

The 8 Best Dog Car Seats of 2024

Use these picks to keep your dog comfortable and secure on your next road trip.



Travel + Leisure / Alli Waataja



Diggs

Why We Love It

This CPS-certified carrier includes seat belt clips and a buckle strap for the car, and a removable pee pad bed, too.

What to Consider

It only has top and side mesh panels for ventilation, which also reduce a pet's visibility.

This crash-tested, CPS-certified dog carrier packs in smart features for safely and conveniently traveling with your pet. Dr. Mary Press, owner of Twin Cities Veterinary Hospital in Corte Madera, Calif., recommends using a carrier for car travel with a small dog. "That's what I do with my dog, especially when I'm going to fly with her," she said. "I always put her in a

carrier." This is the best option for toy breeds that are too small to fit in a CPS-certified harness, and this carrier can be safely strapped in with seat belt clips and a buckle strap. It also features a removable bed that you can cover with pee pads and easily swap out using the side zippered panel, which is helpful for a road trip.

This carrier has useful features when outside of the car, too, including a removable crossbody strap, a trolley sleeve, and three zippered pockets. While the latter equals great storage for travel, this does mean there are only two mesh panels for air flow, one on the top and one on the side. That does offer more privacy, which can be more comforting for some dogs, but may cause other pets to be more nervous if they are used to better visibility.

Available in four colors, the chic, pliable carrier is recommended for animals under 18 pounds so make sure your pet can fit inside comfortably, and check any airline requirement dimensions carefully if planning to use it on a flight as well.

The Details: 20 x 10.8 x 11.5 inches | 18 pound limit | Nylon



Amazon

Why We Love It

This multipurpose Sleepypod is a comfortable pet bed for home, a travel carrier, and a crash-tested car seat.

What to Consider

It only fits dogs under 15 pounds and can't be used for plane travel.

The Sleepypod mobile pet carrier is a great car-travel option for anxious pets, as it's designed with a removable dome top that converts it from a CPS-certified pet car seat and carrier to a comfortable pet bed your dog can get used to as a safe space before hitting the road. The carrier has a secure hook and loop system for attaching it to a seat belt when it functions as a car seat and, going beyond the crash-tested certification from the CPS,

Sleepypod actually replaces or provides a replacement discount on *any* brand of pet carrier or safety harness that's been damaged in an auto accident.

Sleepypod makes several travel carrier options (all CPS-certified), but the brand's namesake is this unique circular mobile pet bed, which comes in a [mini size](#) (13 x 5 inches) for pets 7 pounds or less and the standard size for pets 15 pounds or less, and it's available in five colors. It comes with an ultra-plush shearling bedding that can be removed and machine washed, has an easy-to-clean nylon exterior, and has padding on both the carry handle and the removable shoulder strap for your comfort while traveling (though it is too tall to fit under airplane seats).

The Details: 17 x 6.5 inches | 15 pound limit | Luggage grade ballistic nylon



Rover

Why We Love It

This is the only CPS-certified car harness for large dogs up to 110 pounds, and it does double duty as a walking harness.

What to Consider

It may not fit some breeds depending on their body type.

Large dogs, especially, should be strapped into a seat belt via a harness (or contained in a crate) to prevent them from distracting the driver, or from seriously injuring themselves, a passenger, or the driver in a car crash. "I've seen dogs that aren't strapped in hit the windshield and break ribs, or worse," warns Dr. Press. "It's a good idea to strap your dog in." One of the safest options for traveling with a dog larger than 18 pounds in a vehicle is to secure them directly to the car's seat belt with a crash-tested harness. Sleepypod's Clickit Terrain Plus has been crash-tested for [U.S.](#), [Canadian](#), and [E.U.](#) child safety standards, then independently tested and certified with a five-star safety rating from the Center for Pet Safety. The Terrain Plus is a heavy-duty option that includes features such as shock-absorbing sleeves, patches on the harness shoulders that can be swapped for service patches, and compatibility with Sleepypod's Terrain Pack ([sold separately](#)) for carrying gear.

Available in seven colors and four size options (small, medium, large, and x-large), this cushioned harness is a more affordable option for large dogs than a crate. It also works as both a walking harness with a double D-ring for the leash and as a car safety harness that's secured by running the car's seat belt through it. In fact, it's important to acclimate your dog to the harness before using it in a car, so taking your dog on walks while wearing it will get them used to the feel of it.

The Details: 20.5 to 25.5 inches (small); 25.5 to 28 inches (medium); 28 to 31 inches (large); 31 to 41.5 inches (extra-large) | 18 (small) - 110 pounds (extra-large) limit | Nylon exterior and neoprene lining



Amazon

Why We Love It

It has a soft, machine-washable cover, and includes a removable USB-powered heating pad.

What to Consider

This should only be used for dogs that fit the CPS-certified harnesses (at least 18 pounds) and secured so the harness can be directly connected to the car's seat belt.

First, a disclaimer regarding pet booster seat safety: the CPS has tested booster seats, console seats, and other pet travel seats that attach to the seat or seat belt and have a tether that attaches to the dog's collar or harness, and they have yet to certify a single product in this category. "If you are connecting the dog's harness to the travel seat and you are in a crash, there's a higher probability that, number one, that dog could become a projectile," warns Wolko. "Having a 10-pound dog fly into the side of your head can cause some pretty significant damage. The dogs can also be ejected from the vehicle."

The safest way for a dog to use a booster seat such as the plush K&H Heated Bucket Booster Pet Seat is to secure the seat using car seat connectors or seat belt extenders, so that you can put your dog in a CPS-certified harness attached directly to the car's seat belt. Once safely secured in the back seat, this booster seat does elevate your dog so they can see out the window, which may help with car sickness and nervousness. It has a soft, machine washable cover in case your pet has an accident and comes with a removable USB-powered heating pad for cold days, plus the entire thing is collapsible for more convenient storage.

The Details: 18 x 18 x 16 inches (small); 22 x 20 x 16 inches (large) | 15 pounds (small); 50 pounds (large) limit | Heavy-denier fabric exterior and fleece interior



Paravel

Why We Love It

This stylish carrier features recycled mesh panels on three sides and the top for better ventilation on hot days.

What to Consider

It's expensive considering you may need to use a separate pet carrier for air travel.

With its vegan leather accents, striped handles, and embroidered or hand-painted monogram options, Paravel's Cabana Pet Carrier is easily the most stylish CPS-certified dog car seat in this list, while also being the most expensive non-crate selection. We love all the convenient travel features, from its stain-repellent canvas material made from upcycled plastic bottles

to the fact that it can be folded flat for stowing away when not in use. We've selected this as the best option for hot weather because it has sizable recycled mesh panels for good airflow — on the top, both sides, and one end.

Coming in four colorways, this bag also features several zippered and open pockets for stashing essentials, a removable crossbody strap, a trolley sleeve, and a washable recycled fleece liner. But, if you're planning to use this for car rides and for flights, it may push the limits provided by some carriers so always double-check before booking.

The Details: 11 x 11 x 20.5 inches | 20 pound limit | Canvas



Gunner

Why We Love It

This heavy-duty CPS-certified crate is a safe way to travel with larger dogs up to 75 pounds.

What to Consider

In order to meet CPS-certification standards, Gunner kennels require the additional purchase of strength-rated anchor straps.

Depending on your dog's temperament and size and the type of vehicle you drive, you may need a heavy-duty crate such as the CPS-certified Gunner G1 Kennel. This crate comes in four sizes, but we selected intermediate here because a crate or harness are the safest options for transporting a large dog in a vehicle, while you can use a pet carrier for small or mid-sized dogs. Made of double-walled rotomolded plastic with a door that's reinforced with an aluminum frame, this is a tough crate that keeps your dog safe and comfortable by keeping out the cold or heat. There are vents that are designed to keep out rain, sleet, and snow; a removable drain plug for easy cleaning; a wide base and rubber feet for staying put; and extra safety latches to ensure sneaky dogs can't make a break for it.

It's worth noting that "heavy duty" also means just plain heavy, so be prepared that it weighs 75 pounds empty if you need to carry it with a dog inside. The extra cost of proper safety testing means that Gunner kennels, and all CPS-certified crates, are expensive. It also requires the additional cost of strength-rated anchor straps ([sold separately by Gunner](#)) in order to be safely secured in the back of an SUV, van, or truck. That said, Gunner kennels do come with a lifetime manufacturer's warranty.

The Details: 24.5 x 18.6 x 19 inches (small), 29.5 x 20.5 x 23.5 inches (medium), 34 x 23 x 28.5 (intermediate), 40.25 x 28 x 33.25 (large) | 110 pounds (large) limit | Double-walled rotomolded plastic





Travel + Leisure / Lisa Pezzuto



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Away

Why We Love It

It's made from a sturdy, water-resistant nylon that holds its shape and includes smart travel features like a waterproof side pocket with drainage holes for stashing a collapsible water bowl.

What to Consider

The sherpa bedding is not machine washable.

If you use [Away luggage](#), you may want to pair your suitcase with the brand's

well-designed pet carrier, our [top choice for air travel](#). Not only does it have a sleek look, the Away pet carrier is CPS-certified and incorporates an easy-to-use latch system for attaching to your car's seat belt when on the road. We like that it's made from a sturdy, water-resistant nylon that holds its shape better than many other carriers. But keep in mind that the removable sherpa lining is not machine washable, so budget time to hand wash and air dry before using again after any accidents.

As you'd expect from Away, there's a trolley sleeve, a removable shoulder strap, and multiple pockets for easier travel days. One of our favorite features is the side pocket with waterproof lining and drainage holes, designed specifically for storing a collapsible water bowl.

There's a mesh top panel and back panel, along with a mesh window on one end that has a retractable, magnetic screen you can roll up or cover. This mesh offers ventilation but isn't see-through, which can be good or bad depending on your pet's travel preferences. However, this means that it won't be totally obvious you have a dog in the bag after you leave the car when heading on your next adventure.

The Details: 18.7 x 10.8 x 10.75 inches | 18 pound limit | Nylon and leather



Travel + Leisure / Anna Popp



Amazon

Why We Love It

This secure bench car seat cover is waterproof, machine washable, and has an attractive design with leather accents.

What to Consider

This cover should be used along with a CPS-certified harness attached to the car's seat belt for safety while driving.

If you're traveling in a vehicle with a dog in one of the CPS-certified harnesses we've recommended above, it's a good idea to purchase a car seat cover to protect your upholstery from scratches or messes. It also doubles as a comfortable blanket for your pet on long car rides. We're recommending the PetSafe Happy Ride Quilted Bench Car Seat Cover

because it has smart, practical features while still looking nice enough to leave in the car when you have human riders. There are a few options to choose from, including a bucket seat cover (for an individual seat) or a hammock-style cover that prevents your dog from dropping into the space behind the front seats. We like the bench style because it's big enough for large dogs and you don't have to remove it every time you have guests in the backseats.

Made of a machine-washable, quilted cotton twill with brass and leather accents, this seat cover has adjustable headrest straps, seat anchors, and rubberized non-slip backing to ensure it stays in place. It's waterproof with waterproof zippers for the seat belt slits, so even after muddy or rainy adventures with your dog you don't have to worry about a filthy car. It also comes in three colors (gray, black, and green) and two sizes (extra wide and standard) so be sure to measure your vehicle to find the best fit.

The Details: 56 x 46 inches (standard); 60 x 46 inches (extra wide) | Cotton and leather

Pick the right fit for your dog and your car

For the safety and comfort of your pet, it's important that your dog meets the weight requirements for harnesses, crates, and carriers, and that you measure animals properly to ensure harnesses aren't too tight or loose and that they can stand up and move around in a crate or carrier. The size of your dog also determines the safest type of car seat they should use. Wolko and Dr. Press both recommend carriers for small dogs (including toy breeds) and harnesses and crates for medium to large dogs.

Don't forget to measure your car's seat depth and the back of your car, SUV, or truck to make sure whatever crate, carrier, or seat cover you choose fits

your specific vehicle.

Prioritize safety features

When it comes to dog car safety, you want to think about a few key areas. First, the pet needs to be contained in a way that they can't distract the driver, which could cause an accident. In fact, some cities require dogs to be restrained in specific ways while traveling in a car, so check local laws to avoid fines.

Prioritize CPS-certified, crash-tested products that can protect your dog should you get in an accident. Features for these include carriers that have durable latches or loops made for connecting it to the car's seat belt (carriers that are not crash-tested should be placed on the floor of the vehicle), harnesses with loops for keeping the dog directly connected to the car's seat belt, and heavy-duty crates made of rotomolded plastic or aluminum that can be strapped into the back of a van or truck.

What you absolutely do not want to do is use an [extension tether](#) to attach your dog to a car seat or even the seat belt. These are not crash-tested and can either boomerang or break in an accident, causing your dog to become a projectile, seriously injuring your pet and any human passengers.

Look for durable materials

When selecting your dog car seat, you also want to make sure these products are durable enough to withstand chews and scratches, lots of rounds in the washing machine, and, of course, car accidents. Choose products made from tough materials like luggage-grade nylon and rotomolded plastic.

Other Products You May Need

[K9 Sport Sack](#): If you have an adventure dog who weighs 40 pounds or less, this backpack is a must-have for your next outing. It's comfortable for you to wear and offers plenty of space for your pup to get cozy when they get tired of running about.

[Caraa Pet Carrier](#): Whether you're traveling by car, train, or plane, this pet carrier is a sleek and stylish carrier for your dog (or cat). It fits pets who weigh up to 18 pounds comfortably, is easy to clean, and features so many pockets, you won't mind using this as your personal item.

[Radio Flyer 3-in-1 Off-road Folding Wagon](#): Heading to the beach with your pet? Consider this beach wagon by Radio Flyer. After [testing it out ourselves](#), we fell in love with its UV-blocking canopy, high walls, and overall lightweight build for easily carrying and wheeling across sand.

[Floof Renewing Wipes](#): When traveling with your furry friend, you absolutely must bring cleaning wipes with you to remove dirt from your pup and take care of any messes. These wipes are biodegradable, have a very mild scent, and are hypoallergenic so you don't have to worry about irritating your dog's skin.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are dog car seats safe?

There are many factors to consider here, including whether the seat has been properly crash-tested, whether it's positioned in the safest part of the car, and whether it's the right fit for the size and temperament of your dog. In this article, we focus on CPS-certified products, as they are rigorously tested by an independent third party to ensure their safety on a continuing basis.

While the 30-mph crash simulations the CPS performs are “extreme in nature,” you want to be prepared for the worst when it comes to the safety of you and your pet. Wolko calls the CPS-certified pet carriers they recommend for small dogs and cats “elite performers,” so we’ve included several of these in lieu of pet booster seats.

Do dogs need car seats?

While not all dogs may need a car seat, your pup should be contained while in the car to prevent distractions and keep them safe in case of accidents. “We strongly recommend that pet owners fully contain the pet [especially] if it's a small dog,” Wolko says.

Where is the safest place for a dog car seat?

According to Dr. Press, if the dog is strapped into the seatbelt (such as with a harness), they should be on the backseat, and if they are in a standard carrier, they should be on the floor of the backseat. The exception here is that CPS-certified carriers are crash-tested for use on the backseat, as they are designed to be strapped in with the car’s seat belt and won’t be crushed by the seat belt in an accident. It’s important that you don’t put a dog in the front passenger seat because of the air bag, and you don’t want them seated in between the front seats or on the floor between SUV captain’s chairs as they could become a projectile and injure themselves or a passenger.

“When you have the larger breeds, and let’s say you have a child in the child’s seat, in the backseat of the vehicle,” explains Wolko. “You don’t want to put the dog directly behind that child. You want to move the crate over to the opposite side, so they’re kind of catty-corner to each other. The same thing with a dog in a harness.”

How do I clean a dog car seat?

Dogs can make a mess, especially if they're a carsick-prone or anxious traveler, so it's important to factor in the materials and design of a dog car product to determine if it's easy to clean. Look for materials like nylon (you can wipe down), waterproof and water-resistant fabrics, and easy-to-remove bedding that's machine-washable.

Why Trust Travel + Leisure

For this story, T+L contributor and dog owner [Tara Block](#) researched the best car seats for canines, speaking with experts on pet safety to recommend the safest and most comfortable carriers, harnesses, and seats for pets of all sizes. While researching dog car seats, we spoke with [Lindsey A. Wolko](#), and [Dr. Mary Press](#).

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