

# Come Fly With Me

What you need to know **before you & your bird head to the airport.**

By Laura Doering

**F**ound a great last-minute deal on a flight to visit friends or family and want to bring your bird with you? “I’ll just bring Peaches along with me to the airport and hop aboard,” you think. Not so fast!



First, check with the airline to see if pet birds are allowed as an in-cabin pet or allowed to travel in the cargo hold of the plane. Not all airlines allow pets, and some that do only allow cats or dogs, not birds. There is also a service fee for flying with your pet.

Continental Airlines allows birds to be taken in-cabin, in lieu of a carry-on bag, on most of its domestic flights. The fee can vary from \$50 to \$150 each way, depending on the aircraft. There can be restrictions in regard to the type of ticket purchased. Some airlines cannot allow in-board pets in the business class section of the plane because the seat restrictions are different from the economy class, and a pet on-board can also affect where you are seated (you won't be seated near the bulkhead or in an aisle with an emergency exit, for example).

If the airline you choose does not allow birds to travel with you (either as an in-cabin pet or in the cargo hold), which is the case with American Airlines, another option is to have your bird shipped through an airline-approved shipping company, such as those from FAA-registered Intermediate Air Carriers (IAC) or licensed pet dealers. The International Pet and Animal Transportation

Association (IPATA) allows you to do an online search of qualified pet shippers ([www.ipata.com](http://www.ipata.com).)

Delta Airlines will only accept transport of birds if the “shipper, or the shipper’s agent, certifies in writing on shipper’s letterhead, which must accompany the air waybill, [that] the birds being shipped were born or bred in captivity on special farms.”

## TRAVEL CARRIER SPECIFICATIONS

If you book an in-cabin flight with your bird, your bird must travel in an airline-approved travel carrier. It must fit completely under the seat. Check with the airline you are traveling with to make sure your carrier meets its under-the-seat height requirement. Some airlines offer carriers for sale at their airport counter desk; however, most bird behaviorists agree that a bird should be accustomed to its carrier prior to travel to reduce stress.

Common guidelines for airline-approved travel carriers include:

- The carrier must be sturdy, properly ventilated

and large enough for the animal to turn around and maintain a normal posture.

- No part of the animal’s body can protrude through an opening in the carrier (no wire carriers or kennels allowed).

- The carrier’s closing mechanism must function properly, but it can’t be locked. (Federal regulations mandate the pet be accessible in the event of an emergency.)

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Keep in mind that extreme weather may affect your travel plans. Some airlines might not accept pets accompanying passengers during winter or summer months. Also, an airline’s pet travel policy is subject to change. ●

*Laura Doering is the editor of BIRD TALK Magazine.*

If you travel to another state, confirm that there are no quarantines in effect and that your species of parrot is legal there. Quaker parrots, for example, are illegal to own in California, New Jersey and several other states. Also, some airlines require a certificate of health from a veterinarian, so plan an appointment with your vet well in advance.