

United Airlines Pet In Cabin Policy

Direct answer: United Airlines accepts **dogs and cats only** in the cabin, for a fee of **\$150 each way per pet**. The animal travels in a closed, ventilated, leak-proof carrier stowed under the seat in front of you for the whole flight — soft-sided up to **18 × 11 × 11 inches**, hard-sided up to **17.5 × 12 × 9 inches**. There is no published breed or weight restriction; the constraint is whether the animal fits comfortably in a carrier that fits under the seat. The carrier counts as your carry-on allowance.

One detail catches people out more than any other: on **Boeing 737 MAX aircraft the under-seat height is only 10 inches**, below the standard carrier limit. If any leg of your itinerary is on a MAX, your carrier has to clear that lower bar.

Because in-cabin pet space is capped per flight and the booking cannot be completed in the mobile app, it is worth arranging early. **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can check which flights still have pet space and confirm the aircraft type on each leg.

Which animals United will carry

Dogs and cats. That is the list. United does not carry rabbits, birds, hamsters or other household pets in the cabin, which puts it at the more restrictive end among U.S. carriers — Delta accepts household birds, Frontier accepts rabbits and guinea pigs, and Spirit accepts small birds and rabbits.

Trained service dogs travel free under U.S. Department of Transportation rules and are not governed by the pet policy at all. Emotional support animals are no longer a recognised category on United and travel as ordinary pets, subject to the fee and the carrier requirement.

Cargo is effectively closed to civilians. United suspended its PetSafe cargo programme in March 2018 and has not reopened it to the general public. Cargo transport remains available only to **active-duty U.S. military personnel and State Department employees travelling on orders**. If your dog is too large for the cabin, United is not an option — you are looking at a specialist pet relocation company, typically costing well into four figures, or a different airline.

That single fact reshapes the decision for a lot of owners. A 45-pound dog can travel in the hold on some international carriers. On United it cannot travel at all.

The fee

\$150 each way, per pet. United expresses this as a charge per line of flight on your itinerary. A round trip is therefore \$300, and a journey with a stopover long enough to be treated as a separate line of flight can attract more.

Points to be aware of:

- The fee is **non-refundable** once travel begins
- It **cannot be paid with MileagePlus miles or travel credits**

- It applies per carrier, not per animal, but United permits only **one pet per carrier** and one carrier per ticketed seat
- The pet carrier **counts as your carry-on allowance**, which matters enormously on Basic Economy

That last point deserves emphasis. On domestic Basic Economy, United does not include a full-size carry-on — you get a personal item only. Since the pet carrier consumes the under-seat space and the carry-on allowance, travelling with a pet on Basic Economy leaves you with essentially nowhere to put your own belongings. Booking standard Economy or above is the practical choice when flying with an animal.

Carrier dimensions, and the 737 MAX exception

Carrier type	Maximum dimensions
Soft-sided	18 in long × 11 in wide × 11 in high
Hard-sided	17.5 in long × 12 in wide × 9 in high
Boeing 737 MAX under-seat height	10 in maximum height, regardless of carrier type

Soft-sided carriers are generally the better choice because they compress slightly under the seat, giving a small margin that a rigid case does not. The carrier must be ventilated, leak-proof, and large enough that the animal can **stand up and turn around** inside it.

Check your aircraft type on every leg. United's fleet includes 18 different aircraft types, and under-seat dimensions vary. A carrier that fits on an Airbus A320 may not clear the 10-inch height on a 737 MAX. Worse, aircraft substitutions happen — a schedule change can put you on a MAX for a leg originally sold on something else. If your itinerary touches a MAX, or might, buy a low-profile soft carrier and remove the doubt.

Gate agents do check. A carrier that does not fit means the animal does not travel, and there is no graceful recovery from that at the gate.

Travelling with two pets

United permits one pet carrier per ticketed seat. To bring two animals, you must **buy a second adjacent seat** in the same cabin and pay the \$150 fee for each carrier.

How to do it properly:

- 1 Choose a flight with adequate under-seat space — avoid bulkhead and exit rows, which have none or are prohibited.
- 2 Book **two adjacent seats** at the same fare, booked together. A window-and-middle or aisle-and-middle pair works best.
- 3 Add a pet to each ticketed seat.

4 Pay the pet fee per carrier.

Two puppies or kittens sharing one carrier is not a United provision the way it is at some other airlines. One animal, one carrier, one seat.

Booking: it cannot be done in the app

This trips people up. United's pet booking runs through the "**Travel with a pet**" flow on united.com — it is **not available in the mobile app**. If you have already booked and want to add a pet afterwards, you will generally need to contact United rather than self-serve.

Space is capped per flight, and the caps are small. On some narrow-body aircraft the number of in-cabin pets permitted is genuinely limited, and once the flight is full for pets, it is full — no amount of willingness to pay changes it. Add the pet at the moment of booking, not later.

If a flight you need shows no pet availability, an agent can check adjacent departures faster than you can click through them. **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can run that search across the day's departures and confirm aircraft types at the same time.

Where the pet cannot sit

- **Bulkhead rows** — no under-seat stowage
- **Exit rows** — prohibited, and no stowage
- **Any seat without under-seat space in front of it**, which varies by aircraft and cabin
- **Premium cabins with pod-style seating**, where the footwell configuration does not accommodate a carrier

Choose your seat deliberately. A window seat is generally best: the carrier sits against the fuselage side rather than in the aisle path, and there is less foot traffic against it.

The carrier stays stowed under the seat for the entire flight. The animal does not come out — not during cruise, not briefly, not on a long-haul. Crew enforce this consistently.

Health documentation and international travel

For **domestic U.S. flights**, requirements are modest, though a current rabies vaccination is sensible and some destinations within the U.S. — Hawaii most notably — have their own strict animal import rules that operate independently of the airline.

For **international travel**, the destination country's rules govern, and they are usually more demanding than the airline's:

- **Health certificate** from a licensed veterinarian, typically issued within 10 days of travel
- **Rabies vaccination**, commonly required at least 28 days before travel
- **Microchip**, usually ISO-standard, often required to be implanted before the rabies shot
- **Import permits** for certain countries, which can take weeks

- **Blood titre testing** for rabies-free countries, which can require months of lead time

United will check that you hold the documents required for entry, but the airline does not obtain them for you and will not carry an animal that cannot legally enter the destination. Start this process months ahead for anywhere outside North America, not weeks.

Dogs entering the United States are subject to U.S. Centers for Disease Control requirements that have tightened in recent years, including minimum age and documentation rules. Confirm current requirements before booking a return.

Preparing your pet

The policy tells you what is permitted. Preparation determines whether the day goes well.

Introduce the carrier weeks ahead. Leave it open at home with familiar bedding inside so the animal treats it as a den rather than a trap. A carrier that appears on the morning of travel guarantees a distressed animal.

Build up with short car trips in the carrier so movement inside an enclosed space becomes routine.

Light meal several hours before, water until departure. A full stomach at altitude causes problems; dehydration causes different ones.

Exercise thoroughly before leaving for the airport. A tired animal settles.

Line the carrier absorbently with a puppy pad under the bedding, and pack spares, wipes and a sealable bag. There is nowhere convenient to manage an accident in flight.

Do not sedate without veterinary advice. Sedation carries real cardiovascular and respiratory risk at altitude and many veterinarians advise against it for air travel.

Security screening is the escape risk. You must take the animal out of the carrier so the empty carrier goes through the X-ray, then carry the pet through the metal detector. Fit a harness and lead before you leave home. This is the single moment where animals most often bolt.

Common mistakes

Assuming cargo is available. It is not, for civilians. Owners of large dogs discover this late and have no fallback.

Buying a carrier to the published maximum without checking the aircraft. The 10-inch MAX height defeats a compliant 11-inch carrier.

Booking Basic Economy. No full-size carry-on, and the pet carrier takes what allowance you have.

Adding the pet after booking. Space may be gone, and it cannot be done in the app.

Choosing a bulkhead seat for the extra room. There is no under-seat stowage, so a pet cannot travel there.

Underestimating international lead times. Titre tests and import permits are measured in months.

Booking a tight connection. Moving between terminals with an animal, through security again on some international connections, with no opportunity for a relief break, is harder than it sounds. Allow generous connection time or fly nonstop.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and pet-friendly flight search	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Finding flights with in-cabin pet space, confirming aircraft type on each leg, comparing carriers for larger dogs, booking adjacent seats for two pets
United Airlines Reservations	Published on united.com	Adding a pet to an existing United booking, confirming pet space
United accessibility desk	Published on united.com	Trained service dog travel arrangements
Destination country consulate	Varies	Import permits, quarantine and documentation requirements

Pet travel is one of the clearest cases for speaking to a person. Aircraft type, under-seat dimensions, pet caps and seat suitability all interact, and no booking website surfaces all four at once.

Frequently asked questions

How much does United charge for a pet in the cabin? \$150 each way per pet, charged per line of flight. It cannot be paid with miles or travel credits.

Does United have a weight limit for in-cabin pets? No published weight limit. The requirement is that the animal fits comfortably in a compliant carrier that fits under the seat and can stand and turn around inside it.

Can United carry my dog in cargo? Not for civilian travellers. Cargo transport is limited to active-duty U.S. military and State Department personnel travelling on orders. The PetSafe programme was suspended in March 2018.

What size carrier does United allow? Up to 18 × 11 × 11 inches soft-sided, or 17.5 × 12 × 9 inches hard-sided — but only 10 inches high on Boeing 737 MAX aircraft.

Can I bring two pets on United? Yes, by purchasing a second adjacent seat and paying \$150 for each carrier. One pet per carrier, one carrier per ticketed seat.

Does United allow rabbits or birds in the cabin? No. Dogs and cats only.

Can I book a pet in the United app? No. Pet bookings go through the "Travel with a pet" flow on united.com, or through an agent.

Does the pet carrier count as my carry-on? Yes. That is why Basic Economy, which excludes a full-size carry-on on domestic routes, is a poor fare choice when flying with an animal.

Can my pet come out of the carrier during the flight? No. The carrier stays closed and stowed under the seat in front of you for the entire flight.

The takeaway

United's in-cabin pet policy is workable but narrow: dogs and cats only, \$150 each way, one animal per carrier and one carrier per seat, with no civilian cargo alternative for anything larger. The rules that actually cause problems are the mechanical ones — the 10-inch under-seat height on 737 MAX aircraft, the pet caps that fill quietly, and the fact that the carrier consumes your carry-on allowance.

Get three things right and the rest follows: confirm the aircraft type on every leg before buying a carrier, add the pet at the moment of booking rather than afterwards, and give the animal weeks of acclimatisation to the carrier rather than presenting it on the day.

To check pet space across a day's departures, confirm the aircraft on each leg, or arrange adjacent seats for two animals, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can do the work in one call.