



Photo Courtesy Kimpton Hotels

Posh Pet-Friendly Hotels

Accommodations that roll out the red carpet for your four-legged friend

BY EMILY VOLMAN

Traveling with your pet is not a new concept. In recent years, however, hotels have realized that furry friends are part of the family and enjoy a vacation as much as anyone. In fact, some hotels have taken the pet travel experience to a new level, and, after staying at one of these luxurious lodgings, you might just find your pet pal standing by the door with his bags packed a little too often.

BOUTIQUE HOTELS OFFER DESIGNER DIGS

A “boutique hotel” is a term that was popularized in North America and the United Kingdom to describe intimate, upscale and sometimes quirky hotels that provide more personalized accommodations and services. With locations in big and small cities around the country, a few boutique hotels have definitely gone to the dogs... and cats.

Touting themselves as “the first full-service hotel company to welcome pets,” Kimpton Hotels have raised the bar on being put in the dog house. Not only do they provide a haven of comfort, service, security and style for human guests, but their “HosPETality” program keeps tails wagging.

Atlanta, a frequent destination for Nashvillians, boasts Kimpton’s Hotel Palomar Midtown as one of the most pet-friendly in the city. While you can enjoy this sophisticated 304-room hotel’s evening wine hours and in-room spa services, your pooch can enjoy her own delights. As Brady, the rescued Australian Shepherd / Border Collie mix (and newly appointed Director of Pet Relations) can tell you, each furry guest is spoiled with turndown treats prepared by Chef Keira of Pacci Restaurant placed on a complimentary pet bed, as well as personally engraved pet tags and discounts to locally owned pet stores.

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“At the Hotel Palomar Atlanta, we ensure our pet guests have just as an enjoyable stay as their guardians,” says Mark Fisher, General Manager and proud guardian of Brady. “In addition to our current pet services and our annual Dog Wash in June, we have several other pet-friendly activities in the works. We also encourage feedback from our guests and have a pet suggestion box in the lobby.” Fisher’s love of animals runs deep; in fact, he was recently elected to the Board of Directors for PAWS, the oldest and largest no-kill animal shelter in the metro Atlanta area, and has established donation programs between the hotel and the shelter.

For those traveling to Chicago, Washington D.C. or New York, Affinia Hotels offers outstanding amenities for their human and animal guests alike. Their “My Affinia” program allows you to customize your stay with everything from your perfect pillow to having a guitar waiting for you in your room, while their “Jet Set Pets” program lavishes your animal companion with comforts such as travel bowls, organic treats, plush pet beds and city specific shaped chew toys (such as an Empire State Building toy in NYC and Al Capone toy in Chicago).

“At Affinia Hotels, we are continually looking for ways to enhance the program with more offerings and services to keep our

guests and their pets comfortable,” says Affinia’s Chief Marketing Officer John Moser. If the regular Jet Set Pet amenities are not enough for your pooch, Affinia also offers their signature Happytails Travel Dog Spa Amenity kit, a travel sized toiletry bag filled with luxury pet products.

One of the country’s most well-known boutique lines is W Hotels, whose “Pets Are Welcome” program (otherwise known as P.A.W.) offers every pet a cat or dog specific welcome package including toys, treats, pet tag, clean-up bags, local pet service listings, custom W pet bed, food and water bowls, pet first aid kits, door signs and treat turndown service. In addition, the concierge can happily arrange sitting, walking and grooming services, recommend parks and dog runs and even order a pet birthday cake. And finally, just as you have come to expect a hairdryer waiting in your room, the W Hotel stocks leashes and litter boxes ready for your stay.

W Hotels also takes care to provide a pleasant stay for those without pets or who may have allergies, ensuring that all rooms occupied by pet guests are thoroughly cleaned, aerated and not booked again for at least 12 hours. This includes dry-cleaning all bedding, from duvets to mattress protectors, and upholstery.

COOL CRITTER CRIBS

When you think Hard Rock Hotel, “pampered pets” is probably not the first thing that comes to mind, but Chicago’s Hard Rock Hotel is hoping to change that. Their “Party Like a Rottweiler” and “What’s New Pussycat” programs redefines rock star treatment. Canine guests receive a collapsible travel bowl, clean-up bags and dispenser, Hard Bark Hotel guitar dog toy and signature Hard Rock dog tags, while feline friends receive a collapsible travel bowl, disposable litter box and all-natural catnip toy.

Another inclusion of the above programs is natural, grain-free treats and meals from Companion Natural Pet Food. “In our Base Bar [located in the lobby of the hotel], we use organic and sustainable products,” says Melissa Meulenberg, Hard Rock Hotel Chicago’s E-Commerce Manager. “We think it’s important environmentally and health-wise to promote natural products to our guests and give them the best. That’s why we decided to serve Companion Natural Pet Food. It’s what our General Manager feeds his own dogs.”

But the Hard Rock Hotel Chicago does not stop there. “We’ve always welcomed pets here, but just recently we’ve relaxed our pet policy so that guests can now leave their pet in the room,” says Meulenberg. Listening to feedback from guests who were not able to see a show or visit a museum without their pet during their visit, the hotel changed the policy. “Now guests can just leave their phone number and, if there is a problem such as too much barking or whatnot, we can simply give them a call.” And if you want to sneak a peek of your pet, the hotel offers in-room pet cams free of charge to be viewed on smartphones, iPhones or laptop computers. Between that and the adorable “Heavy Petting” door hangers that alert staff to pet occupied rooms, guests won’t have to concern themselves with who let the dogs out.

Of course, another popular hotel offering five diamond service to celebrities and tourists alike is Loews Hotels, with locations in seventeen cities including Atlanta, Orlando and right here in Nashville. Their “Loews Loves Pets” program presents pet guests with a personalized basket, featuring pet tags, water and food bowls, treats and a detailed package of local city and hotel-run pet services, such as local parks, veterinari-



A pampered pooch enjoys comfy bedding at Affinia Hotels.

PHOTO COURTESY AFFINIA HOTELS.

ans, pet attractions and nearby pet-friendly restaurants. (The Nashville location also hands out copies of Nashville Paw Magazine!) In addition, they offer beds, rawhide bones, kitty scratching posts and pet food meal services.

Even when you’re not traveling, Loews Vanderbilt Hotel continually offers local pet lovers a way to enjoy their facilities right here in our own backyard. Loews has been gracious enough to host a variety of dog-friendly events, from our very own “Rex in the City” patio series to our Barktoberfest event last fall to Agape’s Glitter and Glam fashion show in April. Look for more pet-friendly events coming soon!

RESERVATIONS TO ROAM

When making reservations for your stay, be sure to let the hotel know your pet is coming with you so that they can prepare your room with all the amenities. Some hotels may also have a pet size limit, service or cleaning fees and require proof of vaccination, so you will want to familiarize yourself with specific hotel policies before arrival.

It’s also a great idea to create a pet pack list ahead of time so you won’t forget important items, such as pet medications, treats, special toys, vet records and other needed supplies. And, of course, hotels and fellow guests will greatly appreciate your pooch practicing good manners, so be sure to brush up on training skills before leaving home.



Guests enjoy our Rex in the City event series on the patio at Loews Vanderbilt Hotel.

PHOTO BY ADRIAN HITT.

Thankfully, the days of downer doggie digs are long gone. These days, your pet pal can not only enjoy being by your side, but he can live large while he’s doing it! Just be careful... once your pet gets a taste of the good life, she may decide to stay.

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