

## Traveling with a Dog

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Brennan

As it turns out, we've made quite a few trips this summer with "dog in tow", mostly to Campbell River, but also to Qualicum Beach. It definitely gives us a new perspective on dog ownership!

My previous border collie, Shadow, used to get terrible motion sickness when we took him on trips. As a result, he was usually left with friends or kenneled when we traveled, so my experiences with dogs on road trips was quite limited until we got Brennan.

For us, there is really no other option but to take Brennan along with us on our journeys. There is no nearby neighbor that Brennan is comfortable with that could look after him for a few days when we go shopping. Nor does the idea of kenneling a hyperactive, highly sensitive collie with strangers appeal to me. So, for better or worse, Brennan gets dragged along on all our adventures. Thankfully, he was crate trained before we got him, and handles being confined to his travel carrier for short periods of time quite well. In fact, if things get too crazy for him on the road, he happily retreats into his carrier and prefers to stay there.

One of the things that traveling with Brennan has so clearly emphasized is the impact that irresponsible dog owners have had on the general public and on other dog owners and lovers. Having a dog as a companion has always been something that I have taken very seriously, a responsibility towards my canine companion's health and welfare as well as a responsibility towards all the other people and animals with whom which we come into contact during our daily activities. Over the many years that I lived in the city, I chose not to bring a dog into my life, as I felt that my lifestyle could not provide the necessary conditions for canine happiness. At the same time, I was aghast at the way some people treated their dogs, and the lack of respect they had for those around them. While I have no more love for picking up dog feces than the next person, I would never consider leaving my dog's waste products in the middle of a sidewalk, park, or trail for someone else to step on. Likewise, to allow a potentially aggressive dog (or any dog, for that matter) to run freely without supervision in a public place where it can harass and/or bite other people and attack other dogs, is the extreme of irresponsible dog owner behavior.

To be quite honest, it really sucks that there are so many irresponsible dog owners. Not only do they create dangerous dogs, they make it tough for the rest of us who are trying to be responsible. Many people take dog ownership too lightly. People should research the types of dogs that they would like to get. Different breeds were bred with different purposes and different characteristics. Additionally, certain breeds have specific issues of which a potential owner should be aware. Dogs should not be purchased just because they are a "sexy" breed, or they look tough, or cute, or as toys. If a person isn't committed to dealing with the issues that may be associated with a specific breed, then they shouldn't be buying a puppy of that breed. Although some people will think that I am referring to breeds such as pit bulls here, this is equally true for quirky, photogenic, and often neurotically hyperactive border collies! I might go as far as saying that wanna-be dog owners should take a course on rearing, training, and caring for a dog before they even consider buying a puppy, or acquiring a rescue dog.

The unfortunate outcome of irresponsible dog ownership is that some communities are distinctly dog unfriendly. Our trip to Qualicum Beach to visit Ken's sister was very nearly aborted by such issues. Originally, we were going to stay at an airbnb that Ken's sister had booked ... but we discovered, a day before leaving, that they wouldn't even let us keep Brennan in the parking lot, kenneled in the back of our truck (which we have fixed up to work as a temporary kennel for him when necessary). In the end, the only place that we found that we could stay, on such short notice, was the local campsite. Interestingly enough, there were lots of dogs at the campsite ... all well

behaved and carefully managed by their owners. I guess we responsible types were all being forced to stay at this one particular site.

Except for some time on a remote beach, we kept Brennan on-leash the entire duration of our stay in Qualicum. That being said, Brennan was attacked by a large, mixed-breed dog, which was off-leash with no owner in sight. Fortunately, Brennan, who was on-leash, hid behind us, and I was able to hit the big dog across the nose and shout at it. Realizing it was in for a fight, it backed off and left once it saw the odds were against it. Needless to say, our stay in Qualicum was not as pleasant as it could have been – there were few places we could take Brennan, so we either ended up leaving him in his crate for longer periods than we liked, or just hanging out in the campsite with him.

Thankfully, not all communities are as dog unfriendly as Qualicum Beach (and they may have good reasons to be reacting in this manner). Campbell River, our usually shopping destination, is really a great town to have a dog in.

A big thank you to all the store owners who have let us come into their stores with Brennan on a leash! He is still very young and loves people and attention, but he knows he is supposed to behave when he is on a leash in somebody else's territory. We are responsible for his behavior, and if he shows signs of becoming problematic, we are quick to take him outside to a quieter location where he will not be a pest. Being allowed to bring him into your stores allows us to teach him to behave in an appropriate way, and gives him many opportunities to socialize with people, and sometimes other dogs, which he loves! Recognizing that not all dog owners are irresponsible gives us hope that we can show others what a responsible, caring, and loving relationship with a canine companion is really all about.



## Journal

Our Adventures

<http://oceanecology.ca/wp>

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Brennan looking canty.