

Dog Day Night

A new breed of pet-friendly accommodations—including pet-certified hotels—makes it easier to travel with your furry companion *by Felicity Stone*

Pet owners have been known to resort to devious tactics to keep their four-legged companions close by while travelling. In 2014, a woman managed to board a US Airways flight with her pet pig, claiming it was an emotional support animal. This past April, *Pirates of the Caribbean* star Johnny Depp smuggled Yorkshire terriers Boo and Pistol into Australia, risking euthanasia (Boo and Pistol), fines up to AU\$340,000 and even jail time (Depp). According to a 2013 TripAdvisor survey, 22 per cent of pet owners say they have snuck their animal companions into a hotel or B&B that was not pet-friendly.

In response, websites like PetFriendly.ca, DogFriendly.com, BringFido.com and GoPet Friendly.com have sprung up in recent years, listing pet-friendly travel options. But Victoria-based Pets Can Stay, which has been certifying hotels since 2003, takes it a step further—setting out basic standards (based on input from an advisory board of hospitality, travel, pet and veterinary representatives) for service, fees, room types, amenities, safety and policies regarding leashing, pet-friendly areas and kennelling. “We take a look at everything from the perspective of the hotel, the guest without a pet and the guest with a pet to find a comfortable place where all three can co-exist,” says owner Carla Lewis.

Pets Can Stay—which claims to be the first and only certification program in the world for hotels

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OH MY DOG
Pups get to relax on Westin Element's Heavenly dog bed

catering to the pet-friendly travel market—lists accommodation for most major North American cities and is planning to branch into other countries in 2016. In addition to more than 100 PCS-certified hotels, the website lists hotels that are pet-friendly but not certified, including Opus Vancouver. Although Opus doesn't charge room fees for pets, in February the hotel began offer-

ing an optional Pampered Pooch package, which starts at \$589 and includes treats for human (welcome beverage, in-room iPad, choice of suites) and canine guests (designer bandana, massage and photo session) and a Bow Wow Butler service (dog walking, grooming, birthday cakes). “We try to really enhance the owners' experience and of course the pet by making them feel included,”

says Opus general manager Nicholas Gandossi.

Ultimately, the decision by a hotel to be pet-friendly—certified or otherwise—is all about aligning with the core values of their brand. “We're a lifestyle brand, and because we cater to a lot of people that typically travel more than five-plus nights, which would include people with

pets, we want this to feel more like a residence,” says Ken Boyd, director of sales and marketing at Westin's Element Vancouver Metrotown. Element doesn't charge extra fees for pets and provides pet bowls, treats and a Heavenly dog bed, modelled after the signature Westin Heavenly bed. “It's about health and wellness and keeping whole and balanced while away from home.” □

PRIMARY REASONS FOR TRAVELLING WITH PETS

45%
Companionship

19%
Pet gets stressed out when owner is away

17%
More affordable than a kennel or pet sitter

SOURCE: 2013 TRIPADVISOR SURVEY

FRANK GIUSTRA'S
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THE SHARING GAME

From Uber to Etsy to Airbnb, new “collaborative economy” companies are upending entrenched industries in cities around the world. Why has Vancouver been so slow to hop on board?

by Frances Bula p.22

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