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Pause 4 Paws and Claws

Each quarter, Urban Animal researchers hit the streets of two suburbs to uncover great places for you and your pet to visit

Mosman

Mosman-Mutt-Mania

Mosman is a suburb with a display of rich, leafy trees and flaunts other displays of wealth in more obvious ways. But within this affluent and attractive suburb, you can find some fabulous areas to enjoy with your dog. It's common for Councils to relegate off-leash and designated dog walking parks to unattractive and barren areas - parks which are not particularly enjoyable for human or dog alike. Mosman, however, has some of the most picturesque and well-equipped off-leash areas with views that are truly spectacular. Take for example Rawson Park, just off Middle Head Road. You can park your car next to the bowls and tennis club, walk up a few stairs and there you'll find sweeping views from Middle Harbour over to Watson's Bay. While you take in the glorious vista, dogs can romp and run around this vast area (excepting netball courts and the area within the fenced oval). There are benches under large shady trees and several doggie-doo dispenser bins.

But a real pearler of a location is Mosman's 'dog beach', found at Sirius Cove Reserve. Here you'll find ample parking and easy access to a grassy park that has plenty of shady trees, picnic tables, toilets (disabled included), everything the whole family can enjoy on a stunning Sydney day. The beach is small and sandy and because it remains shallow for metres, dogs can wade out, with or without their owners, enjoying a salty plunge. Oh, the views aren't bad either—lots of bobbing boats moored in the Cove and some gob-smacking real estate. Many locals take advantage of this great location walking their dogs down a track, which borders Taronga Park Zoo and continues down to Little Sirius Point. Getting there is easy as you just go down Raglan Street, take left onto Illawarra Street and before you can say "wet dog", you're there.



Taking a plunge at Sirius Cove

In the evenings Hawthorn Cottage Café turns into a full Italian restaurant and so we decided to check out whether their dog friendly attitude could translate into dinner. We query this possibility with our charming waitperson and she replied "yes, you just have to ring and book and mention this to us and we'll organise an outside table furthest to the street."

Now my partner never does things in a small way, so in organising a dinner at the restaurant, he rallies two other couples and encourages them to bring along their respective dog. Six people and three dogs—"yikes!" I think, "Surely there will be a problem. Our pack will be sent packing." He thinks otherwise.

I hate being wrong but in this instance I'm delighted with the end result. Dinner was a resounding success with great conversation, a few glasses of wine and excellent food. For three dogs that had never met each other, there was a quick mandatory sniff then they settled down to rest. I think the dogs knew that they were involved in something special and best behaviour was expected.

Other friendly cafes include Café Prego serving an array of salads, sandwiches, pastas and cakes. Village Green on Mandolong Road also have an outside courtyard area where many locals take time out to dine with their dogs leashed by their sides.

Hawthorne Cottage Café
Shop 4/707 Military Road
Mosman 2088
ph: 9968 4244

Café Prego
Shop 2/573 Military Road
Mosman 2088
ph: 9969 1264

Village Green
9/3 Mandolong Road
Mosman 2088
ph: 9968 1554

A basic map of these areas (but with little street information) can be found in PDF form at Mosman Council's website www.mosman.nsw.gov.au



Hawthorn Cottage Café

If packing a picnic lunch isn't your cup of tea, we have found the perfect spot to have breakfast or lunch—accompanied by your favourite dog. Hawthorn Cottage Café sits right on Military Road amongst fashionable boutiques and interesting home ware shops. It's a charming café that serves a delicious selection of meals. Their drinks menu is extensive, staff are friendly and service is really fast. We were shown to an outside 'dog table' and before we could think of placing a drinks order, our dog had a fresh bowl of water by her side. My partner ordered corn fritters and declared that they were tastier and better than what you find at Bill's in Surry Hills, which is quite a feat.

Leichhardt

Leichhardt is probably the best part of inner Sydney to find dog-friendly cafes, like-minded animal fans and some fantastic leash-free areas. And yes, you'll even find a gelateria with gelato for dogs!

The centerpiece for dog activity in Leichhardt is Café Bones in the Hawthorn Canal Reserve offering food and beverages for both dogs and their human companions. Established by Mary-Anne Danaher and Lynne Blundell in 2000, they trademarked the name and their signature beast-beverage, the Pupacino, which is frothed milk with powdered liver treat on top. Additionally, they offer their own line of dog treats, open from 4pm-7pm Tuesday to Friday and 9am-7pm Saturday and Sunday. Their website is www.cafebones.com.au.



Pupacino to go

The huge park area runs alongside a canal, which often serves as a questionable bathing area for dogs who leap in after balls or just for the joy of it. Café Bones has tables and chairs and there's always a crowd at the window for their excellent coffee and treats. Bathrooms are conveniently located next door in a council block and plentiful water supplies are next to the Café along with a handy stand where pet owners can find the latest edition of Urban Animal.

Entry for parking is from Foster Street heading towards Balmain from Marion Street, which becomes Darley Street. Turn into Charles Street just before the City Westlink. The road bends to the left to Blackwattle Park and Canal Road and ends about 100 metres before Café Bones. There's plenty of room for parking, a paved flat walkway for access to the park, handy poo bag dispenser and trash cans. When you come into the park area, it's like encountering a cult—not of religious zealots but dog fanciers of all types. Hundreds at times, especially Sunday which is Leichhardt Dog Club training day, but it's never too crowded. It's kinda like a Woodstock of Woof!

Norton Street in Leichhardt is not only restaurant row, it's a bone-an-za for dog cafes. Starting at Bar Via Veneto at the corner of Parramatta Road and continuing next door to the long established Café Sport, there's an array of cafes with dog bowls out front. More often than not, pets are allowed in the outdoor areas. Café Berkelouw directly across from the Norton Plaza has the added convenience of being a bookstore with an adjoining art gallery. Just a couple of doors up at the Bellini Bar is the Bellini Bowl where large breakfast, big paninis and a selection of pastries are the go.

Believe it or not, the Italian Forum Piazza a block from Parramatta Road has an extensive number of indoor/outdoor restaurants which do not object to well behaved pooches. Dante Ristorante Italiano is particularly welcoming and authentic with great desserts.

But where to take a companion animal for dessert? Most weekdays from 10am to 10pm, Saturday to midnight and Sunday from noon to 8 pm, there's Dog Gelato at 106 Norton Street's La Cremeria Sorbetteria, invented by master ice cream maker Luigi DeLuca. It's not always in stock and Luigi is trying to take this product to other pet stores to sell from their freezers. He's guarded about the ingredients but our dog gave it two tongues up! You can call to check on 9564 1127.

If you'd rather take the meat and bone option than a sweet, you need go no farther than the two AC Butchery shops—the original on Marion Street and the newer location within the Norton Plaza—both of which are not only the best sources of a broad range of human meat options, but bone-friendly to the max with a variety offered depending on size and breed. I've never been to butchers who have a greater understanding of bones and dogs!

Another tip for interesting shopping in the area is the organic market held every Saturday morning in the Orange Grove School on the corner of Perry Street and Balmain Road. There are some dog treat and bird food vendors there and a wealth of food options. On the first Saturday of every month, I'm always at the Growers Market across from the Casino where Yummi Treats has a stand right next to their sister coffee stand. The Yummi stand's range is staggering with our faves being the chicken patties, roo nibbles, beef sticks and liver treats, but if it's a late month weekend and stocks are running low, it's an easy place to stock up after a run to AC.



Leichhardt Dogs

Leichhardt Council has a number of off-leash areas and has become much more liberal and forward thinking since the controversy over potentially closing Hawthorn Reserve as a leash free area resulted in a huge protest in March 2004 and also a rally in Gladstone Park, with changes to management plans for Birchgrove, Mort Bay and Elkington Parks. The culmination of Council's efforts was Dog's Day Out in Hawthorn Reserve, which was delayed to early December from its originally rained out date in September.

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