

Keeping Your Cat Happy While You Are Away

So you are all packed and ready to leave for your trip.

You have booked a pet sitter (hopefully a professional, experienced and insured sitter like those that are members of the Asheville Area Professional Pet Sitters Association) and have all the instructions and feeding information about your cat(s) prepared, left their toys out and have their food supply ready.

Before you leave, is there anything else YOU can do that may help your cat(s) be more comfortable while you are away?

Yes, and I'd like to offer a few suggestions here that you may consider.

Cats are quite scent oriented so why not leave a few items of worn clothing with your scent around, particularly in places where they might like to sleep? I know whenever I happen to leave a t-shirt or sweater on the bed one of my cats will inevitably find it to take a nap on. Your scent and a comfy spot to sleep will provide much needed comfort.

Cats LOVE routine. If your pet sitter can replicate your routine as much as possible that is great but realistically that may not be possible. At the least see if your sitter can make their visits roughly the same time of the day each day while you are away and stick as close to your normal routines for feeding.

Undoubtedly you already spoil your companion animal but if there are certain treats or foods or activities that your cat goes wild for be sure to allow your sitter to spoil him or her with these things. It is amazing how quickly some cats will make friends with a stranger over some tasty treats!

Understandably you may want to close some doors inside your home while you are away, especially if your kitty is the sort to get mad and pee on your bed because you are gone! But if possible try not to close off rooms you know they love to spend time in. A closed door that is usually left open is to a cat both confusing and frustrating.

While your cat will likely sleep a great deal of the time you are away, be sure to offer them some diversions. I've cared for some cats that can spend hours looking out a window at birds (so be sure to put your bird feeders where your cat can see them!) or even just at the leaves rustling or passersby. Leaving some curtains open also allow natural light in which is as important for a cat as it is for humans. And you probably already know how much a cat enjoys a nap in a spot of sunlight!

During my time working at an animal shelters I learned that shelter staff often put on some some gentle music for the cats to calm them, so consider setting a clock radio to come on to play at a certain time each day. I recommend something like NPR which has a mix of talk and classical music.

Lastly, use your imagination!

You know your cat better than anyone else so think about what may be possible to brighten his/her day while you are away. Your professional pet sitter will gladly accommodate any requests.

In general your cat will miss you, that's the reality, but anything you and your sitter can do to make your cat's time more enjoyable is well worth it both for your and your cat's peace of mind.

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