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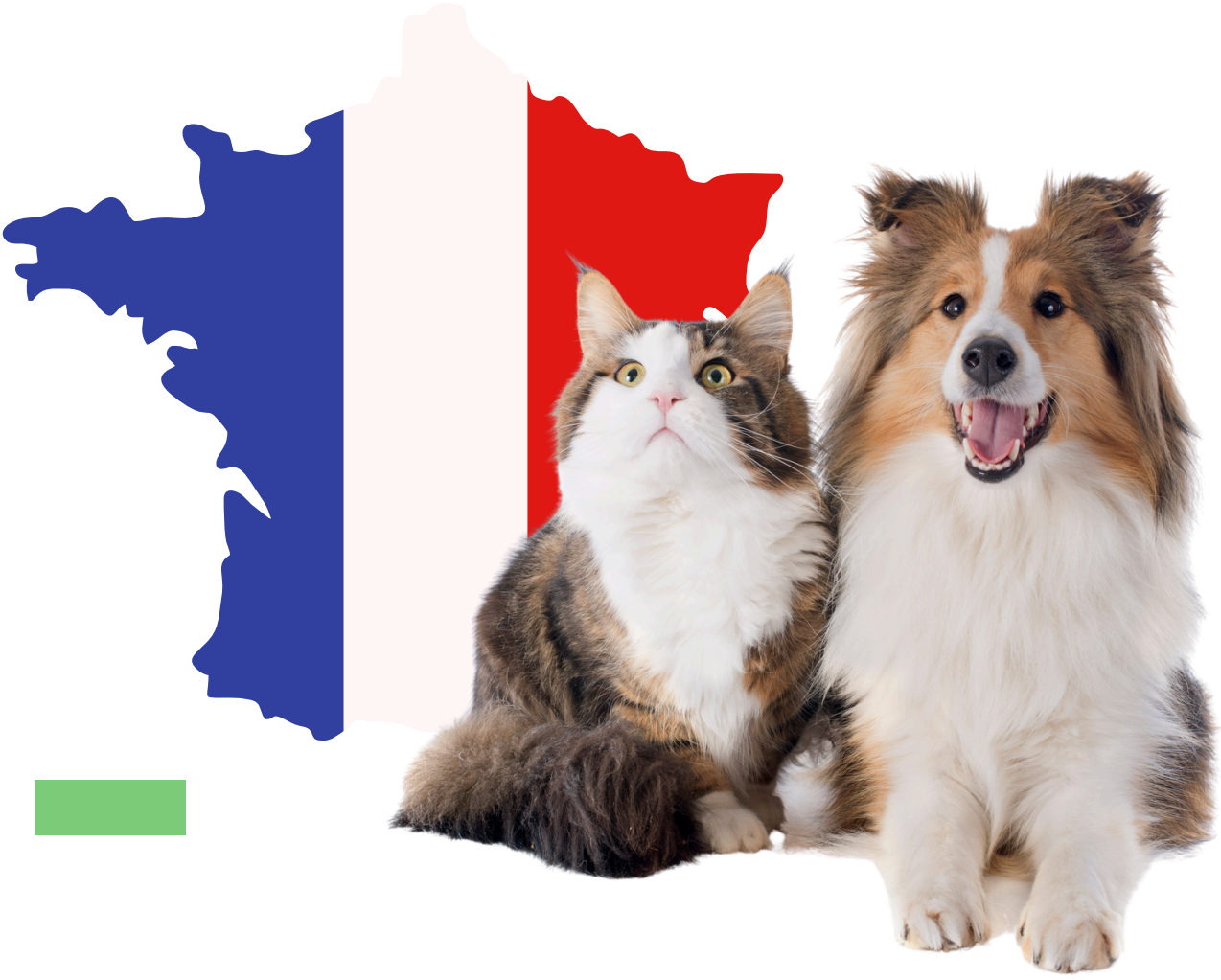
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Landing in France

With Your Dog or Cat

Featuring insights from
Adam Melton & Cécile Gallet

Published by
Starwood Pet Travel





Your Pet's Move Doesn't End at the Airport

Getting your pet onto the plane is only half of an international move. The other half starts in Paris: clearing French customs, getting home from the airport, joining France's national pet registry within 7 days, and adjusting to new rules for homes, trains, parks, and cafés.

This guide follows that second half in order. Every rule comes from official sources, including French customs, Service-Public.fr, I-CAD, Your Europe, and USDA APHIS.



Your pet enters France on a USDA-endorsed EU health certificate, not an EU pet passport. USDA APHIS confirms passports cannot be obtained in the U.S., and the EU issues them only to residents.

Before you fly, your pet needs an ISO microchip and a rabies vaccine given at least 21 days before travel, at 12 weeks or older. No titer test is needed from the U.S. The certificate is valid for 10 days, until your pet's first EU entry check.

Once you live in France, a French vet can issue a passport, valid for life while rabies stays current.

Certificate First, Passport Later

"Almost every week someone asks us how to get a pet passport before they fly to Paris. You can't get one in the U.S., and you don't need one to get in. The passport is something your pet earns by becoming a French resident."

Adam Melton, VP of Strategic Initiatives, Starwood Pet Travel

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What Happens When Your Pet Lands at CDG

Every pet arriving at Paris Charles de Gaulle from the U.S. must be declared to French customs for a document and identity check before it can leave the airport.

Non-commercial moves (French customs): no sale or change of ownership, five pets or fewer per person, and the pet travels with its owner or an authorized person.

Commercial moves (SIVEP border post): anything outside those limits needs a commercial health certificate and a CHED-A filed in TRACES-NT at least one working day before arrival. The pet is not released until the official vet signs the CHED, so a late Friday or weekend landing can mean a long wait.

Requirement checklist:

- ISO 11784/11785 microchip
- Rabies vaccine dated on or after the chip (at leas 21 days before travel)
- Original USDA-endorsed health certificate

Breed rules: France bans import of Category 1 dogs (non-pedigreed dogs resembling an American Staffordshire Terrier, Mastiff, or Tosa). Category 2 dogs can enter under certain conditions.

Flying to Nice via Frankfurt or Amsterdam? The EU entry check happens at that first EU airport, so the health certificate must still be valid when you land there.

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Arrival Day and Your First Week

Plan for the travel crate before you fly

An IATA airline crate is sized from your pet's own measurements, so a large dog's kennel often won't fit a standard European car. TGV INOUI trains only allow carriers up to 45 x 30 x 25 cm. Your four options: keep it (book a van and plan storage), let the airport dispose of it (usually for a fee), give it away through ADEME's "Longue vie aux objets" directory or a local shelter, or use your commune's bulky waste (encombrants) collection. Never leave it on the curb: the fine is €135, or €375 if paid late.

Register your pet with I-CAD within 7 days

I-CAD is France's national identification database for dogs, cats, and ferrets.

- Book a French vet before you land and confirm they handle I-CAD import files.
- Bring the original health certificate and your U.S. vet records.
- The vet opens a provisional import file, valid for one month.
- Finish online through I-CAD's emailed link: upload documents, sign, and pay the €12 fee.
- Download your pet's ID card as a PDF from your owner account.

The name on the health certificate should match the person at the vet, or I-CAD may treat the import as commercial. If your pet goes missing before registration is finished, email contact@i-cad.fr to hold your details for 2 months.

> *"Post arrival, you have to register with I-CAD, and it's very important to do it very shortly after you arrive."*
>
> *Cécile Gallet, Founder and CEO, Haven in France*

From the community (r/Expats_In_France): "You do need the health certificate for the ICAD registration with a French vet, which you are supposed to do within a week of arrival."

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Finding a Pet-Friendly Rental in France

French law protects tenants with pets

If you rent a home as your primary residence, furnished or unfurnished, French law lets you keep one or more pets as long as you respect your neighbors' peace (Article 10 of Law No. 70-598). You are liable for any damage or disturbance your pet causes. The one lease exception: a landlord can prohibit a Category 1 dog, which cannot be imported into France anyway.

Watch out for short-term rentals

Those protections don't cover tourist or seasonal furnished rentals (meublés de tourisme), which can ban all animals. Lock in pet-accepting bridge housing before you book your flight.

What a landlord can ask for and charge

Landlords may only request documents from an official list, which includes foreign IDs and passports. DossierFacile, a free government service, lets you share your whole file with one link. Deposits are capped at one month's rent (unfurnished) or two months' rent (furnished), excluding charges, with or without a pet. Before you sign, check the stairs and lifts, whether the garden is securely fenced, the nearest vet, and nearby parks and walking routes.

> *"Most families moving to France assume the lease will be the hard part. In practice, the law is on the tenant's side once you sign for your primary residence. The pinch point is the gap between landing and moving in."*
>
> *Adam Melton, VP of Strategic Initiatives, Starwood Pet Travel*

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Daily Life With a Dog or Cat in France

Getting around

- Paris Metro and RER: small pets in a closed carrier ride free, and larger dogs ride free if leashed and muzzled.
- RATP buses and trams: carriers only.
- TGV INOUI and Intercités: carriers up to 45 x 30 x 25 cm, or larger dogs leashed and muzzled at your feet, from €10 per train.
- OUIGO: €10 for any size.
- Pets are not allowed on Eurostar to the UK, except guide dogs.

Parks, cafés, and local rules

Each café or shop decides whether dogs can come inside. In Paris, dogs must be leashed in public space, the fine for not picking up after them is €135, and leashed pets are allowed on the paths of 165 marked green spaces. Off-leash areas exist in the Bois de Boulogne and Bois de Vincennes. Other cities set their own rules, so check your mairie's website.

First-year health and care

Watch for processionary caterpillars in pine and oak trees in spring, and ask your vet about leishmaniasis prevention if you live in the south. Find both a regular vet and the nearest after-hours clinic in week one. Your pet's usual food may not be sold in France, so plan a gradual switch. In the Paris woods, professional dog walkers are capped at 10 dogs, and anyone walking 4 or more needs city authorization.

> *"The usual food brand, for instance, may not exist here, and you may have to order it online. The nearest emergency vet may be farther away than expected."*
>
> *Cécile Gallet, Founder and CEO, Haven in France*

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Your Pet's First 30 Days in France

BEFORE YOU FLY

- □ Confirm your vet is using the current EU health certificate model
- □ Book a weekday flight that lands early enough for same-day release
- □ Put the traveling owner's name on the health certificate
- □ Book pet-friendly bridge housing and a French vet for week one
- □ Decide what happens to the travel crate

ARRIVAL DAY

- □ The original health certificate must travel with your pet
- □ Declare your pet to customs and get the certificate stamped

DAYS 1 TO 7

- □ Visit the French vet and open the I-CAD file
- □ Find the nearest emergency or after-hours vet clinic

DAYS 8 TO 30

- □ Download your I-CAD ID card and update your address after you move
- □ Ask your vet about an EU pet passport and regional parasite prevention
- □ Compare pet insurance and meet any dog walker in person

Need help moving your pet to France?

Starwood Pet Travel plans your pet's route, paperwork, and arrival at CDG.
Get a free quote at starwoodpet.com

Sources: French customs (douane.gouv.fr), Service-Public.fr, I-CAD, USDA APHIS, Your Europe, French Ministry of Agriculture, Ville de Paris, RATP, SNCF Connect, IATA, and CDC.

Pet import rules change often, so confirm requirements before you travel.