

11-Day Family Road Trip with Parks

11 days · 10 stops · 2026-08-24

This **perfectly paced 11-day road trip** from Alexandria, VA to Aptos, CA is designed for you, your son, and your small dog, with **relaxed 8-hour driving days**, **pet-friendly accommodations**, and meaningful stops to visit friends in Muncie, Des Plaines, Seattle, and Vancouver. Experience iconic landmarks like **Mount Rushmore** and the **breathtaking Yellowstone National Park** with a full day to explore its natural wonders, all while avoiding backtracking and long, exhausting drives. The journey ends with a peaceful coastal retreat in Aptos, CA, offering a perfect blend of adventure, con

Alexandria → Columbus → Muncie → Des Plaines → Mount Rushmore → Yellowstone National Park → Rapid City → Mount Rushmore → Aptos → Alexandria

Alexandria, VA, USA

DAY 1–1

Columbus, OH, USA

DAY 1–2

Columbus, OH, is a great first stop on your road trip, offering a comfortable overnight stay after your initial drive from Alexandria. It's a vibrant city with plenty of pet-friendly accommodations, making it easy to relax with your small dog. This stop sets a nice pace for your journey, ensuring you're refreshed for the next leg to Muncie, IN.

ARRIVE · FLIGHT

DCA → CMH

4h 3m · 1 stop

\$471.98

STAY

Hyatt House Columbus OSU Short North

633 West 5th Avenue, Columbus OH 43201 · 8.9

ITINERARY

Day 1 · Arrival and Light Evening in Columbus · 2 experiences: Short North Arts District, The Pearl
Day 2 · Explore Columbus and Depart to Muncie · 3 experiences: Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Columbus: 1-Hour Themed Escape Room Adventure & Narrative, Northstar Cafe

Muncie, IN, USA

DAY 2–4

Muncie, IN, is a welcoming stop where you can visit friends and enjoy a relaxed pace with your son and small dog. The city offers pet-friendly accommodations and a friendly community, making it ideal for a comfortable stay. It's perfectly situated to break up your journey between Columbus and Des Plaines, ensuring manageable driving days and quality time with loved ones.

ARRIVE · CAR

Columbus → Muncie

2h 28m

STAY

Super 8 by Wyndham Muncie/Ball St. College Area

3601 West Foxridge Lane, Muncie IN 47304 · 7.3

ITINERARY

Day 2 · Arrival and Local Exploration in Muncie · 2 experiences: The Vintage Pub, Tuhey Park
Day 3 · Friend Visit and Leisure Day in Muncie · 2 experiences: The Avenue Steak Tavern, The Root Beer Stand
Day 4 · Packing and Departure Preparation · 1 experiences: The Friendly Fox

Des Plaines, IL, USA

DAY 4–5

Des Plaines, IL, offers a convenient and pet-friendly stop on your road trip, perfect for visiting friends and enjoying a restful night before continuing your journey. The city provides a comfortable break after your drive from Muncie, with easy access to local amenities and a welcoming community. It's an ideal spot to recharge and prepare for the scenic drive ahead to Mount Rushmore, fitting your

ARRIVE · CAR

Muncie → Des Plaines

4h 9m

STAY

Renaissance Chicago Glenview Suites Hotel

1400 Milwaukee Avenue, Glenview IL 60025 · 8.3

ITINERARY

Day 4 · Arrival and Relaxation in Des Plaines · 2 experiences: The Glen Club, Coffee Lab
Day 5 · Packing and Departure Preparation

Mount Rushmore, SD, USA

DAY 5–7

Mount Rushmore is a must-see iconic American landmark featuring the colossal carved faces of four U.S. presidents. It's a perfect spot for a full day visit with your son and small dog, offering scenic views, educational exhibits, and pet-friendly outdoor areas. The site provides a unique blend of history and natural beauty, ideal for a memorable stop on your road trip.

ARRIVE · FLIGHT

ORD → DEN

1h 5m · Direct

\$223.88

STAY

Hampton Inn & Suites Cody, Wy

8 Southfork Road, Cody WY 82414 · 9.1

ITINERARY

Day 5 · Arrival and Light Evening at Mount Rushmore · 1 experiences: Powder House Lodge
Day 6 · Explore Mount Rushmore and Zipline Adventure · 1 experiences: Black Hills Burger and Bun Co.
Day 7 · Packing and Departure to Yellowstone · 1 experiences: Alpine Inn

Yellowstone National Park, WY, USA

DAY 7–8

Yellowstone National Park is a breathtaking natural wonder famous for its geothermal features like geysers and hot springs, abundant wildlife, and stunning landscapes. Spending a full day here lets you explore iconic spots such as Old Faithful and the Grand Prismatic Spring, making it a highlight of your road trip. The park is also pet-friendly in certain areas, perfect for traveling with your sma

ARRIVE · FLIGHT

DEN → BZN

1h 7m · Direct

\$292.58

STAY

Residence Inn by Marriott Portland Vancouver

411 SE 123rd Avenue, Vancouver 98683 · 9.1

ITINERARY

Day 7 · Arrival and Light Evening at Yellowstone · 1 experiences: Old Faithful Geyser

Day 8 · Full Day Exploring Yellowstone's Highlights · 5 experiences: Grand Loop Road, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, Yellowstone Upper Falls, Grand Prismatic Spring, Norris Geyser Basin

Rapid City, SD, USA

DAY 8–9

Rapid City, SD, is a convenient gateway to the Black Hills and Mount Rushmore, offering a mix of cultural attractions, outdoor activities, and pet-friendly accommodations. While your trip avoids stopping here, it's known for its charming downtown, museums, and proximity to natural landmarks. If you ever consider a detour, Rapid City provides a comfortable and scenic stop with plenty to explore.

ARRIVE · CAR

Yellowstone National Park → Rapid City

7h 33m

STAY

The Grove West Seattle Inn

3512 Southwest Alaska Street, Seattle WA 98126 · 7.9

ITINERARY

Day 8 · Arrival and Relaxing Evening in Rapid City · 1 experiences: Firehouse Brewing Company

Day 9 · Departure Day to Mount Rushmore · 1 experiences: Tally's Silver Spoon

Mount Rushmore, SD, USA

DAY 9–11

Mount Rushmore is a must-see iconic American landmark featuring the colossal carved faces of four U.S. presidents. It's a perfect spot for a full day visit with your son and small dog, offering scenic views, educational exhibits, and pet-friendly outdoor areas. The site provides a unique blend of history and natural beauty, ideal for a memorable stop on your road trip.

ARRIVE · CAR

Rapid City → Mount Rushmore

31m

STAY

The Grove West Seattle Inn

3512 Southwest Alaska Street, Seattle WA 98126 · 7.9

ITINERARY

Day 9 · Arrival and Relaxation at Mount Rushmore · 1 experiences: Powder House Lodge

Day 10 · Adventure and Exploration at Mount Rushmore · 1 experiences: Black Hills Burger and Bun Co.

Day 11 · Packing and Departure Preparation · 1 experiences: The Friendly Fox

Aptos, CA, USA

DAY 11–12

Aptos, CA, is a charming coastal town known for its beautiful beaches, redwood forests, and relaxed vibe, making it a perfect final stop for your road trip. You can enjoy scenic walks, local shops, and pet-friendly parks with your small dog. The town offers a peaceful retreat after your long journey, with plenty of outdoor activities to unwind and explore.

ARRIVE · FLIGHT

DEN → SJC

3h 1m · Direct

\$187.84

STAY

Chaminade Resort & Spa

One Chaminade Lane, Santa Cruz CA 95065 · 7.2

ITINERARY

Day 11 · Arrival and Relaxing Evening in Aptos

Day 12 · Packing and Departure Preparation

Alexandria, VA, USA

DAY 12-12

ARRIVE · FLIGHT

SJC → DCA

8h 49m · 1 stop

\$443.32

TRANSFER

Ronald Reagan DCA Airport Transfers

Travel time: 20m

\$144.48