. "It fit perfectly under the seat of an American Airlines plane." The reviewer adds, "The extension is a LIFESAVER! I can't tell you how glad I am that I got a carrier with the ability to provide ehr a little extra space."



6

best airline-approved pet carrier for 10+ lbs pets

ROVERLUND Pet Carrier

\$174 AT AMAZON

<p>PROS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Rear pocket insert can be removed to compress the carrier to fit under the seat 	<p>CONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Dimensions exceed many airline requirements, but the carrier is flexible, per reviews
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The Roverlund pet carrier stands out thanks to its leak-proof bottom, so if you have a pet that is accident-prone or gets motion sickness, this might be the pet carrier for you. This one also has unique rope handles, so you don't have to worry about anything ripping at the seams as you run through the airport, and a rope strap that turns into a leash.

- **Dimensions:** 19" x 11.75" x 11.5"
- **Pet weight limit:** 20 lbs
- **Colorways:** Camo orange, camo magenta, black/yellow
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** Bed cover is machine washable

THE REVIEW: "I bought the large carrier for my 14.5 lbs Maltese," writes one tester. "I was worried the large carrier wouldn't fit under the seat, or the United agents would give us a hard time as the dimensions are slightly over their guidelines, but everything went really smoothly."

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7

best water-resistant airline-approved pet carrier

Sleepypod Air

\$200 AT SLEEPYPOD.COM



PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Water-resistant polyester lining makes it easy to clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ It weighs 4 lbs, which is on the heavier side

The Sleepypod Air, in its natural form, exceeds the dimensions of most airline-approved pet carriers, but it's designed to be extremely flexible, specifically thanks to its dome-shaped top and sides that fold up to contract the bag's length from 22" to

its dome shaped top and sides that roll up to contract the bag's length from 22" to 16". But don't worry about your pet feeling cramped, the design makes it easy to unfold the sides to give your pet extra room after take-off.

- **Dimensions:** 16-22" x 10.5" x 10.5"
- **Pet weight limit:** 18 lbs
- **Colorways:** 9
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** Inside plush cover is machine washable



8

best budget airline-approved pet carrier backpack

PetAmi Backpack Carrier

\$39 AT AMAZON

**PROS**

- Safety buckle keeps the zippers together to prevent escapes mid-travel

CONS

- ⊗ The back isn't lined for your pet's comfort

The thing no one tells you about traveling with a small pet? They get heavy—fast. A backpack carrier might seem bulky, but it'll allow you to reduce the strain on your back and should fit under the seat in front of you laid on its back. It's also got three side pockets for travel essentials (extra treats, puppy pads, etc), and the sides completely unzip, so you won't have to worry about forcing your pet through a small opening to get in.

- **Dimensions:** 16.3" x 12.5" x 10.2"
- **Pet weight limit:** 18 lbs
- **Colorways:** 12
- **Entry:** Top, sides
- **Machine washable?** No

THE REVIEW: "Great bag for traveling with my 13 lbs poodle. It was a little tight, but she was able to sit when the bag was upright and lay down when the bag was down. The bag fit perfectly with her in it under the window seat of a United Boeing 737 and the middle seat of a United Airbus A320," writes one reviewer. "The backpack style was so much easier than the duffel bag style."



9

best duffel-style airline-approved pet carrier

Away The Pet Carrier

\$225 AT AWAY

**PROS**

➤ Sturdy shape won't cave in on your pet

CONS

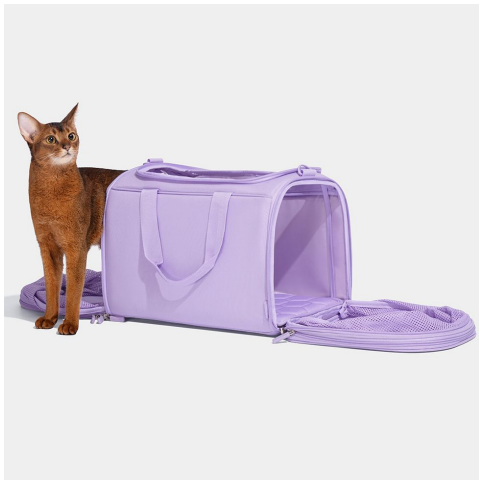
➤ It's less easy to fit under the seat in front of you

Probably the sleekest-looking pet carrier on the market, the Away design looks more like a small duffle bag than a pet carrier. It's very sturdy thanks to its water-resistant nylon fabric, but it has a bit of flexibility, with three mesh panels and a privacy cover to prevent overstimulation. It also comes with a plush sherpa bed with raised sides, so your pup or cat can rest easily.

- **Dimensions:** 18.7" x 10.8" x 10.75"
- **Pet weight limit:** 18 lbs
- **Colorways:** Black, coast
- **Entry:** Top, side
- **Machine washable?** No

THE REVIEW: "I love this carrier because, though the sides are soft, they are rigid and allowed me to feel comfortable pushing him under the seat in front of me. On one of our flights, the fit was very tight and I had to really squish down the top of the carrier, but felt comfortable doing so as I knew the carrier wouldn't collapse on my pup," writes a tester. "It wouldn't fit all the way under the seat, however. The flight attendants did not seem concerned at all."

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10

best bright airline-approved pet carrier

Violet Pet Carrier

\$80 AT VETRESKANYC.COM

<u>PROS</u>	<u>CONS</u>
➕ Two expandable sides give your pet tons of extra space	➖ The expandable mesh sides bunch up when folded

Finally, a pastel-colored pet carrier that actually works. The Vetreska pet carrier will definitely make your fur baby stand out at the airport, and it's got all the bells and whistles you want from a pet carrier: three mesh panels for ventilation, a detachable, padded shoulder strap, and a cushioned supportive base. Plus, it has two expandable sides to give your pet extra room in between flights.

- **Dimensions:** 18.1" x 9.8" x 11.8" (Expands to 40.2" x 9.8" x 11.8")
- **Pet weight limit:** 25 lbs
- **Colorways:** Violet
- **Entry:** Top, sides
- **Machine washable?** No

What to bring on a flight when traveling with a pet:

You know your pet's needs best, but there are a few things I personally never travel without when I'm taking my cat on a flight: treats and puppy pads.

Sadek recommends bringing extra paper towels and a plastic bag in case your pet vomits due to turbulence or stress, as well as food and bottled water in case of flight delays. I'd also consider putting a pet-friendly blanket your fur baby has used or a toy they like in their carrier with them. The familiar scent will help put them at ease and make the pet carrier feel more like a cozy hideaway than a prison.

How to find the best airline-approved pet carrier for you:

Finding the best airline-approved pet carrier for you mostly depends on the design, however, there is one basic rule most follow: only soft-sided pet carriers are allowed in the cabin. Hard pet carriers are generally reserved for animals that travel in cargo and have their own set of regulations.

Airline-approved pet carriers need to be the right size for your pet.

Most pet carriers have stated weight limits, but size is actually a more important factor. Your pet should be able to “stand up, turn around, and lay down comfortably” in their pet carrier, Sadek says. Before purchasing, measure your animal’s length and height as best you can (some pet carrier brands have instructions online) and take

their flexibility into consideration.

Airline-approved pet carriers need ventilation.

Airline-approved pet carriers need at least three mesh sides for ventilation so your pet can breathe comfortably throughout the flight. (Pro tip: if your cat or dog becomes over-stimulated by the crowds at the airport, bring a small blanket or towel you can drape over the carrier.)

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Meet the expert:

Tammy Sadek, DVM, DABVP is a feline-specialist veterinarian and President of the [American Association of Feline Practitioners](#). She has been working as a veterinarian for decades. In 1987, she founded [Kentwood Cat Clinic](#), and went on to launch [Cat Clinic North](#) in Michigan in 1997.

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Olivia Truffaut-Wong is an editor at *Cosmopolitan*, where she covers beauty, entertainment, and lifestyle. She loves finding and testing the best skincare products to recommend, like the [best tinted sunscreens](#), and is always researching the [best cat accessories](#) for her fur baby. She has over 10 years of experience as an entertainment and culture writer and editor, and her work has been featured in *The Cut*, *Refinery29*, *Teen Vogue*, *Polygon*, *Bustle*, and more.

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