

Come! Sit! Stay!

Home on the Road for Rover

By William Dalziel



Local favourite the Love Shack at Milton

My friends believe I'm lucky to be a travel writer, thinking staying in hotels around the world, flying to exotic locations and reporting on local attractions is a cool job. Though I have written for countless newspapers, many airlines' in-flight magazines, womens and travel publications and even Business Review Weekly on upmarket accommodation, give me a place on the beach with the dog any time. Oh and my wife too!

It's not often that I can take my wife away on travel assignments, and as for Fergus, our Beagle, well, he only has to endure boarding when Sandy and I head overseas for our once a year jaunt. At any other time we can, we find interesting and unusual 'pet-friendly' accommodation options up and down the East Coast of Australia where we tend to take off. Since Sandy has a portable IT business and I am always writing on my laptop, we can easily abandon the home and haul Fergus with us on an adventure.

The problem is finding the right place at the right price and not getting stuck with a property that neither lives up to its description nor is not that friendly to Fido after all. In some of the places we've researched, it's more like 'pet-tolerant' or 'pet-suspicious' than 'pet-welcome'. I'll give you some examples.

One of the places that we found through an online pet friendly accommodation site listed the property as being fenced and private, only 400 metres from the beach with pets able to sleep inside. It did have a fence around three sides of the property, but not the front which was a busy street at the bottom of a sharp blind curve. It was private to the extent that there was no one else above or below you in the premises, but houses were abutting the property close enough you could wave to neighbours in their kitchens from your sink as you both did dishes. And you could exchange musical tastes while firing up the barbie with no need to turn up the volume.

As for keeping your dog inside, there was a specific sign in the house that they were not allowed on beds or furniture, but the area they could sleep in was a laundry, small, hot, dank and only leading to that unfenced yard if they had to go out at night. Finally, it was only a little more than half a kilometre as the crow flies in a straight line to where you could see the beach and then another 200 metres down a hill to touch water, but to walk safely to that point was not direct. You had to wend your way up and down steep streets with cars zooming by. Hardly pet-safe for an easily distracted and selectively deaf Beagle!



Camping on a Paw Wheel drive adventure. Photo by Animax.



home alone
pet care

Dog Walking
Pet Sitting
Feeding

7 Days a Week - 365 Days
Fully Insured
Since 1992



1300 306 756
www.homealone.com.au

Order your own urban animal T-shirt!



★ Special Offer to Urban Animal Subscribers
Only \$30 (ex shipping and handling)

Fitted ladies style, made from quality Australian cotton.

For the female feline lover, "Women & cats will do as they please & men and dogs should relax & get used to the idea".
For canine enthusiasts, "The more men I meet the more I like dogs". Both include the Urban Animal logo on the back.

Select a design: Cat option Dog option
 Sizes: sm med lg ex lg
 Hurry! Some sizes are limited

\$40.00 + \$2.50 shipping and handling throughout Australia

Name

Address

Town State Postcode

Phone (in case we need to reach you)

Credit card type Mastercard Visa

Card Number

Expiry Date.....

CCV Number (the last three digits of the number on the back of the card)

Signature.....

Or enclose a cheque for \$42.50 to Urban Animal,
20 Hordern St, Newtown NSW 2042

When we checked back with the rental referral service to let them know about the property, we asked if they personally vetted the properties they handled rentals for and checked them out. They dithered on the point saying they allowed and relied on the property owners' own descriptions, that they visited the top properties near their office on the Central Coast, but no, they had no way of verifying all of the facilities unless there was a complaint. Did we have one? We did, but a year later, there is no reference to the inadequacies on their site—the original description is unchanged.

Then there was the time we wanted to go to the Blue Mountains and explore that area with Fergus. We went to petsplayground.com.au and looked at a variety of properties with glowing descriptions. The one that caught our eyes was described as a B&B with many amenities in a town we knew was kind of in the Blue Mountains. As it turned out, it was about 40 kilometres beyond Katoomba in a small town. The premises were fenced in but most of the walking area was a long driveway and a tiny garden.

Though the retired woman who ran the place was most gracious, the house smelled bad from her own dogs, the bedroom was small with a nightmare of cluttered bric a brac on every surface and wall. The TV was tiny and barely worked. The door separating the bedroom and her house was sliding, hollow, and no insulation from her TV which was cranked up loud due to her hearing problem. And though we had use of her kitchen facilities, they were dark and once we spied the surfaces and cutlery, they were not really clean, as happens when older people can't see the mess that easily. Sandy and I made a pact that B&Bs weren't for us and so now we look at self contained properties. But that's just our personal preference.



Poolside at the Biltmore Resort

So how to best find a place that meets your standards? Word of mouth is the best way, knowing friends who have stayed at places and checking local references. We found a great pet friendly hotel in Melbourne, The Albany in South Yarra through a friend and stay there every time we go down whether with pooch or alone. We've in turn turned it onto dozens of friends who've become fans as well. The Albany has special pet rooms and Fergus enjoys the quiet morning strolls through South Yarra's beautiful tree lined streets.

Of course Urban Animal has eight issues of Come Sit Stay reviews with links to other local operators and their own advertisers. An excellent resource is 'Holidaying With Dogs' which we've used constantly and has all ranges of accommodation. It's a Life Be In It directory that covers all of Australia and has a website at www.holidayingwithdogs.com.au. It defines many properties by whether pets are allowed inside, fenced/not fenced/farm fencing, secure backyard, on lead/off lead rules, and even if there are on-site resident dogs.

These are questions you need to have answered by operators of pet-friendly accommodations and you should double check before reserving in case policies have changed. Be wary of Internet sites that act as agents or advertisers for properties. They not only can have inaccurate information that is not updated but can also allow undocumented information, non-existent rating systems or out of date contacts.

Editor's note: Urban Animal would like to know of your favourites so that we can look at reviewing more great places in the coming issue. We pay our own way, do not let the operator know we are coming to review it and accept no perks or favour advertisers. If a property is deemed not acceptable, it's not reviewed.



The lawn at the Biltmore Resort

Paw WHEEL DRIVE



Tailor made day trips and overnight camping adventures for you and your canine friend. Friendly groups, campfire cooking, fully catered, 4WD not necessary. For more info or to book please contact **Johnno** on details below or check out our website for upcoming dates...

www.pawwheeldrive.com  johnno@pawwheeldrive.com

Ph: 0406 333 899

If you'd like an idea of the range of pet accommodations in just the Western part of the US, here are some notable examples where I've stayed and reviewed. Sadly, Fergus wasn't able to come along for the international ride.

We once luxuriated at the Biltmore Resort in Phoenix Arizona which mails out a Pet Profile prior to your stay to assess your pet's needs. Upon arrival, your pet receives its own personalised commemorative bowl, bag of treats, placemat and a map suggesting detailed dog walks. The Pet Pals menus includes dishes like grilled tenderloin of beef with eggs and brown rice; fresh Alaskan salmon and vegetable stir fry.

An even better example of pampering is Wyndham Peaks Resort and Golden Door Spa in Telluride, Colorado which offers a Doggie Spa Day Package with four hours of pampering. It starts with an hour of playtime followed by a gourmet lunch and treats. The beauty regime begins with a warm bath, hair trim, blow dry, 'pawdicure' an ear and teeth cleaning topped off with a complete brushing and 20 minute body massage. The dogs even receive their own warm, fluffy spa robes.

Just below San Fran is Carmel By The Sea where The Cypress Inn (rated 'Four Paws') is run by none other than movie star Doris Day. It has custom made dog blankets, a directory of pet friendly dining places, contracted pet sitters and welcomes all breeds of dogs into all rooms and suites, unlike some hotels that have size restrictions. The only rule is that they can't be left in the rooms alone.

Seaside, there's the Fess Parker Resort in Santa Barbara featuring Canine Cuisine and a Canine Masseuse in addition to Fess' fine Pinot Noirs. If the name sounds familiar, the proprietor of this 350 room resort is the TV star of Daniel Boone in the 60s. Doggie room service includes premium ground sirloin, cheese pizza treats and canine cookies.

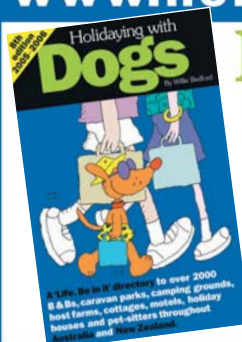
Halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco is the Cayucos Beach Inn with 37 rooms on the water, a set of 'Mutt Mit' stations around the property for poo scooping, a Paws for Thought Booster Bath with fresh pawprint beach towels and an industrial size blow dryer as well as a beachside doggie wash for salt water removal.

In the wine district just an hour north of San Francisco is the Napa River Inn which has exquisite suites, a wonderful dog shop just two blocks down the street, a wealth of dog-friendly restaurants and a superb dog bakery a short trip down the main drag. Complimentary dog biscuits are gifted on check in and each dog gets its own Napa River Water dog bowl

In Lake Tahoe, The Three Buck Inn offers home made cookies on check in, a squeaky toy, dog bed and LeBistro water feeder in each room as well as maps for dog hikes in the mountains surrounding it.

A fantastic magazine featuring extensive pet friendly places as well as how-to guides to holidaying with dogs is 'Fido Friendly' which is quarterly, US\$35 a year for subscriptions and also online at www.fidofriendly.com. They have specials on hiking, winter trips, overseas tales and water sports.

www.holidayingwithdogs.com.au



Holidaying with Dogs

THE DOG OWNERS TRAVEL BIBLE
WITH OVER 2000 PLACES TO STAY

Locations include city & country; beach-fronted cottages; peaceful hideaways; top-rated caravan parks & spots along major tourist routes.

Many welcome dogs inside.

rrp \$19.95

Available from Bookshops, Kmart, Big W, Vets, Map, Outdoor & Pet shops or on-line www.holidayingwithdogs.com.au or phone 'Life. Be in it' 03 5237 6622.