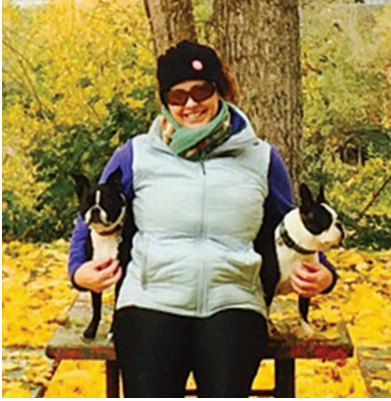


4paws ON THE ROAD

Traveling and Camping with Companion Animals

by Jenn Gehr



Hi, Jenn! Setting a routine to help socialize our new Labmix puppy while on the road 6 months out of the year is proving to be a challenge. I can't seem to start a class because I don't want to pay for a 6 week set only to attend 2 sessions. I do have the basic commands in place and now I need to expand on them. Dog parks? "Shiloh" is full of energy that needs focus. Shi is outgoing and confident with people and dogs, despite our ever-changing locations. If anything, she's too confident, not aggressive in the least but overly excited/happy and that is the area I need help with.

Sincerely, Susan

JENN Susan, Kudos for bringing up such a wonderful, real life challenge that I believe many traveling folks can relate with. Yes, its critical your pet be fully vaccinated before visiting other dogs and is also aware of how critical regular, positive, socialization experiences are to the mental development of a well rounded member of the family. The ideal window to imprint socialization with a puppy is 14-16 weeks old. Most little ones have not yet received their full shot series and training must be carefully structured. Puppies can get diseases by just walking where sick dogs have been and harmful bacteria's are scattered over areas that commonly see a multitude of pets'

feces and body fluids. This is why people avoid dog parks even after initial vaccinations are completed.

The good news is that your Shiloh has a positive outlook on the world around her. Most dogs that travel have a lot of real life experiences and the regular mix of her

seeing new things on a regular basis and having YOU to confide in has been very healthy. Before you head out to socialize, take her for a 20-30min walk or run and get her physically tired so she is ready to take on new experiences without that added boost of energy. Several times during the exercise, practice your sit, stay, heal, and "Look" commands. Do this daily until they are so ingrained with solid precision. Even if the session is short as to not overwhelm the dog, be sure she has adequate physical exercise before expecting her to behave 100%. As she ages, this will all come together IF YOU commit to being positive and consistent.

As you walk about new areas, scout out from afar people that look as though they might enjoy meeting your dog and approach them. Stop 6-8 feet from them as you begin to engage in a conversation – be mindful of having your dog sit quietly by your side, as you remain calm. Tell them you are working hard to make Shiloh a good canine citizen and would them mind if you made a proper introduction. If they say yes, thank them and ask Shiloh to stay by your side as the stranger approaches and uses the back of their hand to sniff them and rub her chest. Keep voices normal and friendly and keep Shiloh from jumping or pulling if possible. Keep interactions brief and thank the stranger for helping train your dog! Other times,

plan on completing "walk by's" where Shiloh must keep her focus on you when passing strangers.

As far as socializing with other dogs, plan the same intro's as you did with strangers. Look ahead for dogs that appear to be under confident control of their owners before trying to make a match. It's important that Shiloh get used to the fact that all dogs are not going to, 1 – Welcome her level of enthusiasm and may react to her by snapping or cowering. 2 – Wish to be her playful wrestling partner! Once you find an owner of a like sized dog that seems friendly and confident, ask if you can walk together. Even if it's only for 5-10 minutes, the dogs will greatly enjoy each other's company and learn that meet's up don't always include rough housing. After a walk, it's absolutely acceptable to let the dogs play a bit, but keep it controlled so there is safety for each other and those around you. Always keep a secure fitting collar or harness on your dog with a current ID and phone number. In addition, I keep a 4 foot leash with me and an extra collar that I have often used to catch a loose dog or tether my dogs to a secure fence or chair while eating at an outside patio. The retractable leash can be unpredictable in length settings and not nearly as strong as a short, nylon lead.

I almost always have an old sweater or flannel shirt tied around my waist ready to place on the floor for my dogs. When we get to a location that I want the dogs to sit or stay on, I point at the jacket and tell them to "get on your spot". I tell them to "stay" and when they are calm and still, I quietly whisper, "good quiet". These last few tips have shaped my girls into highly behaved and socialized fur kids.

Email Jenn your questions and share your pics at

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