

Can My Cat Go Outside? Yes, If Done Safely

We all know how nice it is to get outside on a beautiful sunny day. There's just nothing better than taking a nice walk in the park – breathing in the fresh air, feeling the sunshine on your face, smelling the scent of the trees, and watching the squirrels play and scurry among the leaf litter. Well, your pet cat has the same desire to experience the wonders of the outdoors as you do. Unfortunately, many cat owners don't give their cats the opportunity to spend time outside for fear they will get hit by a car, be killed by a neighborhood dog or a coyote, or get lost and never return. While I certainly understand the dangers of the outdoor world for cats, allowing outdoor time is one of the most enriching things you can do for your cat and there are ways you can do it safely.



By Kelley Bollen

The wonders of the outdoor world are many. Cats who are given the opportunity to spend time outside are stimulated by all of the sights, sounds and smells of nature. This exposure provides much needed mental stimulation that indoor-only cats miss out on.

While most people know that dogs have an amazing sense of smell, few people understand how important this system is for cats. Olfaction is a cat's most powerful and important sense. A cat gathers a lot of information about their environment through their sense of smell. Additionally, they use this system to find prey and even to identify social partners. Knowing this, it's obvious how stimulating the smells of the outdoor world are for cats.

A cat's auditory sense is also quite amazing. Cats can hear sound in the ultrasonic range that humans have no perception of. Some sounds, like bird songs, are extra interesting to cats. The sounds that birds make are "biologically significant" to cats. This means that they instinctually peak a cat's interest. Knowing this, it's obvious how stimulating the sounds of the outdoor world are for cats.

Lastly, when we consider a cat's visual sense, imagine all of the interesting things they can watch when outside. Cats cannot only see in the dark but they have motion-sensitive vision so the tiniest of motions can stimulate a cat's interest.

Simply stated, the benefits to cats of having the opportunity to spend time outdoors cannot be overstated. The outdoor environment is full of things that stimulate their interest and all of their senses. And nothing is better than taking a nice catnap in the warmth of the sunshine while breathing in the fresh air.

It is possible to provide your cat with safe outdoor time. You can install special cat fencing around your yard (or a portion of it) or build a fully enclosed "catio" out of 2x4s and screening or you can teach your kitty to walk on a harness and leash so you can bring her into the yard with you. Regardless of how you choose to do this, giving your cat the opportunity for some outdoor time will go a long way to providing your cat with a enriched life.

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