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Top Pet Friendly Destinations



JEN REEDER

Recently when Sharon Sakson, author of *Paws & Effect: The Healing Power of Dogs*, was at the Vagabond Inn in Naples, NY, she was amused to overhear the owner, Patti Fitzgerald, explaining to a caller that dogs are welcome at the inn but children are not.

"She said, 'I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you, did you say you are bringing your Pekingese? That will be wonderful, we've never had a Pekingese.'

"But apparently, the caller wanted to bring their pre-teen child. Patti was horrified, 'Sorry, no, this is not a child-friendly environment.'

"She said the man could not believe that she would let in his dog but not his kid. But that's the way it is! A sign out front says, 'Loose children will be given a puppy and an espresso,'" Sakson says.

More and more hotels and destinations have begun to cater to people traveling with pets. In some cases, entire regions are welcoming pets. Northern California's Mendocino County is so pet-friendly that it has named a Cairn Terrier, Hairy Putter, their Official Canine Ambassador (Hairy has a blog at www.HairysBlog.com that reviews area restaurants, wineries and of course, off-leash beaches).

Here's a sampling of some of the nation's pet-friendly destinations that can provide a memorable vacation experience for your entire family!

Silverton, Oregon:

Perhaps it's no surprise that Silverton, Ore., a 45-minute drive from Portland, is pet friendly. Silverton was the home of Bobbie the Wonder Dog, who found his way home after being lost in Indiana six months earlier. A downtown mural depicts Bobbie's journey, and Silverton hosts an annual Pet Parade (May 15 this year). Not to be missed: The Pet Friendly Garden, which demonstrates how you can create a garden that is safe, healthy and comfortable for your dogs and other pets (dogs welcome on 8-ft. leash or shorter). The Pet Friendly Garden is one of 20 themed gardens within the 80-acre botanical sanctuary called The Oregon Garden (oregongarden.org). Convenient, pet-friendly lodging can be found at the adjacent Oregon Garden Resort. For a more strenuous outing, bring your pooch to nearby Silver Falls State Park, where miles of walking and hiking trails wind around spectacular waterfalls.

Lake George, New York:

In Lake George, it's all about the Canine Club Getaway (canineclubgetaway.com), which has been called "Club Med for dogs." The Canine Club Getaway isn't just dog-friendly – the dogs are an integral part of the fun! There are several dozen dog-friendly activities each day, including agility classes, swimming, Frisbee, lure coursing, flyball, doggie skateboarding, hiking, prep classes and testing for the Canine Good Citizen and Therapy Dog tests, various obedience classes, "barks and crafts," a dog talent show, dog weddings, plus seminars by experts on a variety of topics. (Dogs are welcome at the seminars, too.) "Why do dogs love it? Because they get to be the center of their human's life for five precious days," says owner/founder Janice Costaco.

Mount Airy, North Carolina:

The city of Mount Airy, famous as the place where actor Andy Griffith grew up, is so committed to welcoming pets that it has a "Pet Friendly" link on its website at www.visitmayberry.com under "Eat, Stay and Play." Among the attractions that welcome pets are the Round Peak Vineyards – take your pet to a wine tasting! – as well as shopping (try the Froo Froo Pet Boutique, "Where Fur Meets Fashion"), restaurants that provide dogs with water and treats, pet friendly campgrounds and local doggie day cares. Every October the town celebrates its four legged residents with "Bark in the Park," a party for dogs and their owners!

Telluride, Colorado:

The idyllic town of Telluride (visittelluride.com) boasts that it has more dogs than people. So dogs are welcome in more than half of the inns and hotels in Telluride and neighboring Mountain Village, and nearly all of the condos and vacation homes allow pets to stay with their owners. Pets are allowed in select cabins of the free, energy-efficient gondola that connects Telluride with neighboring Mountain Village, ensuring man's best friends can also enjoy the 360-degree views. The town's free shuttle bus system, the Galloping Goose, welcomes well-behaved pets on a leash. (Between the shuttle bus system and energy efficient gondola, there is no need for a car in Telluride.) Designated "puppy parking" spots throughout town let dogs chill out for a few minutes while owners pop into nearby retail shops. And the annual Telluride Fur Ball each August is a celebration for dogs and their owners. Benefiting the Second Chance Humane Society, the event features live music, food and dance. The town's surrounding hiking trails are open to dogs – just be sure to pick up their waste and pack it out!

San Diego, California:

Dogs love beaches, making San Diego and adjacent Del Mar a great place to visit year-round. During off-peak months, dogs are allowed to run off leash at the 2-mile long Del Mar Dog Beach (aka Del Mar North Beach), in addition to the city's two major parks, Seagrove Park and Powerhouse Park. But if you want to get your dog in the water, check out Del Mar's annual Surf Dog Surf-A-Thon (every September, surfdog.kintera.org), where dogs compete in a surf competition and costume contests. Doggie Surf Clinics are also available prior to the event to turn pets into surfing pros, and you can buy Surfah Dog Surf Boards in the San Diego North coastal community of Carlsbad – the only dog surfboards manufactured by a professional surfer and surfboard manufacturer (a portion of the proceeds benefit the Helen Woodward Animal Center). Unwind at night at L'Auberge Del Mar, which offers luxurious accommodations and special pet packages for pampered pooches.

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Looking back on time spent with pets, she says, "Some of the best times were when we were camping." Now if they have a short camping trip and don't take their cat Wally, a Himalayan who likes to hang out in the camping trailer, they miss him.

"I think it can be so beneficial for owners and their pets, whether it's camping or traveling with pets, because they get to spend time together," Trumpeter says. "Pets really enjoy it because they get to spend time with you!"

And, remember that it's always a good idea to check with your veterinarian about the area you're planning on traveling to. They will make sure your pet has the necessary vaccinations and medications and/or products appropriate for the area.

Jen Reeder is a freelance journalist who used to spend summers on a sailboat with her grandparents' cat "Fun Fur."

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