

## Is Traveling OK for My Anxious Cat?

**Find out how to calm your cat.**

Dear Dr. Plotnick,

I want to travel, but my cat freaks out if I put her in the car or in a travel box. I recently went away for a week and left her home with someone to check on her. It made her insecure. She still won't leave my side, and when I go to leave, she howls. How safe is it physically and emotionally to force her to ride in a car for eight hours if she is so upset?

Gaye Shulman Via email

Dear Gaye,

As a general rule, cats do not like to travel. While its not dangerous physically or emotionally to take a protesting cat on an eight-hour car trip, its certainly upsetting for owners to witness their anxious cat.

For a short trip, having someone come by your apartment to feed and check on her is reasonable. Apparently this is not an option for you if you plan on going away longer, considering how insecure she became during your recent trip. Ultimately, I do think that taking your cat with you is a better alternative. I am not a big fan of giving tranquilizers or sedatives to cats. I have found that Feliway, a pheromone product, usually makes travel less upsetting for nervous cats. If you spray Feliway on a towel that you put in the carrier, it tends to calm cats. It makes them think that they've marked this item before, so it must be a familiar, secure place. They also make this product in a diffuser that you plug into the wall. The diffuser disperses the pheromone throughout the living space, and again, it has a calming effect on the cat. I find this product to be useful in helping cats to acclimate to a new environment more quickly and less stressfully. Ask your veterinarian about these products.