

# Buyer interactive

Every Dog Has His Day

## Guests Show More Loyalty to Increasing Number Of Pet-Friendly Hotels

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Hurricane Matthew last month brought to the fore a significant challenge for hotels/resorts and their guests. That is, how to accommodate pets. No pet owner wants to leave a pet behind in times of crisis and fortunately now it's often unnecessary as more hotels and resorts are creating pet-friendly environments for family pets and service animals.

Those environments, which mostly focus on dogs, include everything from canine "ambassadors," such as Bachelor the St. Bernard at The Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch near

Vail, CO, and Sandy, a young black Labrador Retriever at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach who is a service dog in training, to such things as dog massages, dog-walking services and "Doggie Beer."

The Loews Don CeSar in St. Petersburg, FL, offers menus for dogs and cats, as well as rawhide bones, catnip and scratching posts; the Delano Las Vegas also offers a menu for dogs, along with a sitting service.

The Westin Austin Downtown in Texas is the hotel that offers "Doggie Beer" (chicken stock in a cute beer can; locally made) as well as Heavenly Dog Bed, bowl, and mat. The hotel also has a curated "dog map" that highlights the best places in town for guests to their pets.

At The Lodge at the legendary Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, CO, Innkeeper Midge Knerr makes peanut butter and banana dog biscuits.

The Viceroy Snowmass in Colorado welcomes pets with a gift bag containing a Viceroy leash, waste bags, Viceroy bandana, cookie treat and a canine menu. In the room, each dog receives a bed and bowls. Not only is the resort dog friendly, but guests can "borrow a dog for the day" from the Aspen Animal Shelter and have it stay with them at the hotel.



Meanwhile, Extended Stay America sets aside approximately 10 percent of the rooms at each of its properties for guests who have dogs and cats. Each of those rooms, said Terry Atkins, vp of marketing communications at ESA, is specifically designed to be pet friendly for the pet owner, as well as the cleaning staff. For example, Atkins said, each of the pet-friendly rooms have hard floors instead of carpets (easier to clean) and each is located near a side exit to make it easier for owners to take their pets outside.

“Part of our mission and goal is helping people who are trying to build a better future for themselves by providing a service to them,” said Atkins. “We try to make their stays with us ‘home-like’ stays—make sure they feel comfortable. For some folks, part of feeling comfortable is having their pets with them. We try to make sure we accommodate just about everybody traveling with pets.”

ESA’s spokes-pet is a black lab named Tupper, who is featured on the company’s social media pages. “Tupper helps bring awareness to our pet-friendly hotels,” Atkins said. “And we plan to do more aggressive marketing around her and being pet-friendly.”

Coral Hospitality, whose properties include Margaritaville Hollywood Beach Resort in Florida, sets aside a small percentage of its rooms for pet owners, said company CEO Lee Weeks, but all areas of the properties are available to service animals.

“While a very small segment of our business, those guests that bring their pets tend to be very loyal and seem to be more likely to spread the word that we are very welcoming to pets,” said Weeks. “However, it’s a growing business and we want to accommodate any segment that is showing growth.”

Modus Hotels’ mantra of “Being Yourself” fits well with the company’s pet-friendly policies and accommodations.

“We understand that no two pets are alike and prepare for their visits based on the pet and their human’s needs,” said Marco Burlimann, area manager for Modus Hotels, which operates properties in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Chicago and Baltimore. “For a service animal, we respect the service they perform and will not pet or feed the animal if they’re wearing a service vest or are designated as a service animal.”

For all pets, Burlimann said, each hotel prepares a pet owner’s room with a dog bed and water bowl. “We also designate their room with our “Paws for a Second” decal on the door, in order to alert our team that there is an animal inside the room,” said Burlimann. “Additionally, we’ll provide a welcome letter for the animal and a map of dog parks around the area.

“Modus loves pets and so do our colleagues; we’ll ask for permission to pet the animal, ask if we can feed it a treat and if it can do any tricks. We enjoy interacting with pets as much as we do interacting with their humans. After all, they’re part of the family and we want them to enjoy their experience as much as their humans.”

A dog’s life never sounded so good.