

Europeans love their pets as much as anyone else, but there are some specific rules about bringing Fido or Fluffy when you move to a European Union country, including Italy, Germany and the U.K.

Dogs and cats now are required to have an identification number, either on a visible tattoo or as a microchip. Tattoos will no longer be accepted after 3 July 2011. Pet passports are also now required for pets traveling between EU countries. All pets entering an European Union country must also have a completed veterinary certificate, found in English at http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/pets/sanco10767r4_en.pdf Please remember that this certificate travels with your pet.

Many European countries also have limitations on certain types of dog breeds they deem as dangerous. For example, in Great Britain, it is illegal to possess a pit bull terrier, a Japanese tosa, a Dogo Argentino or a Fila Brasileiro. If you bring one of these animals into the country, you could be prosecuted and the animal, destroyed. In Germany, the rules vary from state to state, but most consider pit bulls, Staffordshire bull terriers and American Staffordshire terriers too dangerous, and several include Rottweilers in the mix. If these dogs are not banned outright from the German states, they are subject to high licensing fees, and are required to be spayed or neutered and must be muzzled and on a leash whenever they leave the owner's property.

In Germany, owners are legally responsible for anything their pet does. For example, if a dog runs in front of a motorcyclist and causes an accident, the dog's owner is then held responsible for the crash and whatever damage is caused to people or property. Insurance companies offer a special personal liability policy for dog owners. It is highly recommended that you purchase this coverage if you bring a pet to Germany.

Great Britain also requires very strict testing and vaccinating of your pet before it is allowed into the country. Not complying with the order of the regulations could result in a six-month quarantine of your pet, at your expense. To read the specifics, visit the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website at www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/quarantine/index.htm.

In other European countries, the pet entry requirements are not quite as strict.

To bring your pet into Italy, you must have a veterinarian's certificate stating the animal is in good health and that it has been vaccinated for rabies between 20 days and 11 months prior to entry. Customs officials could require a health examination of any pet if it comes directly from tropical regions or if they suspect it may be ill. Dogs must be on a leash or muzzled when in public in Italy.



Mount Brocken/Harz: rucksack with dog, photo by Krüger; Norbert © 2001-2008 DZT All rights reserved German National Tourist Board

You may bring up to five animals per person into Belgium, provided that three certificates have been completed: the EU veterinary certificate; an International Health Certificate completed by an APHIS accredited veterinarian who certifies animal health status, conducts tests, and records test results for the individual animals being exported from the United States; and a Belgium Application for Import or Transit Authorization for Live Animals. You can find links to these forms and other information at www.diplobel.us/TravelingBelgium/Pets/CatDogFerret.asp.

Rules for each country can change at any time, so it's a good idea to double-check with the state department at www.travel.state.gov or on sites including www.pettravel.com for the most updated information. No matter which country you are moving to, it's a good idea to get the facts well in advance to make the move easier for you and your pet. ●

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Belgium: www.diplobel.us/TravelingBelgium/Pets/CatDogFerret.asp
 Great Britain: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/index.htm
 Germany: <http://germany.angloinfo.com/countries/germany/pettravel.asp>
 European Union:
http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/pets/nocomm_third_en.htm
 Italy: <http://italy.usembassy.gov/agtrade/files/pets.asp>