



# All about **Great Pyrenees**

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# The Great Pyrenees Dog

## About the GreatPyrenees Dog

Great Pyrenees Dogs, also called Pyrenean Mountain Dogs, are large elegant dogs. They are very gentle and mild-mannered, especially considering their large size. Great Pyrenees are very loyal and may be suspicious of strangers. They are generally good with children as well as with other pets, although they may display some aggression around other large dogs.

Great Pyrenees originated in the Pyrenees Mountain range, between Spain and France. They have been used in France to guard sheep for thousands of years, and are still used to guard cattle, sheep and other livestock there today. It is believed that the breed descended from large dogs like the Italian Maremma Sheepdog, the Anatolian Sheepdog from Turkey, and the Hungarian Kuvasz. The popularity of the breed had died out by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it was only through a concerted effort of breeders in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the breed was saved.

## The Characteristics of Great Pyrenees Dog

Great Pyrenees have a distinctive white coat and a proud bearing that can only be described as regal. They have a double coat, made up of an undercoat of fine hair and a topcoat of thick, long, hair with a coarse texture. The thick topcoat forms a mane around the neck, which is more pronounced in male dogs than females. Great Pyrenees have dark amber eyes with an almond shape. They have small, triangular ears that lie flat unless they are alerted, at which time the ears stand slightly. They have short necks, and



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Average Height	25 - 32" (63 – 81 cm)
Average Weight	85 - 135 pounds (38 – 61 kg)
Average Litter Size	8-9 puppies
Coat	Double white coat; undercoat is fine, topcoat thick and coarse.
Temperament	Double white coat; undercoat is fine, topcoat thick and coarse.
Compatibility with Children and Pets	Does well with children and most pets; may be somewhat aggressive around other large dogs.
Health Concerns	Joint problems and deafness can be common with this breed.



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## Selecting your Great Pyrenees: Adoption or Breeder?

Deciding whether to adopt a pet from a shelter or rescue group, or purchase a pet from a breeder is a personal choice. Whichever you decide, be sure to research the source and find out as much as you can about how the cat has been cared for up to this point. Breed clubs and online groups are good sources of information about breeders and shelters.

### A Few Words About Adoption:

Your local ASPCA or municipal animal shelter likely has a variety of dogs available for adoption. If breed is not important to you, shelters like these can be excellent sources for an adoptable dog. If, however, you are committed to finding a Great Pyrenees, you may need to do a more specific search. There are groups that specialize in rescue and adoption of Great Pyrenees dogs; check the Internet for a group near you. Your local vet may also be a good resource for locating groups or individuals who have dogs for adoption.

Finding a Great Pyrenees available for adoption or rescue may take longer than locating a dog through a breeder. Your persistence will be rewarded, though, with the good feelings that come from providing a loving home to a Great Pyrenees in need.

Some shelters or rescue groups charge a small fee for processing the adoption; others ask that you make a donation to their organization. Most shelters require you to spay or neuter the animal. Overall, the expense of taking in a rescue dog is usually much lower than the cost of buying one outright.

### A Few Words About Breeders:

A good breeder will always have at least as many questions for you as you have for him. A breeder who cares about his animals will want to know that each dog is going to a good, loving home. You may find that you have a lot of initial contact with a breeder over the phone or via email. When you actually meet with the breeder, you may have your choice of only a few or several dogs, depending on the size of his breeding operation.

Always make sure your breeder keeps sanitary and pleasant conditions. The dogs should appear well-cared for and well-fed, with ample space to play, and clean cages. Look for a dog with clear eyes and a shiny coat. The dogs should be active and alert. Be wary of a breeder whose dogs are overly timid or aggressive. The dogs should be well socialized and appear healthy and happy.

Get any agreements from the breeder in writing, and be very wary of a breeder who refuses to do so. Any reputable breeder should also provide you with a written guarantee regarding your animal and should clearly explain any return policies.



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#### EXPERT TIP

##### Selecting a Crate

A dog should be able to stand and turn around inside a closed crate. If you have a Great Pyrenees Dog puppy, consider the average height and weight of an adult Great and choose a crate based on those specifications. The average size of an adult Great Pyrenees Dog is 15 lbs and 16 inches tall. Choose a sturdy steel or plastic crate for medium sized breeds such as the Great Pyrenees Dog.

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The Internet can be a good resource for locating a Great Pyrenees breeder. You can also check with local Great Pyrenees clubs in your area, and ask your vet for recommendations. There are national and sometimes regional groups and professional societies for cat breeders. You may wish to find a breeder associated with a club such as the Great Pyrenees Club of America, Inc. While not all dog breeders will belong to such groups, membership in a group like this may be an indication of how seriously the breeder takes her work. Ask other dog owners for recommendations for a breeder, or consult listservs and other websites devoted to dogs.

## How to Choose Your New Great Pyrenees

An important decision is whether to bring a puppy or an adult dog into your home. It's no secret that Great Pyrenees puppies are cute and cuddly, but they are also a lot of work. If you cannot devote a serious amount of time and patience to house training and socializing a puppy, consider adopting an adult dog. Make this important decision before you begin looking at dogs. When an adorable Great Pyrenees puppy is playing with your shoelace, it can be very difficult to think of anything but taking her home.

When selecting a dog, it is important to find out as much as you can about how the Great Pyrenees was raised to this point, to have an idea of any health problems or behavioral issues that may not be readily apparent.

There are several signs of a healthy dog. Among these are the following:

- Healthy skin and coat
- Clear, bright eyes
- Energetic and playful demeanor
- Full range of motion in limbs (no limping or restricted movement)
- Readily responsive to noise (no signs of deafness)

## Preparing for Your Great Pyrenees

There are several items you will need to care for your new Great Pyrenees. Some examples of these include a place for the dog to sleep, collar or harness and lead, food and water bowls, good quality food, grooming products, toys, and books on dog care.

Dogs are naturally territorial den animals, and like to have a place of their own. A dog cage or crate gives your puppy his own environment, like a den. Dog crates can also make housetraining easier and minimize damage caused by a bored dog, both of which are important with new puppies. Look for a dog cage that is the proper size for your pet. The dog should have enough room to stand, turn, and lie down. Your dog will want to feel cozy and secure in her cage, so bigger is not better. If you have a Great Pyrenees puppy, you will need a crate that is small enough for her now. If you do not want to invest in more than one cage, look for one with dividers that can be removed as your dog grows.

If you choose not to crate-train your puppy, put her bed in a quiet spot that can become her own den area. A waterproof bed is a good idea for a new puppy that is being housetrained. Choose a size that will fit your dog comfortably without being overly large.

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If you choose not to crate-train your puppy, put her bed in a quiet spot that can become her own den area. A waterproof bed is a good idea for a new puppy that is being housetrained. Choose a size that will fit your dog comfortably without being overly large. Dog beds with removable covers that can be machine-washed are very convenient for use with puppies and older dogs, when incontinence may be an issue.

Your dog will need a properly sized harness or collar, leash, and ID tags. The tags should, at a minimum, have the pet's name and your phone number. This can be critical if your new dog runs away. Harnesses are often easier than collars to train new puppies to walk on a lead.

Your Great Pyrenees will need a place to eat and drink. Dog bowls are often made from plastic, ceramic or stainless steel, all of which are durable. It is important to put the bowls in the same place each day, so your dog knows where to find his food and water. Dog bowls should always be made from safe, non-toxic materials. As your Great Pyrenees grows, consider getting a stand for his food and water bowls, to make feeding more comfortable and ease digestion.

Dog food is the basis of your Great Pyrenees's nutrition, so feeding him the right food and in the right quantities is critical. Healthier food means a healthier dog. Dog food comes in three main forms: hard dry food, canned wet food, or semi-moist food. Check with your vet or breeder for recommendations based on the age and health of your dog.

Grooming products can include brushes, combs, and topical treatments like shampoos and flea prevention products. With their medium to long double coat, Great Pyrenees require daily grooming. They are heavy shedders, and should be brushed several times a day while shedding. They also require frequent bathing to keep their white coats looking clean. Start with just a few minutes of grooming each day, until your dog is accustomed to the attention and activity. Dog shampoos can include flea and tick formulas, detangling formulas, deodorizing formulas, and more. Your Great Pyrenees may benefit from special whitening shampoo, to keep her coat looking its best. It may take some patience and practice to bathe your Great Pyrenees or apply topical treatments. Be prepared with all necessary supplies and be ready to give your dog plenty of praise and maybe even some treats.

Good quality toys will keep your dog entertained and reduce the chances of the dog becoming destructive. All toys should be breed and size appropriate, and checked often for signs of wear.

A few good books on raising dogs, purchased at a pet or book store or borrowed from your library, can be invaluable. Knowledgeable pet owners have happier, healthier pets!

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## Your Great Pyrenees Through the Years: The Great Pyrenees Puppy

Great Pyrenees puppies grow very quickly, and may reach full size by the end of their first year. Careful attention to your Great Pyrenees early diet is critical, to be sure he gets the nutrients he needs for proper bone growth. Great Pyrenees puppies should be trained early, to avoid having a very large, untrained dog running amok!

Vaccinating your dog ensures your pet's immune system can work at its best, protecting your dog from serious diseases. Your vet can recommend a specific schedule, but your dog should receive vaccinations against parvo, distemper, adenovirus, and rabies, at a minimum. Puppies should receive parvovirus, adenovirus-2, and distemper inoculations at 6-8 weeks, 9-11 weeks, and 12-16 weeks. At 16 weeks old, puppies should receive a single dose of rabies vaccination.

## Your Great Pyrenees Through the Years: The Great Pyrenees Adult

All dogs should visit the vet at least once a year, for a "well-dog" check. Dogs over 16 weeks old with an unknown vaccination history should receive a single dose of parvovirus, adenovirus-2, and distemper vaccines. All dogs should receive a booster shot at one year, and be inoculated every three years after that. Adult dogs with unknown vaccination histories and puppies 16 weeks old should receive a single dose of rabies vaccination. A booster shot is required at one year. After that, inoculations should either be done annually, or every three or five years with a vaccine approved for that length of coverage.

## Your Great Pyrenees Through the Years: The Great Pyrenees Senior

Great Pyrenees dogs often live 15 years or more, and are considered a hardy breed. Proper diet and exercise, along with regular annual veterinary checkups, will help to ensure the health of your dog.

## Medical Considerations

Due to their large size, Great Pyrenees can be prone to bone and joint problems. Deafness is commonly a problem among Great Pyrenees. If you get your Great Pyrenees through a breeder, be sure the breeding stock has been carefully screened for genetic problems.

Great Pyrenees litters are usually around 8 or 9 puppies on average, but can be as few as 5-6 or as many as 12-14 pups. Their lifespan is around 9-15, with an average life expectancy of about 12 years. Well cared for, it is not unusual for Great Pyrenees to live 15 years or even more.

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