

# Make your tourism business dog friendly

A toolkit to help your tourism SME  
welcome visitors with dogs

# Make your tourism business dog friendly

**Did you know there are 10.1 million owned dogs in the UK? And that number is likely to grow thanks to a surge in puppy ownership during the coronavirus crisis.**

Did you also know about the post-Brexit requirement for owners to obtain a new animal health certificate (AHC) every time they visit the EU or Northern Ireland? It makes travelling overseas with a pooch far from hassle-free.

Throw in average dog boarding costs of £26+ per day and the fact that 67% of owners plan breaks around their dog and it all points to increasing demand for dog-friendly staycations.

This toolkit will help you fetch that Hound Pound by making your tourism business more appealing to dog owners.

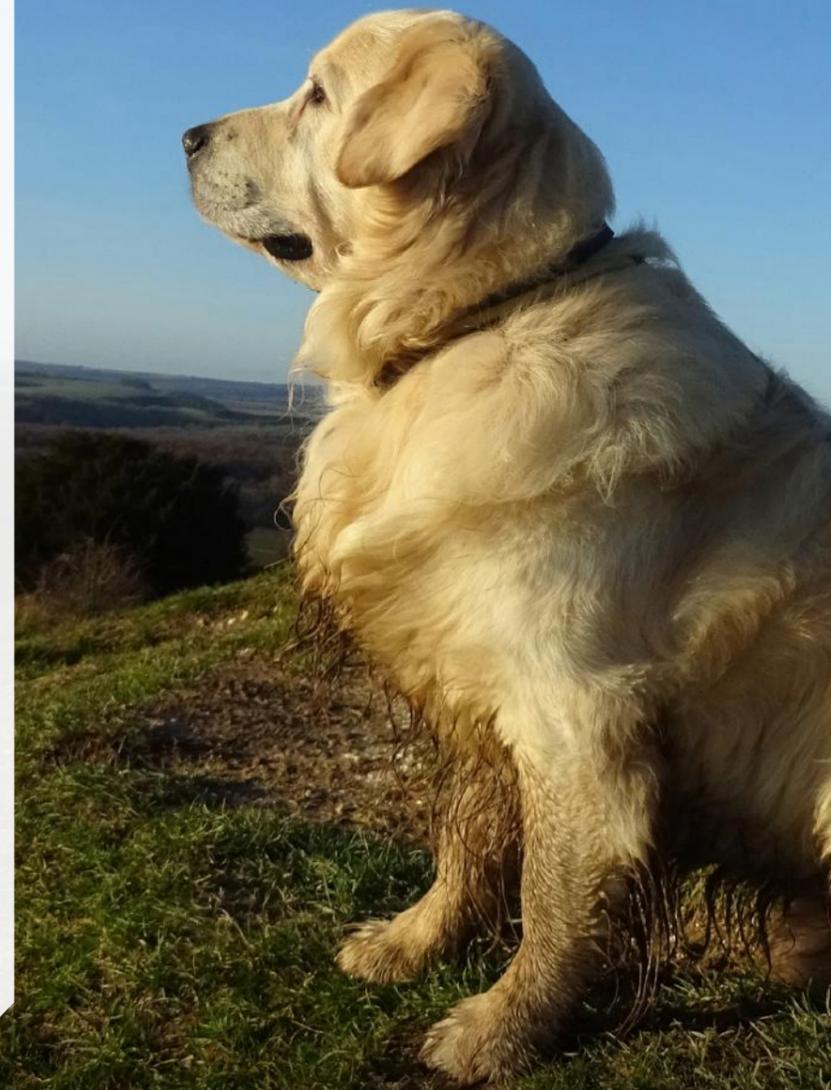
Being dog friendly can be as simple or as barking mad OTT as you choose. At the top end of dog-friendly establishments you'll find dog concierges, personalised water bowls, doggy spas, dedicated chefs and canine menus – and visitors willing to splash the cash on their doggy darlings. But you can easily set tails wagging by providing drinking water, a few treats, dog litter bins and an area for doggy exercise.

Get it right and you'll tap into a loyal network of dog owners that thrives on peer-to-peer recommendations and helps extend the main season; dogs need to be walked whatever the weather, after all.

Plus, dogs are an excellent ice breaker. By welcoming them to your business, you may find that your visitors chat with each other more, helping to generate an even more welcoming environment.

Before we go any further, let's establish the difference between dog friendly and pet friendly. Pet friendly means catering for many different types of pets, such as horses, reptiles, even ferrets. This toolkit is primarily designed to help your tourism business cater for dogs and their owners.

Tap into the Hound Pound by making your tourism business more appealing to dog owners.



DOG-FRIENDLY ATTRACTION



## Case study

Amberley Museum prides itself on its inclusivity, including four-legged visitors. The attraction was even voted the best dog-friendly day out in the UK.

Dogs have been part of the fabric of the museum for as long as anyone can remember, but part of the success of the attraction's dog-friendly approach is down to its willingness to respond to the needs of dog owners.

*"At one time we didn't allow dogs in the café, but this led to visitors complaining as they weren't able to visit the café and we didn't have any undercover seating areas outdoors, which wasn't ideal for rainy days,"* says Caymen O'Reilly, the museum's Marketing Officer. Now, dogs are welcomed with water bowls, free dog biscuits and wide-ranging access to areas including exhibitions, the train, buses and catering outlets.

The experience of people less fond of four-legged visitors is protected by the museum's insistence on only welcoming well-behaved dogs on a short lead.





24% of the UK population has a dog.<sup>1</sup>



83% feel guilty about leaving dog.<sup>2</sup>



56% said they choose to travel with their dog as they enjoy their holiday more.<sup>2</sup>



22% said they won't enjoy their holiday without their dog.<sup>2</sup>



42% of global pet owners agree that in the coming year they would choose holiday destinations based on whether they can take their pets.<sup>3</sup>



49% of global pet owners would be willing to pay more to stay at an accommodation that's pet-friendly.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report, Feb 2020

<sup>2</sup> Statista 2018 UK survey: dog owners behaviour regarding holiday travel 2018

<sup>3</sup> Booking.com predictions for 2020 travel trends

# Who's your audience?



As far as dog owners are concerned, a warm welcome for four-legged visitors is as important as it is for those on two feet.

You only need glance at the stats to see why the UK is known as a nation of animal lovers. Petplan's 2018 pet census revealed that 49% of UK pet owners believe their pet is a family member, 37% put their pet's needs above their own and 15% say their pet is the most important thing in their life, that money is no object and that they would do anything for their pet.

It's also worth noting that dog owners are about four times more likely to meet physical activity guidelines than other people – it must be all those walkies! Active facilities such as dedicated dog-walking maps featuring dog-friendly stops should go down well with your audience.



## Case study



### Dog-friendly accommodation

Dogs have long been welcome at The Goodwood Estate. They can enter the restaurants, join the Members' clubhouse, The Kennels, and stay at the hotel, where up to two small dogs are allowed in each of the seven dedicated dog-friendly rooms.

*"What sets our hotel apart for dog owners is the assurance of a warm welcome. All dog guests are provided with a comfy bed, dog bowl and delicious treats. We have a number of repeat guests who come back because we're so dog friendly,"* says Andrew Coggings, Goodwood's Entertaining and Hospitality Managing Director.





**HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT?**  
 Planning for furry visitors as you would for families?

## How to start

**Before you do anything else, check your insurance policy covers damage by domestic pets and establish how much you'll need to adjust your advertised rates to cover any extra costs such as deep cleaning, staff training, potential flea infestations, greater wear and tear and more-frequent redecorating.**

Then, address anything that could be considered a danger to dogs. Close off any sharp drops and potential escape routes. Make dog owners aware of any potential hazards in the local area such as

shoots and tick season, and move any poisonous plants out of Rover's reach. If you're making accommodation dog friendly, move breakables out of harm's way and, if applicable, install a dog-proof fence.

Take it up a notch with simple dog-friendly touches guaranteed to make dogs and their humans feel extra welcome, such as water bowls, free dog treats and towels to dry off wet pooches.

Dog-friendly accommodations could include a small doggy welcome hamper packed with a squeaky toy, treats and poop bags. You could go all out with personalised water

bowls, blankets and luxury dog food. Don't forget to clarify dog owners' responsibilities and add dog-specific information to your welcome pack. Local vets, doggy daycare centres and dog grooming services are essentials. Information about nearby dog-friendly beaches, attractions, pubs and great dog walks will be well-received too.

With all that in place, consider becoming listed by specialist dog-friendly days out and/or accommodation organisations. All of this should be done without disturbing the experience of dog-free visitors.

CLARITY IS KEY

## Top tips



Share your dog policy on your website. Guide dogs should be included in your Access Statement.



Clarify what type/size of dogs are welcome, where and when they're allowed and any extra costs.



If you don't allow all dogs, provide details of nearby kennels or dog sitters to help owners plan.



Many guests are happy to pay extra for dog-friendly options such as easy outdoor access or dog sitting.



Consider training staff on welcoming dogs, such as how to read canine body language and handle any dangerous situations.



There's demand for accommodation that allows multiple dogs, so if you have the space accept 2+ dogs.

# Marketing Magic



Hashtags are an effective, free way to help market your dog-friendly tourism business.

Once you're ready to welcome dogs, fill your social media channels with dog-friendly images and content. This will naturally involve pictures of cute dogs enjoying your business so generating engagement shouldn't be too hard!

To help get your message in front of new audiences, hone a list of dog-themed hashtags to use on Instagram, Twitter and any other hashtag-friendly social media platforms you're active on.

Save time by creating a library of relevant hashtags to choose from each time you post. Aim for a mix of niche, hyper-relevant hashtags, such as **#DogFriendlyWestSussex** and **#PawfectWestSussex**, with high-volume, popular hashtags, such as **#dogfriendly**, **#dogfriendlyaccommodation**, **#dogfriendlyuk** and **#tongueouttuesday**. If your audience is smaller, you'll gain more visibility by choosing smaller hashtags. But there's no set-in-stone rule. You'll need to experiment and find what works best for you!

If you're affiliated to any dog-friendly listings sites, include their handle to boost your chances of a re-post. You can also tap into the excitement generated by West Sussex's dog-focused events such as Goodwoof and Paws in the Park (**#PawsInThePark**).

## Find out more

- [Statista UK survey: Attitudes of dog owners towards holidaying and their pet in the United Kingdom \(UK\) in 2018](#)
- [Paws In The Park](#)
- [Goodwoof](#)
- [Dog-friendly attractions in West Sussex](#)