

Watch this dog fly

Pet travel has gone upmarket, particularly in canine-friendly North America and Europe, writes **Rachael Oakes-Ash**

BABIES are so five minutes ago. Now the ultimate celebrity accessory is the pooch. Where Paris Hilton and her well-heeled friends go, Fido goes, too, which means Fido enjoys five-star travel and first-class cabins.

Pet travel has gone upmarket, especially in canine-friendly North America and Europe.

Airlines, hotels and specialty dog services are catering for a fast-growing travel trend.

United Airlines allows pooches to fly upfront with their owners on domestic flights in the US — although Fido and his friends must remain in their designer kennel stored under the seat in front for the flight. This could account for the obsession with the mini dog. It's easier to get on board.

Continental Airlines offers a similar service in lieu of carry-on cabin baggage with a maximum of one pet in business and first class and no more than four pets in the economy cabin. Passengers flying to London from the US with Continental need not worry about pesky quarantine time. The airline is part of Britain's Pet Travel Scheme allowing domesticated pets to

travel between accredited countries without quarantine.

And for Qantas passengers this means no waiting for Fido when travelling from Australia to London via Singapore. Though only guide dogs are allowed to fly in the cabin, the rest can be checked in below.

But where does pooch bed down when he arrives? Check into dog-friendly Four Seasons hotels across the US and your four-legged loved one will be greeted with heart-shaped dog biscuits on a silver platter, squeaky faux newspaper toys, dog bowls with paws for feet and a welcome letter from the hotel for the truly educated canine.

Fairmont Hotels of Canada understands the separation anxiety pooch owners can feel. That's why a number of its hotels employ resident hotel dogs for guests to treat like their own. It's all part of the K-9 Ambassador Program. Fairmont uses retired guide dogs and puppies in training as house dogs that mingle well with guests who have brought their own.

Go skiing and it would seem every Fido has an inner avalanche dog just waiting to get out. Dogs and snow go hand in hand in many ski resorts.

Pampered pooches at Aspen have their own room service menu at the exclusive Little Nell boutique hotel. On check-in, the pampered one receives his or her own bling, an identification tag with the hotel's address, and can join a group exercise class with the hotel dog walker or may even prefer personal training. There is even a hair stylist on hand.

Not to be outdone, the neighbouring St Regis hotel offers Frette linen on their in-room doggy beds — nothing but the best for Aspen puppies.

Further north in British Columbia at Whistler Mountain, the Westin's famous Heavenly Beds are extended for Rover with the trademarked Heavenly Dog Bed.

Even Cunard cruise liner, the Queen Mary 2, allows pampered pets on board with doggy biscuits, QM2 dog coat, frisbee, name tag and portrait with pet owners.

In Europe hotel brands such as the Sofitel and the Hilton take care of dogs and their accompanying humans.

Closer to home, most farm-stay holidays and some bed and breakfasts allow room for the family dog but they usually have to sleep outside.



FIVE-star travel, first-class cabins ... socialite Paris Hilton and her dog.

Funky boutique hotel, The Medusa, in Sydney's Darlinghurst has a number of dog-friendly courtyard guest rooms and claims to be the only luxury hotel in Australia to offer this in-house service for guests and dog to sleep under the one roof.

Health and quarantine regulations in Australia restrict the number of dog-friendly hotel services available and quarantine means you can take

Fido overseas for a holiday romp in Europe but you'll have to wait 30 days to get him back when you return.

Before you go, best check the quarantine restrictions in the country you are visiting. Britain's Pets with Passports Pet Travel Scheme allows dogs to travel freely between credited countries and Britain.

Info: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/pets/index.htm