

# Dog Friendly Opportunities



Anecdotal evidence shows many dog owners don't go on holiday because they don't know what possibilities exist to take their best friends with them. Potential day-trippers stay at home or don't venture to enjoy a meal after a day out, because they don't know there are lots of places that will welcome their dog. The truth is there's ample opportunity in the dog-friendly tourism sector; it's just a case of drawing it to the attention of responsible dog owners.

Dog people Limited, inspired by Hamish (the director's Airedale Terrier) has something of a mission to help dog lovers find what they've been missing. They've been working on it since 2002. The segment is significant with an estimated 5.7M dog-owning households in the UK alone (data from The Pet Food Manufacturers Association). Pet passports freed up opportunities for dogs to travel to and from the UK; British dogs can now travel to Europe and European dogs can enjoy Britain too. EU regulations, on topics like food hygiene (EC 852/204), help intra-European dog-loving tourists enjoy the consistency of expectation (although not strictly the case, mostly for cultural reasons, dog-owning diners should enjoy similar access in Inverness, Keswick, Brecon, Gerardmer or Rimini).



So what's involved in attracting a slice of this steadily growing tourism and leisure segment? Clearly the basic product has to be right, whether accommodation, 'attraction' or catering. Businesses have

to make their minds about how to position their offer but, if they want to attract dog owners too, they will need to understand their potential needs.

Dog people developed a unique dog-friendly rating system to help its advertisers understand the likely issues and to help them differentiate themselves from the competition. The system can also help guests be responsible during their visit. It draws attention to a range of services many dog owners will find useful including walks and veterinary information, facility to eat breakfast (and other meals) accompanied by one's dog and emergency food supplies or 'scoop bags' in case owners forget to pack them. Providing guests with as much up to date relevant information as possible - both positive and 'negative' - enables them to make good choices and generates customer satisfaction by avoiding disappointment.

Dog owners too should think carefully about their dogs' needs on holiday. Firstly there's the journey. Make sure your dog is properly secured in the car (for both his safety and yours), plan sufficient stops and ensure freshwater is available for him (The Blue Cross provide a range of information leaflets, including one on moving home and travelling with your dog).



If travelling to or from the UK you'll need to plan your Channel crossing and find out about pet passport arrangements. Different carriers have different arrangements, some are more dog friendly than others. Brittany Ferries have thought through the issues and provided information on both the Pet Travel Scheme and its own pet transport conditions.

You'll need to think about your destination, does it have what you need for a canine inclusive holiday or day out? Finally don't forget to do the dog's packing for him; among other things, he'll need his usual food, his bed, his lead and scoop bags, some treats and maybe a toy or two.

Some accommodation providers make additional charges for dogs but these are generally small compared to kenneling. If you take your dog with you on holiday or a short break neither the family, nor you nor the dog will incur the emotional cost of leaving him behind. What is also important, you'll all enjoy the experience more for being together.



There are literally hundreds of cottages, holiday parks, hotels and guest houses that will be delighted to welcome guests with their pets. There are also many pubs (and other places to eat), heritage sites and other attractions that will be pleased to entertain responsible dog owners. Opportunity is plentiful, so too are potential visitors - a well-known website is a perfect vehicle for putting the two together and keeping important information up to date.

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Date: 2009-12-28

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-dog-friendly-opportunities-article1059>