Your Dog’s First Boarding Holiday

A little preparation makes a big difference

A practical guide for dog owners, inspired by Stella and Barney. Prepare for a first stay with familiar routines, thoughtful packing and a calm handover.

Before the holiday

Choose the right boarder

Ask about the licence required in their area, insurance, supervision, other dogs, sleeping arrangements and emergency plans. Explain your dog’s individual needs, including any mobility, sight or breathing difficulties.

Arrange an introduction

Visit with your dog if the boarder offers this. A short trial stay may help you understand how your dog settles before a longer holiday.

Keep routines familiar

Share usual meal times, toilet habits, exercise preferences, bedtime routines and things that help your dog feel secure. Avoid introducing unfamiliar food immediately before the stay.

> Barney: Small steps can make a new adventure feel familiar.

Packing and handover

Pack familiar belongings

Bring enough usual food, feeding instructions, treats, food and water bowls, towel, blanket, bed, poo bags, harness and lead. Include a car seat where appropriate, grooming brush and any usual grooming products.

Share care information

Provide medication in labelled packaging with prescribed instructions, health and behaviour updates, vaccination information requested by the boarder, your vet’s details and an emergency contact.

Agree the arrangements

Confirm arrival and collection times, how updates will be shared and what to do if your dog becomes unwell. Label belongings and keep the goodbye calm and brief.

Stella: Familiar scents and comforts can help us feel at home.

During the stay and coming home

Allow time to settle

Some dogs settle quickly while others need more time. Agree a sensible update schedule with your boarder and let them know what normally reassures your dog.

Collect and reconnect

Ask how your dog ate, slept, exercised and settled. Collect belongings and remaining medication, and check whether anything unusual happened.

Return to familiar routines

Offer water, rest and normal meals. Give your dog space to decompress. If you notice persistent or concerning changes in health or behaviour, seek veterinary advice.

Keep a note of what worked well so the next holiday is easier.

Free interactive packing checklist: Open the Puglins checklist.