

Woof, Woof! Dog Bark Park Inn

Amid farm fields of wheat and canola stretching for mile after mile and rimmed by forested mountains and deep river canyons stands an unexpected sight on Idaho's Camas Prairie – a giant dog and his smaller but larger than life-size puppy. Both are Beagles. The biggest dog is a three story, one-unit guesthouse where visitors can spend a night or more inside the World's Biggest Beagle.



The **Dog Bark Park Inn Bed & Breakfast** at Cottonwood, Idaho, open April through October, features a decidedly dog-themed interior. Guests sleep under the watchful gazes of an impressive display of wooden dog carvings artistically arranged on the wall above the bed. Owners, Dennis Sullivan & Frances Conklin, playfully proclaim: “This is perhaps the only place one can sleep with twenty-six dogs and still get a good night’s rest.”

Venturing up the ladder-like stairs into the dog’s head reveals a cozy loft room complete with an inviting reading or napping alcove that is actually the inside of the beagle’s muzzle. Two small windows situated on both sides of the loft offer high-rise views of the countryside below.

Dog Bark Park Inn Bed & Breakfast, designed and built by husband & wife artists, Dennis & Frances, opened in 2003 and since then has seen many visitors as Sweet Willy’s (that is the giant beagle’s pet name) fame has spread. The dog is 30 feet tall. Its ears are made of 14-foot lengths of carpeting that lift and move in the breeze. The exterior walls are two layers of concrete stucco hand mixed in small lots and hand applied section by section taking more than two years to complete.

Amenities include a diverse collection of books, games and puzzles for all ages. “We also provide the added luxury of no television or telephone, finding our guests really enjoy stepping away from modern life” states Frances.

Dennis & Frances are wood carvers, using chainsaws to fashion their artwork. As might be expected, dogs are their specialty. Working from their artist’s studio and gift shop in a separate, and traditionally shaped, building a few paces away from the giant beagles, visitors can see works in progress and visit with the artists. Nearly every breed of dog can be carved. The beagle dog was the first dog breed they began carving and it quickly became their trademark piece. Hence, the big dog building is a Beagle!



About the Area

Before settlement in the 1880's by American homesteaders, the Camas Prairie was Nez Perce Indian country. The Nez Perce still live in this area, giving opportunity for guests to explore the native cultures firsthand. Many recreational activities are also readily available, such as fishing, hiking, whitewater rafting, horseback riding, camping, berry picking, stargazing, wildlife viewing. During summer, nearly every community on the prairie offers small town festivals and rodeos.

One town has a particularly unique event – an annual **Combine Demolition Derby**. The derby draws a dozen or so nearly worn-out harvest combines which are outrageously decorated for the festivities that include a parade of the machines before they then proceed to crash into each other. The last machine still able to run wins the competition!

Cottonwood, population 944, is a quaint agricultural town with a compact business district. Descendants of original homesteading families still farm the same lands around Cottonwood. Wheat, barley, canola and cattle ranching are the prevalent farming endeavors.

A short scenic drive from town is the 100-year-old Monastery of St. Gertrude. An impressive historical museum, established 75 years ago by Sister Alfreda Elsensohn of the Monastery, is open year-round to the public. Every August, the Monastery hosts the **Raspberry Festival**, a one-day event where the tasteful berry grown in great profusion by the Sisters is showcased. Raspberry foods and fancies are featured along with music, arts and crafts fair, foot races, historical displays, hot rod car show and other activities.

Getting to Dog Bark Park & Other Major Attractions

The nearest commercial airport is in Lewiston, Idaho and an easy 60-minute drive to Cottonwood. Larger airports within a half-day drive are: Spokane, Washington; Missoula, Montana; and Boise, Idaho.

Yellowstone National Park: 1 day drive

Glacier National Park: 1 day drive

Seattle: 7-hour drive

San Francisco: 2-day drive



Distance from population centers and interstate highways is both a challenge and benefit for Dog Bark Park. Getting to Cottonwood can be a challenge in time, cost and logistics of travel, particularly for visitors not accustomed to traveling the vast expanses of the western United States. Upon nearing Dog Bark Park visitors enjoy not only the wide-open scenery but also freedom from traffic jams and urban clutter. For example, one can drive an hour in either direction from Dog Bark Park on US Hwy 95 and not encounter a single traffic light. What will be encountered are miles of unfenced agricultural land dotted with farm homes, tiny towns and spectacular river canyons.

By Frances Conklin

Dog Bark Park Inn B & B, 2421 Business Hwy 95 at the Dog, Cottonwood ID 83522

<http://www.dogbarkparkinn.com>

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