

Traveling with Working Dogs



If you were wondering if 5 people, 4 dogs, and 17 pieces of luggage (including dog crates) can fit in an elevator the answer is YES, but just barely. Clío and Quincy are stuck in the back and I (Adela) am taking the picture and had to jump in before the doors closed.

In the last two years, ICF has seen an increase in projects outside of Northern California. We have had several projects that involved a long road trip and/or flying. Our cars are set up as our portable offices and have everything we need to take care of our dogs. But it's more work to fly. All the pictures in this edition of our newsletter are about traveling.

Traveling can be very stressful for both the dog and the handler. Many times we are asking our dogs to work several days in a row, longer hours, and sometimes in very different climate or terrain than they are used to. Taking care of our partners is vital to the job. That means reducing stress when we can, providing comfort, increasing the amount of food, and making sure they get enough play time and sleep.

~Adela~



This was a multiple-day project and the dogs had been working very hard. Zia jumped into our rental car to get into her crate, but ended up in Clío's. They both were so tired, I don't think they cared.



We get asked if our dogs get their own seat when we fly. No, they share our foot space.



Left: Zia has learned to reduce stress by being close to "her" people. Right: Clio wants to know what's for in-flight breakfast.



Left: Zia uses Quincy for comfort and a pillow while flying. Right: Karen with Quincy and dog-sitting Zia and Jazz at the airport.



Clío and Jazz sleep in the hotel after working.



Left: Zia decided the top of her crate is a better place to hang out when the car is packed. Right: Piper takes a nap while we eat lunch during a project. Working dogs learn to sleep whenever and wherever.


Our Dogs Work Hard

ICF recently completed a lengthy, out-of-state deployment. During our search, I was careful to collect data on how long my dog Clíodhna (Clío) worked and how far she traveled by saving GPS track data for each area worked. (ICF dogs wear a GPS device on their collar or harness.) I believe this data is representative of all four dogs on the search.



This search comprised seven long search days with a one-day break in the middle. Over the seven days, Clío averaged 5.63 MILES searching each day, and averaged over 3 HOURS of nose time each day. (Nose time is the actual working time, not the time traveling to the area, waiting or being in the vehicle.) It was tiring for the dogs and exhausting for the handlers.

An important consideration for the dogs, and often overlooked, is their caloric needs when expending this much energy, day after day. On this search I fed Clío at least 150% of her normal food intake and she still lost 3-4% body weight over the two weeks we were gone.

Joseph



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We are happy to talk with you about your project and how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials. Call, email, or check us out on facebook or our website. (You can find past newsletters there, too.)

Please feel free to pass this newsletter along to anyone who might be interested.

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