

# BRINGING YOUR DOG ON HOLIDAY

E-BOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

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How lovely that you want to go on vacation with your dog! Driving somewhere together and enjoying nature or the city can be incredibly fun. But it's important to get it right, because vacationing with your dog can also be stressful, both for you and your dog. In this e-book, I'll do everything I can to make sure your vacation is enjoyable for you, your family and your dog.

This e-book is based on a Dutch lecture I gave a while ago. You'll notice at the end we'll cover some frequently asked questions that were raised by the audience at the time.

If your question is not among them, you can always send it to me at [lizwolting.com](https://lizwolting.com) or [@lizwolting](https://www.instagram.com/lizwolting) on Instagram. I hope you enjoy reading and most importantly, have a very relaxing and fun holiday with your dog

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# A LITTLE ABOUT ME

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I am Liz Wolting, the founder of Animal's Faith and president of Animal's Faith Foundation. Animal's Faith is a training center that specializes in dogs with severe behavior problems and euthanasia counseling. In addition, my foundation takes in dogs whose owners or other shelters have said, "We can't do anything more with dog" We rehabilitate these dogs and rehome them safely.

Because we specialize in dogs with the most severe behavioral problems worldwide, we look very deeply into the psyche of both the dog and the owners. Only this way can we form a good bond between the two. In this e-book, of course, I will tell you all about that.

I studied veterinary medicine at the University of Ghent. I did not finish the studies, because at one point I had a side job in an animal shelter and there I lost my heart to the rescuing world.

Eventually I started my own training center and shelter. That was a long time ago now; I started in 2009. In those years, I have learned so much.

I have now trained more than 15,000 dogs and saved more than 7,000 dogs from death. And, of course, I will continue to do this for as long as I live. If you want to know more about me, be sure to follow me on any of my social media channels. You can always find those on my website ([lizwolting.com](http://lizwolting.com)). And you can always send me a message, because I love to help you.



# A RELAXING VACATION

You obviously want the vacation to be fun and relaxing for yourself, because we humans go on vacation for ourselves. But if you take your dog with you, of course you also want it to be fun for your dog. Here is where it is very important to know: **a dog does not understand the concept of vacation.** In fact, in nature, dogs do not go on vacation. For them, going on holiday is very strange; dogs are concerned with survival and life, but not with vacation. So we have to teach them that.

For a dog used to being at home, a strange place with all kinds of new smells, things to see and different rules is very strange. As with everything, practice makes perfect. The more often you go on vacation with your dog, the easier it will be, provided you get it right. For example, if you take your dog to town often, but do not guide him properly, it will become more difficult for your dog instead of easier. **So good guidance is always important to achieve relaxation.**

One of the most important things when you go on vacation with your dog, especially the first time, is to make sure that the type of vacation you plan suits both you and your dog.

For example, if you have a dog that finds crowds difficult, has trouble with impulse control, is reactive to everything and can't climb stairs, then you shouldn't go into an apartment in the middle of Madrid. Because that is obviously going to be very difficult.

Most people understand that, but it goes beyond that. For example, if you have a dog that is very reactive to other dogs, you need to think carefully about the location. In many French villages, for example, there are many yard dogs that are not always tied up and can roam loose. If your dog finds that very exciting, it is not wise to stay in such an environment. That makes it extra difficult for both your dog and you, and then the vacation ends up being anything but relaxing. You will come home more stressed than when you left, and that, of course, is not the purpose of a vacation.

Make sure the **purpose of your vacation** is clear. Many people simply think, "Okay, I'm going on vacation with my dog," and that's it. But especially if it's the first time, you need to think about what you want to accomplish. Do you want your dog to relax more than at home? That is often difficult because he is in an unfamiliar, and therefore unsafe, environment. So what is the goal? Do you want to strengthen the bond with your dog? Do you want to teach him new things? Do you want him to enjoy a low-stimulation environment? Do you want to increase his self-confidence by taking him to new places? Would you like to teach him to run loose and do you find that too exciting in the Netherlands? It is important to have a clear goal in mind, so you can plan your vacation accordingly.

Above all, **don't make it too hard on yourself and your dog**. Many people make the mistake of suddenly spending all day with their dog during the holidays, forgetting a bit about a dog's learning ability and capacity. Dogs that normally live with someone who works full-time and is away from home often, can get a lot of sleep. These are often dogs without sleep deprivation. But if such a dog is suddenly with you 24/7 for two weeks, and he has to go for walks all day, to town, to a restaurant at night, and to the beach, it quickly becomes too much for him.

He is not used to that, doesn't sleep enough, and then life becomes very difficult for your dog and you.

Make sure you have a **good accommodation**. That depends on your own needs, of course, but sometimes you don't have a choice. I know people who camp with their dogs in a tent. You can do that, but it does make it a little more difficult than staying in a cottage. Personally, I find traveling with an RV very convenient because it's all my own stuff and I don't have to worry about what might fall over or get damaged. Of course, if you stay in an Airbnb, hotel or something similar, you have to be much more careful than if it's your own stuff.

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*It is important to have a clear goal in mind, so you can plan your vacation accordingly.*



Going on vacation, of course, is always **outside a dog's comfort zone**. You are on unfamiliar territory, so it's always outside of what a dog finds comfortable. And that's totally okay, but within limits. You don't want the dog to get into a stress zone. Comfort zone is fine, stress zone is not fine.

And super important: **sleep**. I always hammer on the importance of sleep, and I will probably continue to do so throughout my life. But especially during a vacation, sleep is even more important for your dog than at home, because he gets more stimuli to process and it is all harder for him.

It is extra important that your dog immediately dares to sleep enough in his new place. This is often where it goes wrong. Anyone who knocks on my door and says, "Oh Liz, I really had a vacation from hell," is probably experiencing this because their dog doesn't sleep enough throughout the day, or only sleeps at night.



# BASIC STABILITY OF YOU & YOUR DOG

Well, let's talk about the basic stability of your dog and yourself. These are both important when we think about vacationing. What does this mean? The moment you, for example, always walk the same area at home, it will obviously be a lot harder for your dog on vacation than if you always vary or often do something different. If you are much at home and do not often take your dog with you, or if your dog is never alone but you want to leave him alone on vacation, or just the other way around, that also makes it a lot more difficult. You have to take that into account: **what is your dog's base level and how hard will you deviate from it during the vacation?**

And also look at yourself. What do you yourself find exciting in life? If you go on vacation and think, "Oh, that's very much outside my comfort zone," then you know it's going to be harder for yourself to guide your dog in those circumstances. Therefore, try to do a lot of things that are just outside your comfort zone anyway.

This will help you grow more and more confident and make new things easier. The easier it is for you, the better you can guide your dog and the easier it becomes for your dog.

In addition, **how do you react during stress?** And how does your dog react during stress? Especially when departing, this is important to know. I remember from before, when we went on vacation with the whole family, my mother was always extremely stressed. We a family of five children, so packing for everyone and making sure all the animals were left cared for at home caused mega stress. As a result, the run-up to the vacation and the entire car ride were often very hectic. Once arrived, my mother was often flat in bed for 1-2 days from neck pain due to the stress. That is not what we want.





When you yourself start a vacation so stressed, your dog knows and makes the first association of "okay, this trip is stressful." Of course, that doesn't make the vacation pleasant for your dog either. Therefore, try to keep your stress reaction as low as possible. Keep it as relaxed as possible and don't stress over nothing. Do not make it too difficult for yourself. Many people do all kinds of things last minute, such as packing, and worry about forgetting little things. Imagine forgetting the sprinkles. That's really not a big deal. Usually you can also just buy everything you need abroad. People live there too, you know.

Then, what is the **sleeping pattern** of you and your dog at home? Again, if we are stressed beforehand, we sleep less well, and so does our dog. And that's not helpful. Although people often go on vacation to catch up on sleep and relax, of course that's not really the right motivation. You want to go on vacation to discover new things and not because you don't sleep enough in daily life and want to catch up on that on vacation. That doesn't work and your body doesn't like it. So pay attention to your own sleep and that of your dog, especially in the run-up to the vacation. It is important that you start your vacation relaxed.

**Finally, do you have habits that can make a vacation extra difficult?** For example, if you work from home and are an avid surfer and want to be at the beach all day, remember that some beaches, especially in the summer, don't allow dogs. And then your dog might just be unable to stay home alone because he's not used to that. These are things you don't need to be hugely concerned about, but it's helpful to take a moment to think about them and come up with a solution so that your vacation will be calmer and easier.

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*Again, if we are stressed beforehand, we sleep less well, and so does our dog.*

# PICKING YOUR VACATION

Okay, so how do you choose the right vacation? **First, you need to have a clear goal.** What do you want? Do you want your dog to be able to run loose a lot? Then you shouldn't go in the city. Do you want peace and quiet and space? For example, do you have a dog that is still reactive, but you want to teach him to run loose or at least practice during the vacations? Then you should choose a place where there are few other dogs. Otherwise there is no point. Or do you have a dog with a huge hunting instinct? Then I wouldn't go to Andalusia in Spain, for example, because there are a lot of rabbits there. Then you will lose your dog all the time because he races after every rabbit. So it is important to choose a location that suits your dog's needs and behavior so that you both have a relaxing and fun vacation.

## CHECK THE ENVIRONMENT

Then, after making sure your goal is clear and your type of holiday is planned accordingly, check the environment for types of stimuli. Go to Google Maps, put it on satellite mode and do your own research.

Descriptions can be misleading, so see for yourself what the environment is: are you in the middle of a forest or are there houses all around you? How far is it from the beach? You can create nice routes on Google Maps to see how and how long something is to walk or bike.

## CHECK THE WEATHER

What are the weather conditions? You can't always influence this, but if you want to be outside a lot, you shouldn't go to a rainy area. Assume you understand that. For example, my dog Basje is a little afraid of thunderstorms. When I go to an area where it thunders often, I practice extra with him. This is good for him because it makes him less afraid. But if you don't want to invest your time practicing, then you should avoid just that kind of area.





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## CHECK THE ACCOMODATION

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Of course you want a dog-friendly accommodation, but you also want a dog-friendly environment. Sometimes that's hard to find. At a campground where dogs are welcomed, you might be surprised there are only busy roads in the area. Or you're in a beautiful place like the desert in Spain, but the ground is full of thorny plants. If you have a dog with sensitive paws, that's tough. Two of my dogs have sensitive pads and get stuck in those things all the time. For a few days, that's no big deal, but for two weeks of vacation, you don't want constant issues with your dog's paws. So always keep in mind both the accommodation itself and the immediate area you are staying in.

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## CHECK THE REVIEWS

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Therefore, always check reviews as well. The owners often write what potential guests want to hear, but reviews from previous visitors give you a more realistic picture. This is very important, especially reviews from people who had a dog with them themselves.

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## CHECK THE FEED BANS

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Also check which country you are visiting, as some countries have breed bans. France, for example, is strict with certain dog breeds, including for transit.

Some people take the risk, but it is not recommended. Suppose you are stopped or an incident happens between your dog and another dog or a human. If it turns out you have a banned breed, then you have a problem. We have to avoid that.

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## CHECK THE RULES

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The rules regarding animal transportation are also important. In the Netherlands there are few rules, but in other countries they are stricter. This does not mean that you will immediately get a fine, but if something happens and your dog was not transported correctly, you can get into trouble. Also, your insurance might then not cover things.

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## CHECK THE VACCINATIONS

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Of course, a rabies vaccination is always important. You are not allowed to cross the border without a rabies vaccination. Don't fool around with that either or get around the rules. It's there for a reason: we don't want to spread rabies in other countries. Make sure the rabies vaccination is given at least three weeks before departure. If you stay on vacation in the Netherlands, it's not necessary. But as soon as you cross the border, to Belgium, Germany or beyond, a rabies vaccination is mandatory. This is really super important.

Also note other obligations and necessities. In Spain, for example, there's the illness leishmania. You cannot protect your dog 100% against this, but there are remedies that reduce the chance of infection. You can also choose to test your dog before and after your vacation to see if he is infected. Deworm your dog properly, especially since heartworm is still common abroad. You want to prevent that, too.

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## CHECK POISONOUS PLANTS

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Also consider poisonous animals and plants. You often see snakes in warm countries, so that's something to consider. It's not a disaster because snakes are more afraid of us than we are of them, but it's helpful to know. If your dog or yourself is bitten, always take a picture of the snake so you know what you are dealing with and whether you need to take action.

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## CHECK NEAREST VET

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And what I always do is I check at every location I arrive at where is the nearest vet. Hopefully not necessary, but better to know and not need it than need and not know.



# THE PACKING LIST FOR YOUR DOG

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- **Passport:** Very important, don't forget this. Like our passport, your dog's is necessary and must come with you.
- **Crate:** If you use a crate at home, include it. The crate is your dog's safe place. Without his familiar crate, the new environment can be extra exciting. If he is used to sleeping in a crate at home, he will have a hard time adjusting in a strange environment without it. So always take the crate with you. For air travel, your dog will already be in a crate in the hold, or at your feet. Introduce the crate at least two weeks before departure as a safe place, so that he can sleep in it even at the new location.
- **Dog food:** This is not always necessary, you can always choose to buy food locally. Dog food is available in most countries, but not everywhere. In less touristy countries, such as Albania, dry dog food (kibble) is hard to find. People there often cook fresh food for their dogs instead of giving kibble.
- **Medication and first aid kit:** Bring your dog's medication and a first aid kit. A thermometer is super important because temperature says a lot about your dog's health. I also always bring bandages and gauze pads. If something happens and your dog gets hurt, you can bandage him and apply first aid.
- **Poop bags:** You can usually buy these locally as well, but you can also bring them from home.
- **Muzzle:** In some countries, a muzzle is mandatory. In Austria, for example, dogs must wear a muzzle in cities, and in Germany on public transportation. Make sure your dog is used to the muzzle before you leave.



- Blankets: Bring blankets that smell familiar to your dog. This helps him feel more at home.
- Swimming vest: Especially useful if your dog is going swimming and is a bit top-heavy, such as a Molosser. These dogs have a harder time swimming because their large head makes them tip over in the water. A life jacket can help then.
- Leashes: Multiple types of lines can be useful, especially if you want to practice off-leash running. Bring different leashes depending on what your dog can do and what you want to teach.
- Training snacks: Rewards are always handy. If your dog is food sensitive and you use food as a reward, bring it with you.
- Dog coat, bathrobe or shoes (optional): Important if you are going to rough areas where your dog can injure his paws. Make sure your dog is used to the shoes before you really need them.

# BEFORE DEPARTURE

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What is important when you are about to leave? Of course, you want the departure to go as smoothly as possible, and then **staying calm** is incredibly important. Do not look for too many challenges the last days before you go on vacation. Don't do all kinds of difficult things or visit everyone with your dog. Make sure your dog sleeps extra so he starts the trip and vacation rested.

Also, make sure that your dog has mastered the basics: that he sleeps well, trusts you and that you have a good bond. A good start is half the battle.

Get a good crate if you travel by car. I am a big advocate of traveling with a crate and not anything else. For those people who have been following me for a while, know that I had a major accident last year with my previous motor home. My dogs survived that because they were in crates. So a crate is incredibly important if you want to transport your dog safely. With a harness your dog can still flip to the left or right in an accident and hit his head against the window, which can be very dangerous. That is why I am always 100% in favor of a crate in the car.

When you **start packing**, preferably do it little by little over a longer period of time to avoid stress. But if you pack last-minute, as many of us do, pack everything at once. If there are several people in your family, you can do this just before you leave, but make sure your dog is out at that time so he doesn't notice the packing.

This applies not only to packing your suitcase, but also to loading the car. If your dog is at home, put him in the car first, preferably in the crate, and then pack things. This prevents commotion in the house. Your dog easily picks this up as stress. If your dog is not at home, you can pack everything and load the car first and then load your dog.

Teach your dog that opening the car door or tailgate does not mean he can jump out. This is especially important if your dog is not in a crate and is loose in the car. Accidents happen when dogs think that when the door is opened, they are allowed out immediately. This can be dangerous, especially at highway stops. The last thing you want is for your dog to run onto the highway. So make sure your dog knows he is not allowed out until you say so.

# EN ROUTE

People somehow tend to stop frequently during a car ride with their dog so the dog can pee. While at home they don't do that at all. I should hope that most people do not let their dog out every two hours. Your dog normally sleeps about 19 hours a day. In nature he sleeps those hours in one stretch of time. At home hopefully at least eight hours at a time. And then he doesn't have to pee in between either. It's no different in the car. The more often you stop, the harder it becomes for your dog. Rather drive all at once and stop only after about eight hours.

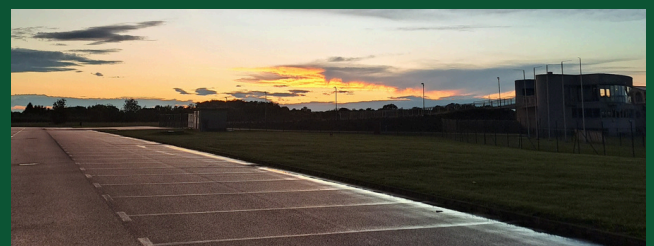
If you are taking a very long drive, it is fine for you to stop every two hours to stretch your legs yourself; we are different from dogs. But for your dog, it's stressful to be in a new place for 5 to 10 minutes each time and get acclimated. He has to process all those new smells, which can take hours. If you stop in a new place again two hours later, he has to acclimate again. Thus, your dog gets overexcited even before you arrive at the vacation spot. So don't do that; it only makes it harder for him.

As I said before, **always transport your dog in a crate** if possible. This is really very important.

Make sure he has a leash and collar or harness on, both in the crate and when he is not in the crate. In case something happens and you have to intervene, you have a hold. You don't have to catch your dog then, which makes everything more difficult. You can guide your dog much more easily and calmly if he has something on.

If your dog is not carsick, you may also give him **something to chew** while driving. This is no problem at all. Not every dog can stand this, but if he can, feel free to let him chew to calm himself down.

**Drinking on the road is allowed but not necessarily** required. It can cause a lot of mess if you put a container down while driving. I wouldn't do that myself. But if you think your dog gets thirsty, you can always use a fixed bowl, one you can attach to the crate. You can put some water in there. Dogs drink relatively little, especially compared to humans, so it's often not necessary if you're not making a 10-hour drive.





**Don't feed your dog right before departure.** Feeding in advance increases the risk of car sickness. Don't feed him until you get to the destination. A dog can do just fine for a day without food if necessary. Riding in the car with a full belly, or even worse, on a plane, is not pleasant for a dog. So rather skip that.

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# ARRIVAL

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When you arrive, **first make sure you put things inside and preferably already in place**, and only then get the dog out of the car. Why? You want the environment to be immediately calm, whether you're in a house, tent, campground, or wherever. If you bring the dog in first and then the bags and then walk around putting everything in its place, you create turmoil. The first association your dog gets with the new place is restless. You don't want that.

So, first put your things inside and give everything its place. Then get your dog out of the car, preferably with the crate if he has one. Do you want him to be in the crate inside as well? Then put that up first and let him in there quietly. Don't rush, it's vacation time.

Many people arrive at their vacation destination and want everything taken care of as quickly as possible, but that's not the point. Take your time, slow down, and make sure it stays a peaceful affair. **The calmer you are, the nicer it is for your dog.** Starting well is half the battle.

Have you been driving for a very long time? Then you can choose to first put your things inside and prepare the place for your dog.

After that, go for a walk with him first so he can stretch his legs and pee. Only then can you take your dog into the accomodation. That way his physical needs are met and he can rest right after that in his spot.

**Always leave important documents, such as your dog's passport, in the car.** Why? One, you don't want to forget it. It is very annoying if you forget the passport at your vacation destination.

Two, suppose something happens to your dog and you have to go to a vet. The vet, especially when it's a dog from another country, will always ask for his passport. If something really happens, you probably forget about it. If it's already in the car and you go to the vet by car, you always have the passport handy. Leave it there, then nothing can happen to it. The chances of someone asking for it while walking are minimal. So always leave the passport in the car.

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*Don't rush, it's vacation time.*

### **Give your dog immediate clarity.**

Don't let him figure out for himself what to do in the new location. When you come in, and especially if he has just had a nice walk, immediately put him in his spot. Let him know right away that this is his new spot and that he doesn't have to sniff around. Your dog can sniff and explore the house, he has such a good nose that he doesn't need to sniff every nook and cranny. He can smell just fine from his spot what everything is and where everything is in the house. When your dog sniffs this way, his nose is more "on" than when he sniffs very much on the ground. He gains less information when he sniffs the ground with his nose than when he sniffs the air.

The first thing you want to teach your dog is: **you don't have to do anything here**. You're not responsible for anything, you just get to relax. It's going to be a nice vacation. All you have to do here is chill and sleep. If you're needed, I'll call you.

Make sure immediately that the sleeping spot is clear, because especially dogs with a higher energy level often start to show control behavior from tension. They want to follow you and be with you everywhere. This has nothing to do with sociability, but because they think they have to do that and find it exciting.

Every time we allow the dog to follow everything, we confirm that it is their job, and that is not helpful. Freedom for dogs often means a lot of stress.

**Your first time on holiday with your dog is really a training.** So, have the right mindset. Don't go with the mindset that everything will be super fantastic right away and you won't have to teach your dog anything. Just know that it will be exciting for your dog and that he will need extra guidance. That's normal, not a bad thing at all. If you go into the vacation with a training mindset, it will be much nicer and you won't have false expectations that could make it disappointing.

**New stimuli create a compromised sense of security and that is tiring.** So your dog needs extra rest and guidance. Just as we can get tired from new experiences, your dog needs to sleep much more than a human to process all those new stimuli. Keep that in mind and give your dog that extra rest, which is super important.





# DURING THE VACATION

No matter how long you go on vacation, your dog has a set learning pattern that is the same as humans: **4 days, 14 days, 28 days**. The first 4 days are the most important. During that period, your dog sees where he is and what he has to do. Therefore, it is important to give your dog structure from the beginning and make it clear that he does not have to do so much. If you let your dog do whatever it wants for the first four days, you will see that from day five he shows more annoying and hyper behavior. This persists for up to 14 days, and then if you don't guide properly, it will get worse after those 14 days. We don't want that.

**A good start is half the battle.** If you guide the first four days super well, you can loosen the guidance step by step. The first four days you want to give your dog a lot of structure, make it clear that he can sleep all day and that he doesn't have to do anything. Sure, you can do more activities than normal, but note that a dog will be less stressed if he walks 1,5 to 2 hours a day.

At 2 to 3 hours of walking a day his stress increases a little, and at more than 3 hours a day his stress increases a lot. So don't suddenly start walking your dog for five, six, seven hours, because he will get overexcited and become grumpy, whiny and difficult.

The more you do with your dog, the more he needs sleep. If you go to a different area every day, it is much more intense than if you stay at a campsite and keep walking the same block. Know that if you do more activities, your dog also needs more sleep.


**If you want to leave your dog alone in the accommodation, preferably start with that on the first day.** If you arrive late at night, do it the second day. Again, those first four days apply. During that period, your dog will see what he needs to do at this location. If you never leave him alone and then suddenly you do, he will not understand and you will get a lot of protest. Make sure you practice leaving your dog alone from day 1.

Teach him to stay in his spot when you leave. Start with short periods of being away, say 5 or 10 minutes. Stand briefly in the hallway or outside to watch your dog and see how he is doing. It is important to get good with this from day 1. If you are staying in a accommodation with other people's belongings, of course: be careful.

If you're going to be in a **tent** with your dog, it's obviously a bit more difficult. Several factors come into play here. A tent can get super hot, so leaving your dog alone in a tent is much more difficult. The same goes for an RV. It doesn't get as hot in an RV as it does in a car, and you can use windows and vents. But a tent can get very hot and is not very sturdy. If your dog wants to break out, it can easily do so. That's why it's extra important to practice from the beginning.

If you have a yard, you can already practice with the tent at home. Teach your dog a fixed place in the tent and make sure he understands that "zipper open" does not mean he can get out. It is very important that your dog knows that there are boundaries, regardless of whether the door of the tent is open or not. Make sure your dog feels safe and relaxed in the tent. Start practicing right from day 1. I always practice this with my dog on a leash.

An example: I open the tent, put my dog in his fixed spot and walk out, leaving the door open. This way I can direct my dog from a distance and teach him to stay in his spot, despite the open door. If he can do that well, you can close the door once. It is important to practice with the door open first so he learns to stay in his spot. Only after that do you practice with the door closed. We don't want to quickly put the dog in the tent and zip it up hoping it will go well, because then your dog will demolish the tent and it won't go well. Practice with the door open first and only then with the door closed.



*If you want to leave your dog alone in the accommodation, preferably start with that on the first day.*

In the accomodation, **you can start building freedom for your dog after 14 to 28 days**. For dogs that are already used to a lot or dogs with low energy levels, you can build up some freedom after 4 days, but in small steps. After 14 days, for an average, especially adult dog, things can get a lot better. Always look at your dog. If he gets more hyper and stressed, then you know things are not going well, he needs more guidance. Don't give him more freedom, but guide more. Is he getting calmer? Then you are doing well and you can slowly ask more of your dog.

Outside, you can give more freedom in a new environment from the beginning, **because you can teach new things well on vacation**.

Especially in the Netherlands, many dogs have a wrong association with their immediate environment. Reactive dogs or dogs that pull on the leash usually pull harder or are more reactive in their own environment than in a foreign environment. Because they are calmer in a strange environment, they can also learn more in those circumstances.

So yes, you can learn new things that you might not be able to teach right away at home, but now you can because you're in a new environment. Take advantage of that, because that's really where the quality of being together during vacation is. That's really outside.






And if you think, I'm outside all day because I'm in the garden all day, that too is fine. It's okay to sit in the yard with your dog, but teach him a set place from day one so that **he also learns to sleep in the yard**. I meet many people who live in RVs who have trouble because their dog barks at everything as soon as he is attached to the RV. This is normal because a dog is not made to sleep in the open air. Dogs normally sleep in a den or under something, it must be dark with only one exit. Some dogs are smart enough to lie under the camper, but that is not possible everywhere.

Other dogs just don't dare and don't feel safe enough to sleep. They think they have to watch everything all day. The more stimuli there are and the more open and exposed your dog is, the harder it is to sleep. Most people also find it harder to sleep outside than in a safe bedroom.

**So first teach your dog a permanent place.** Teach him that he can stay there under any circumstances, with you there. If he can do that, you can increase the distance between you and the dog a little bit more and more. Your dog really has to learn this, he can't do it by himself.

It is important that the vacation is fun for both. **Overstimulation is not fun for anyone.** Make sure you don't overstimulate yourself, but don't overstimulate your dog either. So don't feel obligated to take your dog along around all day. I had clients the other day who did very well. They went for a good walk with the dogs in the morning, then the dogs went to the hotel room where they had learned to stay nicely in their crates. Then they went to do something fun together, while the dogs could sleep carefree with no stimuli around them, which made the quality of their sleep very good. In the evening, they went for another walk together. Thus, the dogs really enjoyed the vacation and had quality time together. There was also plenty of time left to do fun things themselves.

If, like me, you live alone, you can of course do things by yourself without your dog. This is not a problem and is good for your overall development and self-confidence.



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# GOING HOME AGAIN

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Then there comes a time when the vacations come to an end, unfortunately. You can take a little more risk with your dog the last few days. If you still like to do that long hike and you're a little longer than three hours on the road, that's fine. Especially the last few days, because after that you'll be going home and you know your dog can get extra sleep back home. Just like with humans, it's not a disaster if your dog occasionally falls a little short on sleep. You just don't want your dog sleeping too little for days on end or systematically.

**Again, stay calm.** Often you have less time to pack everything than when you leave. First, put your dog in the car, preferably in his crate. When he sits there calmly, pack everything and put it in the car. If you are staying in a cottage and still need to clean, do that after. It's more convenient to clean without a dog running around, and it's calmer for your dog. Leave him in the car nicely. Especially if he's in a crate, you can leave the lid open so it doesn't get too hot. If you are somewhere super hot, you do have to take that into account. If necessary, put your dog in the crate somewhere outside so he doesn't get all the commotion. That's much less stressful for him.

**Make sure you leave everything tidy.** When I didn't own an RV and stayed in many Airbnb's, I often saw that owners were reluctant to allow dogs because dog owners didn't always treat the accommodations neatly. Of course, we all want to be able to continue to vacation nicely with our dogs. This is only possible if we set a good example and keep everything tidy. Don't make a mess of it. If something breaks or your dog breaks something, report it nicely. People understand and if you offer to reimburse it, you'll be fine. My goal is always to leave Airbnb's and other places cleaner than I found them. Then no one can be difficult about it and the owners are very happy.

**Do not feed your dog just before the trip, as this is unpleasant and may make him unnecessarily nauseous.** And during the drive, again be careful not to let your dog out of the car every so often. Just drive all at once if you can, at least for your dog's sake. Let him sleep well all those hours in the car.



# UPON RETURNING HOME

Okay, then you get home. First get your things out of the car and put them in their place, and only then get your dog out. This will immediately make home feel calm again. After that, let your dog sleep soundly. Even after a great vacation, it has still been very tiring for your dog. You can't avoid that. Make sure he sleeps extra, especially in the first four days, and keep it calm in terms of activities. Especially if you did more in the last few days of your vacation, the dog is allowed to rest now. Walk his familiar rounds and don't make it too exciting. He may follow his normal routine, so one and a half to two hours of walking a day, but don't immediately go to strange places or visit everyone. Keep it simple: sleep, walk, sleep, walk, a little food, but mostly quiet and low key.

**If you've taught new things to your dog while on vacation, keep it up.** So if you've practiced letting him follow you off leash while walking, keep doing that in the Netherlands. Maybe do it a little shorter in the beginning because there are more stimuli in Western countries.

If on vacation your dog ran off leash beside you for half an hour in a quiet environment, you might do that for three minutes in the Netherlands and see how he does. If that goes well, you can try the next walk for five minutes. Our Western countries are busier and has more stimuli, so it's harder for your dog to keep his concentration. That's normal, keep that in mind, but don't stop practicing, because that would be a waste.

If your dog is really very tired, again, sleep is more important than food. Your dog can quite well go a day without food, but not without sleep. Make sure he goes to sleep first when you get home. If he is too tired to eat, don't force him. It's not a big deal, fasting is healthy. Let him sleep and give him more food later if needed.

**Please review the place you stayed.** Mention your experiences with your dog. This is helpful for the next people who want to take their dog. Tell how the environment was, how the owners and neighbours treated the dog, and whether it was fun. That kind of information is always good to know and helps others choose a suitable place.

# QUESTIONS FROM THE WEBINAR

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**Hi, can you also tell us more about a crate in the car? We don't have one at the moment. So what do I best pay attention to when buying one?**

Yes, it depends on your car. I'm always an advocate of transporting your dog in the trunk if you have one, because that's where it's most stable. It also depends on the type of car you have, what will and won't fit. For example, you can take a Sky Kennel, which is an airplane bench and a little less sturdy. But you also have real car crates. Autokooi.nl has them. Those are more expensive, but also really made to withstand a crash. Many car brands have special benches made for their type of car. You can always look into those, and otherwise you can also have them custom made. My preference is for a metal bench that is really made for in the car. They come in all shapes and sizes. There are benches for vans, for multiple dogs, with a partition in it, in all kinds of varieties. If you can't figure it out, feel free to send me a message and I'll be happy to help you.



**Hi, is it actually convenient to walk your dog before you drive in the morning? We usually leave very early. Should I let him out then or not? He sleeps super fine in the car, but we are a bit searching.**

I would always walk him beforehand, though, because he has to sit still for a long time. Take a good walk, not excessive, but about three quarters of an hour to an hour. Make sure the walk has structure and that he is satisfied both physically and mentally. After that, you can put him in the car from the walk. Normally after the walk he would go to sleep in his crate in the living room, but now you put him in the crate in the car. This way you keep the normal pattern as much as possible.



**Hi, our question is about taking the dog to friends or another unfamiliar place like the beach. I would love for her to just go to sleep there but usually it takes an hour or so, and only then does she sleeps a bit. At home she basically sleeps all day. Do you have any tips on how to get her to calm down and sleep faster?**

It is in itself normal for a dog to sleep less well in a strange place. We have that too. If I'm visiting friends and I'm lying there on the couch where I might fall asleep pretty quickly on my own couch, I don't do that so quickly at friends. Because it's just not my place. You can help her by laying her down and making it really clear to her that she's safe. But basically, it's perfectly normal that when you're in a new place, that at first she kind of catches her breath and thinks: is it safe to sleep here? Because yes, she has no idea where she is all of a sudden. You do, but your dog doesn't. The safer your dog feels with you, the faster the dog will go to sleep. But sleeping in a strange place will always be more difficult than in a familiar place. That is also quite normal and that is actually a good thing.



**We are going on vacation by train. I have it all planned out, so it's a nine-hour train ride. Do you happen to have any tips for that? For example, she does have to wear a muzzle on the train.on the train.**

Yes, so make sure the muzzle is properly taught beforehand. It is very important that it is a comfortable muzzle that does not pinch. When traveling by train, it is especially important that you enter the train in a calm order: first you, then the dog. Try to avoid entering the train in the middle of the crowds while everyone is pushing through the doors. I usually enter the train with my dog last or one of the last.

Then find a place where you can put the dog next to the window so she is not in the aisle. Sit on the side of the aisle yourself so you act as a buffer. Make sure she is lying down quietly. If she has been properly exercised beforehand, she can just sleep. You can hang your bags on the seat she is lying under, so you actually only occupy three spots.





**Hi, we are going to Spain to our mother-in-law for three months. There is also another dog there. They like each other very much, but don't leave each other alone. We were wondering if it is smart to keep our dog on the crate in the bedroom, so she is not bothered by other people and the other dog. What do you think?**

I wouldn't necessarily put her in the bedroom. I would say teach the dogs how to behave. I'm not a fan of getting around problems. If they can't do this yet, teach them. If dogs won't leave each other alone, that's excessive control behavior. Teach both dogs to stay in their places. If the crate comes along, you can close the door to prevent the other dog from bothering her. Make sure the dogs do not lie next to each other, but with enough space between them.



**We would like to teach our dog to swim. We are working on that, but we don't know if we are doing it right. How can we best help her?**

When swimming, it is important to note that many dogs swim panickily at first. Especially dogs that are taught to go into the water after a stick or something, often start floundering hard and throwing up a lot of water. As you can see on my Instagram, my dog Sam can swim very cleanly. That's because he uses his back legs. Most dogs that can't swim well don't use their back legs properly. They have to learn that. What helps is that you go into the water together and hold a hand under their belly, making them rest their belly on your hand. Make sure their back stays really straight with the water. This is how you teach them to activate their hind legs. Many dogs are not aware of their hind legs, so this is difficult for them. You can also trigger this by doing balance exercises. For example, when a dog jumps into the car, there is a big difference between a dog that jumps with its front legs and immediately after with both hind legs, and a dog that uses one front leg, then the other front leg, then one hind leg and then the other hind leg. The latter way is better because those dogs are more aware of their hind legs. The more aware they are of their hind legs, the easier swimming becomes. Sometimes dogs also have physical limitations. One of my dogs had surgery on his hind leg as a young dog and could not move that leg as well due to osteoarthritis. As a result, he always tipped over in the water, which he found annoying. With him, I used a life jacket because I knew he couldn't physically do it, and I helped him too. In a healthy dog, it often helps to hold that hand under the belly the first few times until they get that feeling a little bit. Once they get the feeling, it becomes more and more of a habit.



## What if my dog is afraid to go into the water?

If she is scared, it is important that you yourself get in the water. Always practice with the leash on and calmly ask her to come to you, but do not pull or force. It is okay for her to know that she needs to come to you, but also that she finds it scary and needs to get over her fear first. Give her time and space to get over that fear.

Don't force anything, and certainly don't throw your dog into the water, because that will only make it worse. Then her worst fear will become reality, and of course we should not have that. So take your time and let her get used to the water at her own pace.





**Hello, so we have an RV and travel that way with our dog. That in itself goes very well, only it is a camper without air conditioning. So it can get really hot. And of course that is always annoying for ourselves. So we will leave early and try to be somewhere around 14-15 hours. But what are your tips for traveling in an RV without air conditioning?**

Yes, dogs can handle a lot of heat, but it gets dangerous for them at temperatures of 45–50 degrees. That's not sustainable for us either, so the chances of it getting that hot in the RV are fortunately not that big. My camper also does not have air conditioning. One time I experienced that while standing in full sun almost all day, it got to 39 degrees inside. That's really the hottest I've experienced. I had the windows open, of course. When I drive, it's always cooler because I turn on the blowers and have the windows open. You can open the side windows a little bit for driving wind, which helps cool down tremendously.

Driving itself, as long as you are not in a traffic jam, is usually doable. The only thing to watch out for is when you get in a traffic jam and stand still. Do you have a max-fan or a fan in the roof? No. That's a good investment, it really makes a difference. Make sure you open windows opposite each other for good air circulation.

Normally, an RV does not get as hot as a car. It also depends on the insulation and color of your RV; white RVs heat up less quickly than black ones. While driving, you probably can't open the window in the ceiling, but if you're stopped in a traffic jam, you might be able to scramble to the back to open it. Keep the blower on, it helps tremendously.

While driving, the heat from the sun is different than when you are stationary; when you are stationary, the RV heats up much faster. The worst heat comes through your windows, so if you can blind those while driving and standing still, that also helps.



**Hi, we go to the seaside with our dog. We do that more often, but since last time she drinks the seawater and gets sick from it. Now we don't dare to let her run off leash anymore. What can we do about this?**

Drinking seawater is controlling behavior. She does so because the sea is moving and she finds that exciting, which makes her want to "correct" the sea and thus ingest water. This means that the concept of a 'sea' has not been taught quite right for her and she finds it stressful. We need to teach her to go into the sea with more calmness, especially in her head.

What I would do in this case is go into the sea with her and really redirect her. Make sure that when you get to the beach, it doesn't go with "whoa, full energy, we're going to the beach." High energy doesn't represent joy, it represents stress, so then you know it's exciting for your dog.

You often see that from that high energy, dogs do indeed start to exhibit controlling behavior toward movement. Sound plus movement is a threat; a sea makes sound and moves. So it is a sign that she finds it very exciting. I would really take her to the sea on a leash, step by step, so that she stays calm and doesn't make a big thing out of it. When she is calm by the sea, walk along the waterline a few times. Let her ignore the sea so she doesn't think she has to do anything with it.

If she can do that, go into the sea together and redirect her if she does show control behavior. Should she want to start biting, redirect her every time and let her know she doesn't have to. Make sure you always have water with you because swimming is tiring for dogs and they can get overheated. So make sure you always have fresh water with you, so she can drink when she is thirsty and doesn't have to drink from the sea.

If she stays calm and just tries a sip, she will soon discover that sea water is dirty and not suitable for drinking. By gently guiding her and making sure she has plenty of drinking water, you can prevent her from drinking seawater and getting sick.





**What do you best pay attention to when buying a muzzle?  
How do you find an appropriate muzzle for your dog's  
muzzle?**

Yes, that's a very good question. It depends a little bit on the type of dog you have. There are many standard muzzles available. I always favor the Baskerville muzzles, which you can buy at ZooPlus, for example. Pay close attention to the size. With Molossers, dogs with wider heads, I prefer metal muzzles. Those are a bit harder to find, especially in the Netherlands so we always order them in Germany, because they give more room. Most muzzles are designed for shepherd dogs, so they can press on the side of the head, and of course that is not nice for ever dog.

The most important thing about a muzzle is that it allows the dog to eat and drink. Avoid muzzles that completely close the muzzle, as this is very annoying. Dogs then cannot pant, which is especially problematic with larger dogs. With Baskerville muzzles, it is important to check that the dog can still open its mouth enough to pant and cool off.

Make sure you choose the right size by measuring the circumference and length of your dog's muzzle. It is essential that the muzzle is comfortable and not too tight so that your dog can breathe, pant and drink freely.



**Our dog has to go on the boat soon. How would you handle that? He won't fit in a crate, he's just way too big for that and the space in the boat is too small. Nothing can go away to put a bench, so there is possibly a dog cushion for him. How would you handle that?**

I would get on the boat, put the dog in place, make sure he can stay in that place under all circumstances and then just go sailing. Above all, don't make too big a thing out of it and stay very calm yourself. Make sure he goes back to his place every time and doesn't start walking around on the boat. That will be the most stressy thing, especially when you are sailing, because he can lose his balance. We shouldn't have that. But if you make sure he stays in his place, he'll be totally fine and you can go boating.



**My question is also about sleeping on vacation. Our dog does quite well in the crate. When he is on a leash at the campsite, he lays down quietly, but not sleep. Of course, I can't force him to sleep. So maybe you have some tips or should I just make sure he still has some extra long lying time? We've only been away for weekends so far, so we haven't had those full four or five days yet.**

Yes exactly, that also plays into it. I would, if it works out once, maybe go a little longer on holiday, so he can build up a little more of a sense of security. And I would especially extend the time he lies down. It is often the case, especially with young dogs, that they do lie down for a while and then at some point think: I'm bored, and then they go do something. We then often tend to think: ah, it's vacation, we'll do something with them. But precisely from boredom comes the need to go to sleep.

So I would extend his lying down time, his "I'm not doing anything" time, a bit. This will teach him that it is fine to rest and that there are no stimuli to keep him awake. Eventually, this will help him fall asleep faster, even on vacation.



**Hi, our dog is in the crate in the car but it seems like she has no balance, so then she wants to lie down but still stays upright. Can we do something to help her so she doesn't feel like she's falling over?**

I would make the crate a little smaller. If she stays put, the crate is probably too big. It may help to put some thicker blankets in the crate, making it more cozy and reducing the space. This makes it less convenient for her to stay put, so she will lie down sooner.

Also pay attention to how she enters the crate. If she jumps right into the crate as soon as you open the trunk, she is going into the crate with the wrong energy. Make sure this all happens calmly: car open, calm. Crate door open, calm. Let her go into the crate calmly and make sure she doesn't jump out right away. You can leave the crate door open, but make sure she stays in it.

Make the crate smaller so she can't stand all the time and not lie stretched out with her legs straight forward. When dogs lie down straight, they lose balance quickly because it's not natural for them. You want them to lie slightly tilted or in a doughnut shape so they can sleep comfortably. By reducing the size of the crate, you help her feel safer and lie down more easily.

# FINAL WORD

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Was your question about vacation not answered above? Or would you like to know more about topics such as how to get the basics right? Or have you already booked a vacation and are now worried that it is not a good match with your dog? There is a solution for everything so here I list some options on how I can help you, because of course I want you to have a great holiday with your dog.

Would you like concrete help with a specific problem or challenge? Then of course I am happy to help you. You can book a **one-on-one consultation** with me through my website.

**You can also read my book**, "Naturally balanced with your dog." In addition, I have online courses you can take. You can find all of these on our website, on topics from puppyhood to behavior in the home and, of course, pulling on the leash.

There are also more **webinars and e-books** available on my website. If you want to learn more about those, feel free to look around. And if you think, "I absolutely love what you do, I want to do that too!" then you can always enroll in my training as a behaviorist and enter the same profession as I do.

Finally, you can also follow me on **Instagram**, **@lizwolting** to get regular totally free fine tips and advice. For everyone going on vacation, I wish lots of fun for you and your dog.

