

pet flight options ~ how can my pet travel?

Worldwide there are a great many pets travelling every day, and depending on the airline involved and the regulations of the destination country, these pets could be travelling as **accompanied (or "excess") baggage** (including possibly in the passenger cabin) or as **manifest cargo**. The differences between these are outlined below.

Most importantly, however, be aware that ALL ANIMALS TRAVELLING INTO the UAE MUST ARRIVE as MANIFEST CARGO (loud and clear enough for you? <evil grin>).

accompanied/excess baggage

"Accompanied baggage" (also called "excess baggage" or just "baggage") is when you check in your pet for your flight at the very same time you check in yourself, and in exactly the same way as your luggage. Yes, it's true ~ you actually bring your pet with you to the check-in counter, put him/her on the scales for weighing (while in the travel box, of course), pay on the spot for your pet's ticket based on the weight of your pet inside the travel box, and then, instead of being rather unceremoniously carried off on the conveyor belt along with your luggage (though it *has* been known to happen!), an airport porter will come to take your pet to the very same cargo hold area of the plane as he/she would go if being flown as manifest cargo (see below). Yes, whether travelling as baggage or cargo, pets still travel in exactly the same cargo hold compartment of the plane, a place which is fully climate controlled. In other words, the difference for your pet between flying as cargo and baggage is actually related only to the way in which your pet is checked in for the flight, how the fees are calculated, and generally all the check-in and check-out processes ~ but not in how your pet actually travels once put into the plane and the flight takes off.

For a lot more insight into the process of booking an accompanied baggage flight for your pet, see our document [Travelling with Pets as Accompanied/Excess Baggage from the UAE](#)

accompanied/excess baggage - in the passenger cabin:

This is exactly what it says ~ an animal joining the passenger inside the passenger cabin of an aircraft for the duration of the flight, in a soft pet bag/carrier. That said, this practice is frequently not tolerated by other passengers and is prohibited by most of the airlines. Of those that do permit it, the weight and carrier size restrictions mean that it is only viable for VERY small dogs and cats. However, conversely, many airlines do indeed allow service dogs in the passenger cabin, and both Emirates and Etihad airlines do allow falcons, hooded and tethered, to travel with their owners in the cabin too, first-class only ~ perhaps inspiring the notion in you that it's time to play dress-up with your Chihuahua?

manifest cargo:

Travelling as "manifest cargo" (or just "cargo") means that your pet will travel as an *unaccompanied* shipment, even if you will be travelling on the same flight. In fact, if you need to travel at a different time than, and on a different flight from, your pet, cargo is the *only* way to go. This means that your pet is *not* checked in with your luggage when you arrive at the airport's passenger terminal, but rather she is brought to the airport's cargo section several hours before the time of departure and then handled, with care of course, like other types of cargo shipment, including all the associated documentation and security procedures. It also means that your pet's ticket is calculated not by weight, as in baggage travel, but rather based on the size of your pets' travel box. And speaking of care, it is indeed very true that not only pets, but in fact *all* animals, are required by international aviation transport regulations to be treated not only with care, but speedily and as a priority over almost all other types of cargo being handled. So don't frighten yourself with images of your pet being abandoned in some merciless warehouse environment or crammed into an inhumane space inside the cargo hold of the aircraft ~ this just does not happen.

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Many people instinctively feel that they need to travel with their pet as accompanied baggage if they can ~ it is a less expensive way to relocate your pet and depending on the destination, the cost of your pet travelling as cargo can range from hundreds to thousands of Dirhams more than it would be as accompanied baggage. This is due both to the way the airlines charge for each and the bureaucracy of cargo versus accompanied baggage.

More importantly for most owners, you're in more direct control over your pet closer to departure time and often more quickly after arrival.

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However, our own experience informs us that one of the frequently unanticipated advantages of relocating by cargo is that, being *less* directly involved in your pet's shipment, you might find yourself feeling calmer and your pet overall might well be more relaxed. Equally important, accompanied baggage exposes your pet to the hustle and bustle of a busy airport as you bring your pet in her travel box through the crowds and to the check-in counter, finally handing her over to an airport porter/handler ~ consider the potential for anxiety compared to the usual relative quiet of the dedicated room for animals of the cargo terminal at your airport, where your pet spends a couple of hours in his/her travel box awaiting flight-time.

Many, many people travel with their pets as accompanied baggage, experiencing no problems at all ~ it is, of course, a perfectly good way to relocate and significantly less expensive. However, the UAE government, as well as many other governments and airlines around the world, now require pets to travel as cargo because of the increased security protocols and better airport handling procedures; additionally, many animal relocation specialists around the world also prefer cargo because of the knowledgeable care and organisation surrounding the shipment from beginning to end. Is there a downside? Yes. Cargo travel is a more bureaucratic and involved approach, and therefore more expensive. And there is no way to sugarcoat this.

Whether or not you have a choice as to the mode of transport for your pet is entirely determined by the laws of the countries and the airlines involved.