

More people than ever traveling with their pets

By Anne Kadet, SmartMoney

Karen Goldberg may be single, but when she hits the road, she's hardly lacking for travel companions. Every year she joins her extended family for a long cruise or grabs a friend to explore new cities like New Orleans. Last summer, however, the 39-year-old CPA took a gamble and turned to someone new: Riley, her 86-pound golden retriever.

The plan was to spend \$1,100 on a four-night stay at Canine Camp Getaway, a Lake George, N.Y., retreat for pets and their owners. But retreat suggests quiet – in practice, the lodge in the Adirondacks was more like a madcap convention for the pet set. At night Goldberg and Riley shared a room, but each had a double bed. By day, the two joined 40 other humans and 70 dogs for goofy bonding activities, from decorating homemade dog biscuits to making paw paintings and drinking beer at “yappy hour.” Just like at a human summer camp, Goldberg says, cliques formed; the labs and retrievers would congregate poolside, while the border collies hung out at the advanced agility course and the hounds gathered for a scent-detection workshop. The humans? They spent all day talking about dog training, dog nutrition and, of course, their pet-centric expeditions. Clearly, it wasn't exactly the typical family vacation. “All the conversations revolved around dogs,” she says.



People bring
their four-
legged family
members hiking
in Tahoe.
Photo/LTN

Tales of pet pampering gone wild are hardly surprising in the age of Swarovski crystal collars and air-conditioned dog mansions. But for anyone out and about this summer, with or without Fido, it'll be hard to ignore the fact that dog mania has reached a tipping point. Upstanding citizens who might otherwise be considered perfectly lucid are taking the "animal companion" concept to a new level – bringing their pets to the movies, shopping and out for dinner in fancy bistros. And, in an economy where a four-legged customer is better than none, businesses are happy to accommodate them. Well-behaved canines are welcome at retailers like Apple, The Gap and Pottery Barn, while some restaurants and hotels go a step further, offering pet menus and puppy-sitting. Even tourist agencies are boarding the gravy train. Washington state's Yakima Valley Visitors & Convention Bureau, for example, just launched a website listing the area's dog-friendly wineries, restaurants, museums and stores. "We want to be known as a very pet-friendly wine destination," says CEO John Cooper.

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