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# The Washington Post

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

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## Does your dog miss you while you're on vacation? Ask a pet psychic.

Pet psychics have long claimed an ability to communicate with animals beyond the grave. Some now say they can also divine your pets' travel preferences.

May 12, 2026



Animal communicator Elizabeth Baudhuin sits with Beth Wadsworth's dogs Cleo and Rosie before conducting a psychic session on May 7. (Craig Hudson/For The Washington Post)



By Andrea Sachs

The puggle wanted to talk about her Christmas road trip to Illinois. The pet psychic was ready to listen.

Cleo, an 8-year-old pug-beagle mix, shared with Elizabeth Baudhuin, an animal communicator, her highs and lows of the family adventure during a recent session in D.C. On the plus side, Baudhuin said, she enjoyed riding in her blue dog bed, sleeping in hotels and seeing her Uncle Doug. She was less enthusiastic by the brief stops at highway rest areas and the cold stone pathway and prickly grass in the backyard of the rental home.

Before wrapping up, Baudhuin posed a final question on behalf of her owner: Would she want to travel to Illinois again? Baudhuin looked at Cleo, awaiting her reply.

"It's a big yes!" she declared.

Have you ever wondered if your cats really like driving to the beach every summer? If the dog minds flying in a carrier inches from your feet? If your pets, left behind with a sitter, miss you or see your absence as an opportunity to extract more snacks?

Pet psychics say they have the answers.



Baudhuin conducts a psychic session with Beth Wadsworth's blonde puggle Cleo inside Beth's home. (Craig Hudson/For The Washington Post)

"Animal communication is always valuable, but it's not something you need daily, because you are communicating with your animal every day," said Baudhuin, who charges from \$144 for her Vacation In Peace Plan and energy healing services. "What I do tends to be more situational and periodic."

Pet psychics say they can connect with the spirit world, putting owners in touch with their beloved animals who will never again curl up in their lap. They also assist families with animals who are nearing death or struggling with behavioral issues.

However, a lesser-known field of animal communication has emerged at the intersection of telepathy and pet travel, with psychics claiming to patch in to animals vacationing with their families or staycationing with a sitter.

"The human being may be really attached to them and completely worried about how their pet is going to do," said Maribeth Decker, an intuitive animal

communicator and energy healer based in Northern Virginia, “and that’s enough to say, ‘I need somebody to come in and assure the animal and me.’”



Baudhuin shares photos of some of her previous clients. (Craig Hudson/For The Washington Post)

## The cat wants her own hotel bathroom

Interspecies communication, an unaccredited and unregulated field, is more craft than science, a discipline with a touch of mysticism and Dr. Dolittle. Rather than observe an animal’s physical condition or behavior like a veterinarian or trainer, psychics commune with an animal’s mind and energy.

Similar to people, some pets are gregarious and others are tight-lipped, psychics say. Baudhuin, who primarily works with dogs, cats, horses and rabbits, said one of her bearded dragon clients is especially chatty, prattling about its food.

When connecting with an animal, the psychic doesn't need to be in the same room or even on the same continent. Many practitioners say they prefer to speak to the pet remotely to minimize external distractions, such as a barking sibling or a parent fixing a sandwich.

For Postcards From Your Pet, a service Decker created for her traveling pet owners, she will ask for basic details about the family's trip, such as its duration and the pet-sitting arrangements. She also requires a photo of the animal, the knock-knock that opens the door to her conversation.

"A photo gives me information, and I can picture talking to them," said Decker, a retired Navy officer who says she discovered her telepathic powers after the deaths of her dogs, Timmie and Eddy. "I get a feeling for how they're doing. Many times they're doing fine; other times they're a little nervous, so I will reassure them that their people are going to come home."

Communicators say the conversation is not always verbal, but can appear in their minds as shapes, visions or sensations.

"The animals will send us their thoughts, their feelings, the images in their heads and the feelings in their body," said Laura Stinchfield, an animal communicator and people medium for more than 30 years. "Then our mind transfers that into whichever way the individual does it. My mind transfers it into words, or another animal communicator might see mostly pictures or have mostly feelings."



Cleo, close up. (Craig Hudson/For The Washington Post)

The psychic will transcribe the pet's comments and concerns as they trickle – or gush – in. Since 2022, Baudhuin has been working with Windy and Max, a pair of cats who divide their time between D.C. and Florida. She has reams of handwritten notes documenting her sessions with the cats, who have very particular demands for the annual drive south.

Last February, Baudhuin says, Windy asked if she would have her own hotel bathroom. "This seems important to her. She is showing me an actual bathroom with tiled floors, not a litter box," Baudhuin noted. "I think she may like to lay on the tiles, versus carpeting."

Every year, before the long drive, Windy will remind Baudhuin that she does not want to sit within eyeshot of Max. No offense, she told Baudhuin, but she can't stand looking at him for hours upon hours.

"Max is a big orange tabby who is not trying to upset anybody, but he takes up a lot of space in the room," Baudhuin said. "He just wasn't Windy's thing."

Katherine Anderson, a board-certified veterinary behaviorist and assistant clinical professor at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, expressed her reservations about the discipline, which has not been clinically studied or supported by scientific evidence. However, she said the psychic's intervention could act like a placebo, offering psychological comfort to the pet owner.

"Our job is to communicate with animals in the sense that they can't speak English and they can't tell us what's going on, but we base a lot on their body language and what they're doing," Anderson said. "I feel like if you go to a psychic, it's partly because you feel that it gives you something that you need."

Michele Silva-Dockery and her husband sign up for Decker's Postcard package (\$100 per week and from \$120 for regular virtual sessions) whenever they leave their senior cats, Dolly and Molly, rescues found alone in a deserted home. They don't want their girls to think they're abandoning them, too.

Every day, Decker says, she will mentally check in on Molly and Dolly, who stay with a sitter in their Maryland home. She'll tell them to play, lie in the sun and not worry about their people, that they're doing well and will return in a set number of sunrises, a passage of time Decker said is more relatable to a nonhuman than hours or days.



To gain a deeper understanding of an animal, pet psychics also draw on methods rooted in the physical realm. (Craig Hudson/For The Washington Post)

## Luggage panic and mental postcards

Some pet owners contact psychics for more than a general wellness check; they have specific concerns.

Max the cat originally refused to go into his carrier. Cleo was loudly whining in the kitchen at bedtime. Dolly would hide under the bed whenever she was left alone with Silva-Dockery's husband.

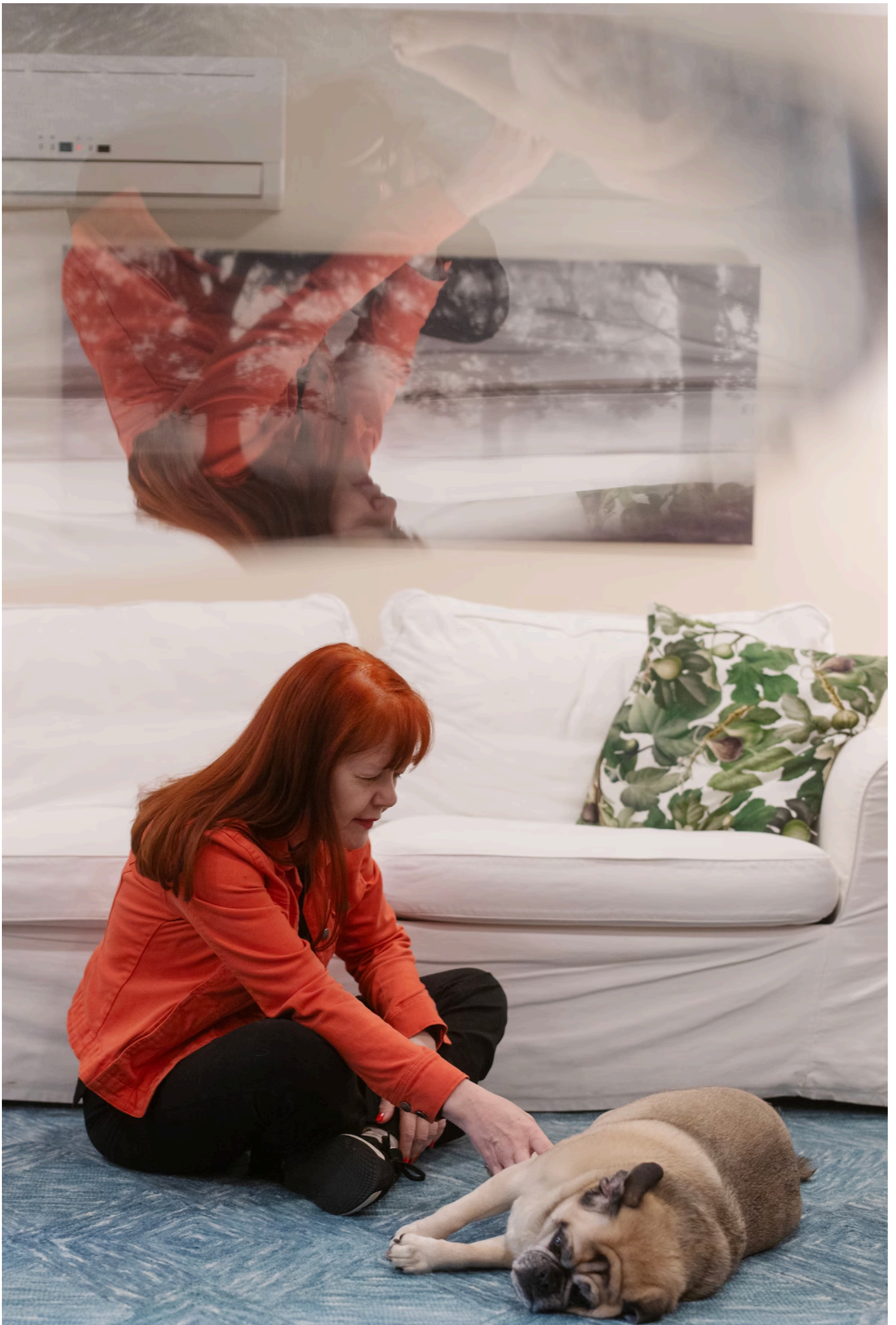
For a recent weekend trip, Scott Muzinski, a chiropractor in Northern Virginia, booked a Postcards session for his cats, Mac and Chip. In the past, his pets have exhibited "luggage panic" when suitcases suddenly materialize. Post-trip, he said they would act pouty.

Decker's daily drop-ins, he said, has smoothed his exit and return.

"The behavior's just different," Muzinski said. "As a scientist, it's really hard for me to qualify that. But as a human being, I can go, 'Yeah, they're behaving different when Maribeth taps in and does whatever she does'."

To gain a deeper understanding of an animal, pet psychics also draw on methods rooted in the physical realm.

"It's very important for people to understand animal body language as well as telepathy, because animal body language is their number one form of communication," Stinchfield said.



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Stinchfield, a former animal trainer, blends both worlds. For instance, for dogs unnerved by travel, she recommends reinforcing self-soothing behaviors such as blinking, licking, yawning, sitting or stretching through praise and rewards. Because animals respond better to an encouraging tone, she reminds owners to use positive affirmations, such as "be brave, you're safe," rather than fear-based language like "don't be scared." In addition, she said to describe every step of the journey so their animals know what to expect.

"Say it exactly like you would to your kids. We're going to get on the plane and we're going to fly up like a bird," Stinchfield said. "But you will want to visualize everything you're saying and match that visualization with a feeling in the body."

For people who can't vacation with their pets, [Joan Ranquet](#), an animal communicator and founder of Communication With All Life University, an educational and coaching platform, recommends two meditations they can recite. One explains the trip before their departure.

"The animal communicator can help you convey that you're going to France, but they're not going to see the Eiffel Tower," said Ranquet, adding that animals know a lot but probably not cultural landmarks.

The other involves checking in on your pets while you are away, just as a parent would with their children, except you will use your mind instead of your mobile.

Lorin Maughan, a Seattle-area mom to four cats and a horse, said she used to obsessively check the pet camera at her house or her phone for texts from the sitter. Then she started following Ranquet's advice, sending mental

messages to her menagerie. She'd tell them she was on holiday, having a great time, but would be back soon. She'd transmit images of their joyful homecoming.

At least for Maughan, it worked.

"I used to freak out if my pet sitter didn't send me proof-of-life photos every five minutes," Maughan said. "It has really helped me with my anxiety when I travel. Now I don't check in on them every five minutes."



**By Andrea Sachs**

Andrea Sachs has written for Travel since 2000. She has reported from nearby places such as Ellicott City, Md., and the Jersey Shore, and from far-flung locations, including Burma, Namibia and Russia. X @andsachs\_sachs