

Texans love their dogs.
Even better, they love yours, too.

BY RONA
DISTENFELD

Dog-friendly TEXAS

Instead of leaving Fido at home (or gasp, in a kennel), grab his leash and hit the road.

You could fill a book with all the Texas eateries, hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, parks, beaches and businesses that welcome well-behaved dogs, and the list keeps growing. Here's a sample to get travelers started.

METROPLEX MUTTS

From Dallas fashionistas' purse dogs to the cattle dogs of Fort Worth, the Metroplex is dog friendly.

Fort Woof, in Gateway Park near downtown Fort Worth, was voted the best dog park in the U.S. by Dog Fancy Magazine in 2007. Fences separate small-dog and big-dog areas, and pooches run on an agility course or explore water fountains and real (but nonfunctioning) fire hydrants. Visitors can also hike the trails along the Trinity River and around the Fort Worth Nature Center. Having worked up a thirst, Rover

Fort Woof in Fort Worth has real (nonworking) fire hydrants donated by the fire department.



RONA DISTENFELD

can hit Ye Olde Bull and Bush pub on Montgomery Street for a cold one (or a lukewarm one in the British tradition). Or diners can stop for one of the best burgers in Texas at the Love Shack.

Over in Dallas, Lee Harvey's is the place to go with pooch for its Dog Day Afternoons every Sunday starting at 1 p.m. A bartender there describes it as "a dog park with a bar." They also serve serious burgers and salads. Other days of the week, Breadwinners welcomes dogs on its patio. To jog off the burgers and beer, head to White Rock Dog Park on the north end of White Rock Lake. Big and small dogs have segregated, leash-free areas, plus there's a swimming area.

Does Fido need a trim? Or if plans call for some dog-free time, travelers can drop dogs off at Every Dog's Day in Frisco. This doggy day spa offers outdoor and indoor play areas, overnight rooms with real beds, gourmet baked treats, an indoor pool for hydrotherapy and lots of love from the staff. Before dogs are put in a group, the staff takes steps to make sure it will integrate well. If not, a separate play area is available. When picking up Fido, the spa provides a report card so owners can see how their dog behaved, making the experience fun and guilt-free.

For those staying in Frisco, the new loft Hotel provides pooches with their own beds and treats and welcomes them to its nightly happy hour. The city of Dallas' only AAA Five Diamond-rated hotel, the Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek, also welcomes dogs. So owners and pooches can stay in style.

CAPITOL CANINES

Laid-back Austin is a dog-lover's paradise. More than a dozen leash-free parks are scattered around the city, with the biggest on the south side of Ladybird Lake. Poop-pickup bag dispensers are conveniently located along the trail, and swimming in the lake is legal for dogs (but not for people). Kayak and canoe rentals are available at several places along the trail, and canoers can paddle upstream to one of the islands with their dog.

Austin has several restaurants with dog-friendly patios. Freddie's shady backyard on South First Street was

BEFORE YOU GO

one of the first. It has water bowls and a special doggy burger on its menu. Opal Devine's, Austin Java and Maria's Taco Xpress also welcome dogs—visitors shouldn't miss Maria's Gospel Brunch on Sundays. Owners and dogs can dance to great live music.

Owners can also treat pooches to live music at Threadgill's World Headquarters or go shopping along South Congress. Most stores and galleries on SoCo don't mind a four-legged browser. Austin's historical Driskill Hotel was voted the most pet-friendly hotel in America by Animal Fair magazine in 2008.

WATER DOGS, CHILI DOGS, ASTRO DOGS

Texas has 624 miles of coastline along the Gulf of Mexico. Dogs can play in the surf at Matagorda, Mustang Island or South Padre Island, where recreational vehicle hookups or tent camping right by the water are available. Or travelers can rent a Forever Houseboat on Lake Amistad and explore its many remote islands.

Prefer drier spaces? Visitors should head to Terlingua for the famous chili cook-offs the first weekend in No-

- **Every Dogs Day Canine Resort and Day Spa:** (972) 294-5477; www.everydogsdays.net
- **Fort Woof Gateway Park:** www.fortwoof.org
- **White Rock Dog Park:** (214) 670-5656; www.whiterockdogpark.com

vember. The CASI and Tolbert events are just down the road from each other on State Highway 170, and both allow leashed dogs to wander. Dog-lovers should be sure to stop at the Apache Trading Post in Alpine for a doggie treat.

In 2008, AAA named Houston "America's most pet-friendly city." Almost 50 percent of the hotels allow pets, and the Hotel Derek makes dogs VIPs with pets-only amenities (Cher stayed here with her cat). The Hotel Granduca offers treats and one complimentary walk per day.

Wherever dogs may roam, owners should remember to pick up after him or her. This helps ensure dogs remain welcome. Some hotels require vaccination records on check-in, and they're a good thing to have just in case a dog tangles with local wildlife or a poorly behaved pooch.

For trip-planning assistance, contact your AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel.

■ A frequent contributor to Home & Away, freelancer Rona Distenfeld and her cocker spaniel, Jesse, make their home in Austin, Texas.

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