

Travel



Five Places: Tattoo's permanent mark on fashion, decor and design **N2**

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND SFGATE.COM | Sunday, July 22, 2012 | Section N



Richard Stenger / Redwoods.info

Matt Lang and his dog, Dante, hike on a redwood trail in Eureka's Sequoia Park, which offers 67 magnificent acres of trees, meadows, ponds and creeks.

Road hounds' spots

Five of California's dog-friendly locales thrive on being fit for man and beast to stay (and heel)

By John Flinn

It's yappy hour in the cocktail lounge of Carmel's swanky Cypress Inn, and that's no typo.

Among the quietly mingling guests — I never heard any actual yapping — are Djinn-Djinn, a winsome Labradoodle; Newton, a hyperaware Border collie-Australian shepherd mix; Sadie, a life-of-the-party Chihuahua; and Tucker, my 12-year-old golden retriever.

It's just the kind of welcome we were looking for when we went in search of the most dog-friendly destinations in California. Our criteria: They had to have hotels and restaurants that did more than grudgingly accept pets — they had to roll out the red carpet for their four-legged guests. And they had to have lots of places — beaches, trails, tourist attractions — where dogs could romp off-leash.

Surfing, whale watching, gallery browsing, even canoeing — we found places in California where your dog can do it with you. Our picks for canine-friendly locales are on **Pages N4-N6**.



John Flinn / Special to The Chronicle

Above: Tucker inspects a "mutt-tini" during yappy hour at the Cypress Inn.

Below: Catch-a-Canoe in Mendocino rents wide-beamed canoes built to carry dogs.



- ▶ Familiar food, toys, bedding and other comforts from home will help Champ be more relaxed in new environments. Throw in a towel for wiping muddy paws. And remember, dogs can get carsick, too.
- ▶ To minimize canine-caused distractions on the road, make sure Frisky is safely secured in a crate or with a seat-belt leash or harness.
- ▶ Make sure your cherished bundle of fur has an ID tag that includes your cell phone number. Tuck a copy of shot records in your canine travel kit, and carry photos just in case.
- ▶ "Leave no trace" principles are not just for camping. Always, always pick up after your dog.

— Janet Fullwood, travel@sfgchronicle.com



Rick Hemmings / Special to The Chronicle

INFO TO GO

GEAR

Rick Steves Rolling Backpack

When it comes to roll-aboard luggage, cobblestone streets can be hell on wheels. So can stairs on the London Underground and third-floor walk-ups in the Latin Quarter. Rick Steves' new Rolling Backpack solves this dilemma with tuck-away shoulder straps that convert the roll-aboard to a rudimentary rucksack. I wouldn't carry it on an inn-to-inn walk in Tuscany, but it's comfortable enough to get you past an obstruction until you're rolling again. Like other Rick Steves luggage it's got a well-thought-out array of pockets and an admirable lack of troublesome frills and gewgaws. And it's built to take unspeakable abuse.

What we liked: The wheels are larger than those on Steves' 21-inch Roll-Aboard (my wife's go-to luggage for the last decade) for a smoother ride, and they're spaced far enough apart that they won't hit your hips. Well, my hips anyway.

Not so much: The bag is about 20 percent smaller than the 21-inch Roll-Aboard. It means you'll pass even the stingiest airline carry-on requirement, but you'll have to be a pack-light extremist to fit in everything for a two-week trip to Europe.

Vitals: Rolling Backpack, \$159.99 at www.ricksteves.com.
— John Flinn, travel@sfgate.com



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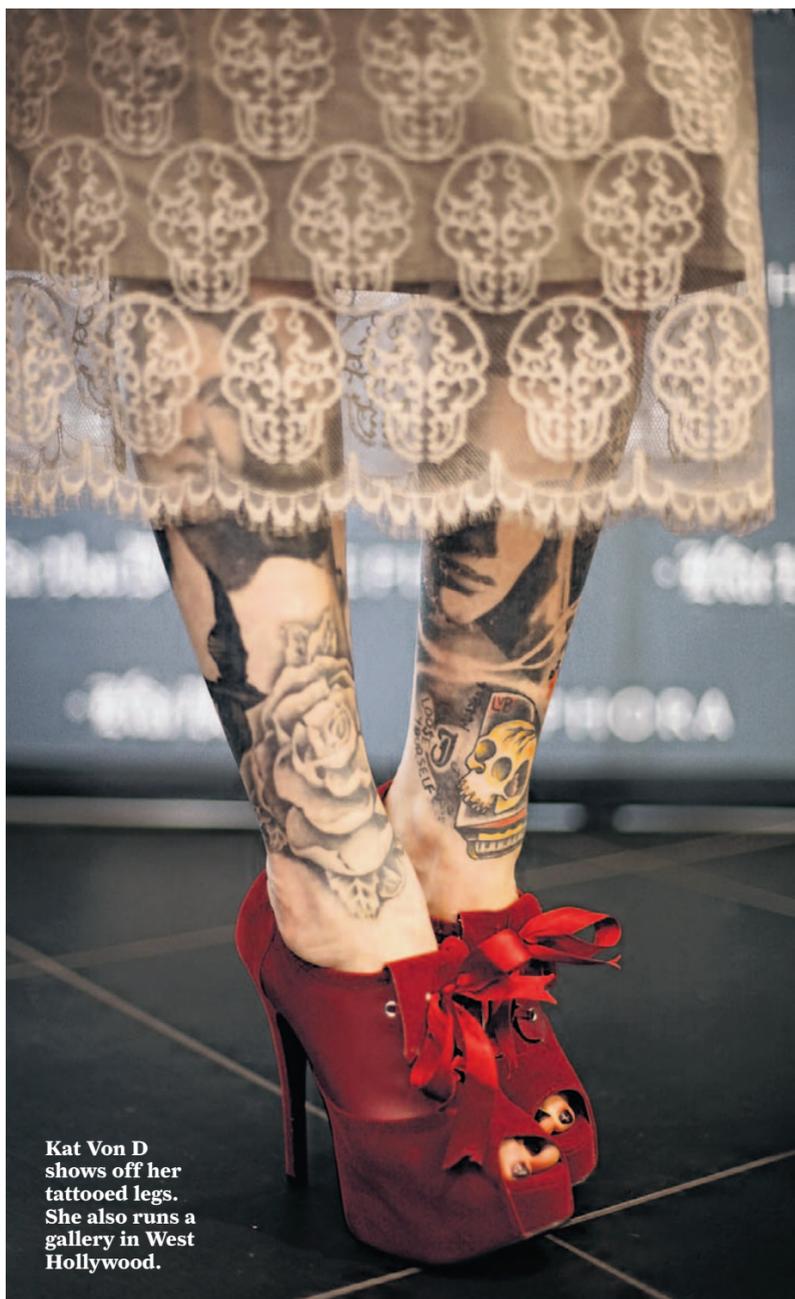
QUOTABLE TRAVELER

By Larry Habegger

“We are all tourists now, and there is no escape.”

— Paul Fussell (1924-2012), *American historian and author, from “Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars” (1980)*

FIVE PLACES



Kat Von D shows off her tattooed legs. She also runs a gallery in West Hollywood.

Jackie Butler / Getty Images

Celebrate living art of tattoos

Is it possible there are more tattoo studios than coffee shops? As diverse and interesting as the traditions that inspire them, tattoos have moved from Egyptian mummies, South Pacific tribes and the fringes of Western society to mainstream art and pop culture. These are sites that celebrate the high art of ink on a living canvas.

— Audrey Medina, travel@sfgate.com

1. King Ink, Mirage Resort & Casino, Las Vegas
Book an appointment with artist Mario Barth or one of his visiting artists. The world's first tattoo studio and nightclub combines events, fashion and a lounge filled with frescoes of Barth's work. Use the club's free computers and Wi-Fi to find just the right tat to add to your collection. (702) 369-9567, 3400 S. Las Vegas Blvd., www.kinginklasvegas.com.

2. Ink Eats and Drinks, Sacramento
Murals of flash tattoos on the walls and ceiling set the mood in this midtown bistro. Your ink will get you drink discounts on Tattoo Tuesday, but even the inkless will love the tastings, upscale comfort food and one of the best brunches in town. Open till 4 a.m. on the weekends, it's the place to go after the show. 2730 N St., (916) 456-2800, www.inkeats.com.

3. Triangle Tattoo & Museum, Fort Bragg
Let Madame Chinchilla or Mr. G turn your skin into art at this old-school shop. Upstairs, circus skin art, Maori tattoos from the 1800s, vintage ink machines, and loads of photos will give you a glimpse into tattoo history. Free admission. 356 B N. Main St., (707) 964-8814, www.triangletattoo.com.

4. Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu
Hawaii's tattoo traditions come from deep roots. Hand-tapped kakau, Polynesian and Japanese art, as well as the anchors and pin-up girls of Norman “Sailor Jerry” Collins continue to influence modern tattoos around the world. The Tattoo Honolulu exhibit features 10 of Hawaii's best contemporary artists, as well as historic tools, photos and drawings. The exhibit runs through Jan. 13. Admission is \$10. 900 S. Beretania St., (808) 532-8700, www.honoluluacademy.org.

5. Kat Von D's Wonderland Gallery, West Hollywood
Fans of TV's “L.A. Ink” will jump right through the looking glass in Kat's contemporary art gallery. Enjoy “Viva Vampira,” the gallery's current exhibit, and shop for Kat's designer fashions, books and gifts. Looking for an absinthe goblet or some zombie family car stickers? Look no further. It's right next door to High Voltage Tattoo at 1257 N. La Brea Ave., (323) 645-6920, www.wonderlandla.net.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

By Christopher Elliott

Airline promised a refund, but it never delivered

Q: I am having a problem with Virgin Atlantic Airways over a refund for two tickets I purchased last year. My husband and I planned to travel to England in August, but he had a serious stroke, and his doctor advised him not to travel for at least six months.

When I called Virgin and advised it that we could not travel at that time, I was told the ticket would be good for one year, and we could use it at any time that we were OK'd to fly. This seemed fair to me at the time because I fully expected my husband to recover and be able to travel.

Subsequently, my husband's physician advised him his progress was such that air travel was not an option in the foreseeable future.

I asked Virgin for a refund and was told I would get one within the next four to eight weeks. It did not happen. I have called and received no help. I have written to the company, but nothing has been done.

I would appreciate any help or suggestions you might be able to give me.

— LeEster Koranteng, Sanford, Fla.

A: If Virgin promised you a refund, you should get it. But did it?

When an airline says it will offer a refund on a nonrefundable ticket, it can mean you'll get all of your money back. Or it can mean that it intends to refund taxes and fees, but not the fare. Or, in your case, it can mean it intends to do nothing at all.

So, unless you specifically had a promise to refund the entire ticket — and preferably in writing — then this may have been a misunderstanding between you and Virgin Atlantic.

Then again, maybe not. Airlines sometimes waive their nonrefundability rules for medical reasons, but they must be severe. For example, broken limbs or temporary illnesses typically don't rise to that level, while chronic or terminal illnesses do. But I've seen airlines balk at refunding tickets to the relatives of

passengers who have died.

Seriously.

Documenting Virgin Atlantic's refund promise might have saved you a lot of hassle. You can do that by e-mailing the airline through its website and keeping the correspondence. Any assurances given to you by phone don't really count for much. Why? Because there's no evidence that a representative made those promises.

Still, you deserve a straight answer from the airline. If they're going to keep your money, they should tell you instead of stringing you along.

I contacted Virgin Atlantic on your behalf, and it refunded your husband's ticket. I wish him a speedy recovery.

Christopher Elliott is the ombudsman for National Geographic Traveler magazine. elliottc@gmail.com

JUST BACK FROM: KONA, HAWAII

Jeannine Stamatakis, Piedmont



I went because: My mom and I wanted to go on a girls' trip to Kona, Hawaii.

Don't miss: Kilauea Volcano — simply spectacular.

Don't bother: Taking too much time to sleep — there is so much to do.

Cooler souvenir: A plumeria necklace — quintessential Hawaiian jewelry.

Worth a splurge: Dining at the Kamuela Provision Company (Hilton at Waikoloa Village) and watching the sunset — absolutely delightful.

I wish I'd packed: I packed the right amount of clothing — I always need extra room to bring back gifts for family and friends, though.

Other comments: Make sure to visit the petroglyphs (lava rock carvings etched into stone by native Hawaiians centuries ago) and swim with the dolphins.

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INFO TO GO

GLOBETROTTER

By Jeanne Cooper

New activity

Angel Fire, N.M.: New Mexico's first zip line also offers the highest U.S. ride, atop the 10,600-foot summit of the Angel Fire Resort ski mountain, including a 1,600-foot-long zip 30 stories above the forest floor. Those not ready for such a Rocky Mountain high can opt for lower courses, or the expanded Bike Park. www.angelfireresort.com.



Angel Fire Resort

New attraction

London: In the competitive spirit of the Olympics, the London Eye has a new rival for aerial sight-seeing. The 377-foot-tall ArcelorMittal Orbit, right, a torch-like sculpture in red steel rising over the Olympic Stadium, will provide a new perspective on the city skyline when it opens later this week. www.arcelormittalorbit.com.



Visit England



Holiday

Oman: Capital city Muscat's signature blend of traditional Arabic and modern Western design largely reflects the interests and initiative of British-educated Sultan Qaboos bin Said, above. His ascension to the throne on July 23, 1970, is marked by an annual holiday known as Renaissance Day.

New hotel

Vietnam: Six years in the making, the new, 197-room InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort, below, offers ocean views from its hillside, rain-forest perch above a private bay. Michel Roux will become the country's first three-star Michelin chef when the resort's La Maison 1888 opens. Rates from \$255. www.ichotelsgroup.com.



InterContinental Hotels

DEPARTURES By Joshua Berman

Finding spirit of mariachi in hunt for the perfect suit

My heart sinks when I see the black gate in front of the window. "Lunes cerrado," says a hand-scrawled sign on the door of La Casa del Mariachi. Closed Mondays.

Everything I need is in the window display: the straight-cut pants adorned with silver *botonaduras*; matching *chuleco* (vest); the *chamarra* (short jacket); and the *moño*, a fluffy bow tie. These items together are called a "traje de charro," which loosely translates as "cowboy suit," and refers specifically to the outfit worn by the lead singer of a mariachi band. Sold separately and equally important: boots, belt, buckle and sombrero.

I have to return home to Colorado tomorrow morning. My mission — to go to East Los Angeles to buy an authentic *traje de charro* — looks bleak. I wonder if I should bail and go to Plaza Olvera, an important historical part of Los Angeles with a ton of touristy souvenir shops.

"Everything is 'Made in China' on Olvera Street," someone told me at a party last night. "Mariachi Plaza is the real deal."

That is where I am, at the corner of First Street and Boyle Avenue, the cradle of mariachi music in the United States, a

musical genre recently declared by UNESCO as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity."

I step into the plaza and look around. There are grand, music-themed murals of mustachioed men; a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe blessing a swirling stream of guitars; a bigger-than-life bronze of a twirling female dancer; and a smattering of tables with lounging, half-uniformed musicians, waiting for customers.

"Caballeros," I say, approaching a group of men. Gentlemen! Nobody stands or even one

paunchy man who is wearing black-and-silver pants, white shirt and a loosely tied *moño*.

"Maybe you can help me," I say. "I need a *traje de charro*, but the store is closed."

"Is the suit for you?" he asks.

"Yes," I say.

He is thinking. "I have some extra *trajes de charro* at home," he says.

"From the groups I used to play in. I can sell you one of those for much cheaper than the stores."

The man is built like a fireplug, thick and stocky. Just like me. He stands up, and I note his beefy shoulders and

expansive chest. Just like mine.

"Cesar Gutierrez," he says, extending his hand. We are the same height. "Josué," I say. "What color are the suits?"

"One is marine blue," he says. "Another is gray and green. Another is a light brown. I'll have to drive home to get them. Go to the *mercadito* for the hat," he advises. "It's on First Street, just past the cemetery. We'll meet here at 3:30."

Two hours later, in Mariachi Plaza, Cesar lays the suits across a table. The tan one is moth-eaten and the gray one is, well, gray. But the

blue suit is in excellent condition, and Cesar helps me put on the vest and jacket.

"Stand up straight," he orders. It could have been tailored just for me.

Cesar looks at me critically.

"It's good," he says.

"The pants are a little tight, but that's good."

"Is the jacket supposed to be this high?"

"Yes, man, of course," he says, "so the people can see your belt."

I pay Cesar cash, and he hands me a dark blue *moño*. "I wore that suit when I was in a group called Mariachi Sol de America. You can find them on YouTube," he says.

"What instrument do you play?" I ask.

"Guitarra y biguela," he says. As I begin to remove the jacket, Cesar puts his hand on my arm. "If you are going to remain in this barrio, you should keep the *traje* on."

That's the opposite advice I expect, a white *gabacho* from Colorado parading around East L.A. in a *traje de charro* seems like asking for trouble, but Cesar ex-

plains: "The thieves, *pandilleros* and gang-bangers, they'll leave you alone. They respect mariachis."

The next morning, as I board my flight to Denver and fuss with hanging my outfit and stowing my sombrero, a fellow passenger asks, "Are you a mariachi?"

I am a Spanish teacher in Boulder, Colo., for first through eighth grades, so I have a small repertoire of traditional Mexican and Latin American songs I can sing. I can shout a decent *grita*, the half-laugh/half-sob that mariachi crowds love. I have a mustache.

Still, I would never have labeled myself an actual mariachi. I've never owned a uniform, and besides, it felt like intruding a culture, instead of celebrating. Now, though, I can hear the *botonaduras* of my *charro* suit jingling as I close the latch on the hanging closet.

"Yes," I say. "Yes, I am." And I take my seat.

Joshua Berman is a freelance writer. E-mail: travel@sfgchronicle.com

READY, SET, GO By Christine Delsol

Hot enough for you? Try Oxnard

Oxnard promises to be next weekend's hottest destination, as its annual Salsa Festival cranks up the temperature with spicy food and blazing music. Celebrating salsa in all its permutations — food, music and dance — the two-day celebration is conveniently located near cool ocean breezes to ward off any chance of overheating. The Salsa Tasting Tent provides titillation for palates of any persuasion, mild to scorching, and the Festival Marketplace offers everything from gourmet salsas and other sauces to Mexican pottery, tropical clothing, potted plants and Latin American imports.



Michael Maloney / The Chronicle

Vitals: 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday and next Sunday. Free admission. Tasting Tent, \$5. Plaza Park, Fifth and B streets, Oxnard. (805) 247-0197. www.oxnardsalsafestival.com.

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Dog-friendly hotel in Jack London Square and the Oakland Waterfront 10 Washington St, Oakland, CA 94607 (510) 250-3719... call for reservations!

► **Namaste to North Lake Tahoe:** Top yoga instructors, live good-vibe music and incomparable Tahoe scenery converge at Squaw Valley's Wanderlust Festival. Set on the grounds of the Wanderlust Healing Sanctuary, the festival's yoga sessions and wellness programs are augmented by outdoor expeditions, a Wanderkind Kids Program, cooking demonstrations and a farm-to-table dinner, along with a full complement of food vendors and art installations. Wanderlust offers samples of local, organic and biodynamic vineyards and breweries. Thursday-next Sunday. \$99-\$475. (800) 403-0206. squaw.wanderlustfestival.com.

► **Vintage treasures in Moss Landing:** The quietly famous "junking" capital of California brings all its quirkiness to bear for the annual Moss Landing Antique Fair. The town's corps of permanent antique shops will be joined by hundreds of antique booths lining the streets with antique furniture and all manner of vintage items, from movie posters to art, glassware to books. A pancake breakfast kicks things off, and afternoon brings a fish fry, artichokes and a variety of street food. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. next Sunday. Free. Downtown Moss Landing. (831) 633-4501. www.mosslandingchamber.com.

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ROAD HOUNDS' SPOTS

Destinations cater to canines



John Flinn / Special to The Chronicle

Surfers mix it up with dogs on Orange County's Huntington Beach, which offers a wide selection of canine-friendly restaurants, hotels and attractions.

Huntington Beach: Dogs hang 20 in surf, then it's off to dine, sleep

There's more "bushy, bushy blond hair" than ever on this surf beach, but these days it's as likely to belong to a golden retriever as a surfer dude.

Huntington Beach's mile-long Dog Beach is the best of its kind in Southern California, a wide, inviting expanse of sand for off-leash romping and splashing in the surf.

This Orange County beach town works hard to promote itself as "Surf City, USA," but it's also a strong contender for "Dog City, USA," with a wide selection of canine-friendly restaurants, hotels and attractions. If you ever wanted to watch a dog surf, or to

train your dog to hang 20, this is the place.

Stay: The new Shorebreak Hotel boasts of 300-thread-count Frette linens, ocean views and romantic fire pits — but, truthfully, they had us at "no pet fee."

A Joie de Vivre luxury boutique property, the Shorebreak exudes a laid-back-yet-upscale vibe that could be called "surfer chic." It's near the Huntington Beach Pier, a mile from Dog Beach.

There's a bowl of dog treats at the desk, you can borrow a dog bed for free, and the hotel offers discounts on local pet-sitting services. Looking for more? Book the hotel's High Maintenance Bitch package, which

includes, among other things, a feather boa for your pet and a \$25 credit on the room-service doggie menu.

At the hotel's Zimzala Restaurant, which specializes in California comfort food, dogs are welcome to dine with their owners on the restaurant's outdoor patio. If he's been a good boy, order him some yogurt-dipped bacon strips from the Man's Best Friend menu.

Details: 500 Pacific Coast Highway, Huntington Beach, www.shorebreakhotel.com, (714) 861-4470. Rooms start at \$199. No pet fee.

A good budget alternative is the La Quinta Inn about 10 miles away at John Wayne Orange County Airport. Like most La Quintas, it charges no pet fee. 1515 South Coast Drive, Costa Mesa, www.lq.com, (714) 957-5841. Rooms start at \$79, breakfast included.

Eat: At the Park Bench Café, your dog can dine with you at umbrella-shaded tables set up on the grass at the edge of Huntington Beach Central Park, a 350-acre recreation complex 2 miles from the beach.

Waiters will bring a water bowl and a canine



Diane Edmonds / WavePics

Dog surfing lessons are offered July through September on the off-leash Dog Beach, and the Surf City Surf Dog competition runs Sept. 28 through 30.

cuisine menu that includes boneless chicken strips, bacon bits and, for dogs counting their carbs, lean ground turkey. Several California restaurants offer doggie menus, but the Park Bench Café is probably the first: It's been doing it since 1993.

For humans, there are enormous omelets and eggs Benedict for breakfast and brunch, and burgers and salads for lunch.

Details: 17732 Goldenwest Street, Huntington Beach; (714) 842-0775; parkbenchcafe.com. Open Tuesday through Sunday for breakfast and lunch. Cheeseburgers, \$9.25; chicken strips off the doggie menu, \$3.25.

Play: Huntington Beach's off-leash Dog

Beach stretches from Seapoint Avenue to Goldenwest Street. Get there early to grab one of the metered parking spots in the lots along the Pacifica Coast Highway (\$1.50 an hour); otherwise hunt for parking on side streets.

A 15-foot-high cliff protects the beach — you don't have to worry about your dog darting out onto the highway — but makes access a little tricky. Look for ramps at either end of the beach and a few improvised trails in between. Grab a couple of waste bags from one of the dispensers, and use them. Regulars here are fastidious about cleanliness. Don't be the guy who just kicks a little sand over the brown bombs.

If your pet wants to graduate from dog-paddling to shooting the curl, this is his chance. A group called Surf City Surf Dog will host private one-on-one surf lessons for dogs this summer in preparation for an end-of-the-summer dog festival that culminates in a canine surfing competition.

Surf City Surf Dog starts the evening of Sept. 28 with a doggie fashion show complete with red carpet, and concludes Sept. 30 with the Surf Dog Competition. Details, surfcitysurf.com.

Dog surf lessons offered in July, August and September. Owners are required to get wet. \$45. Inquiries, info@bookthatevent.com.

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ROAD HOUNDS' SPOTS



Photos by John Flinn / Special to The Chronicle

Beautiful McLeod Lake is a mile stroll from the end of the road in Mammoth.

Mammoth Lakes: Ample transit, trees for dogs and owners

Lake Tahoe is the obvious pick for an alpine doggie playground, but we're going with Mammoth Lakes for a couple of reasons: If Tahoe has any official off-leash beaches, we've never found them. And Mammoth really puts out the welcome mat for dogs.

In summer, dogs ride free on the gondola to the 11,053-foot summit of Mammoth Mountain. Ditto on local buses and on the shuttle to Red's Meadow and Devil's Postpile. (On the latter two, though, they're required to be muzzled.)

Mammoth is surrounded by national forest land, a dog's best friend when it comes to off-leash romping. From the mile-long stroll to fetching McLeod Lake to the only stretch of the John Muir Trail where dogs are allowed, this is paradise for four-legged hiking.

Mammoth might seem to be part of Southern California's sphere of influence, but in summer, with Tioga Pass open, it's only a 5½-hour drive from San Francisco.

Sleep: You can find dog-friendly lodging in every price range, from a Motel 6 to the swanky Westin Monache Resort. We stay at Tamarack

Lodge, a collection of Craftsman-style cabins on the shore of 8,600-foot-high Twin Lakes, a few miles out of town. Dogs are permitted only in the cabins, which, frankly, are a bit pricey for what you get. But we like the proximity to the lakes, and we have a selfish agenda: Tamarack's Lakefront Restaurant, which unfortunately does not permit dogs, is astoundingly good — worth-a-special-trip good. But the promise of a doggie bag and a hike-swim the next day assuages our guilt.

Go to www.tamaracklodge.com, (760) 934-2442. Cabins start at \$169. Pet fee, \$30 a night.

Other choices? Mammoth Lakes has at least 20 dog-friendly hotels. Details: mammothdogs.com.

Eat: Leftovers from Tamarack Lodge's Lakefront Restaurant are hard to beat. But for a more social experience try Roberto's Cafe, the area's most popular Mexican restaurant, where dogs can dine with their owners and enjoy the mountain views from the outdoor patio. Similarly, the Base Camp Cafe welcomes dogs on their terrace. For an apres-hike snack, stop by Tailwaggers

Bakery in town, where they bake dog cookies with everything from chicken livers to Mono Lake brine shrimp.

Roberto's Cafe, 271 Old Mammoth Road, Mammoth Lakes. www.robertoscafe.com, (760) 934-3667. Burritos, about \$9. Dinner entrees, \$11.29 to \$18.99.

Base Camp Cafe, 3325 Main St., Mammoth Lakes. www.basecampcafe.com, (760) 934-3900. Burgers, \$7.95.

Tailwaggers Bakery is located in the Sierra Center Mall on Old Mammoth Road. Details: www.mammothtailwaggers.com, (760) 924-3400. Dog cookies start at \$2.99.

Play: Ride with your dog on the gondola to the top of Mammoth Mountain (\$24 for humans; free for dogs) for one of the most sweeping views in California. Leashed dogs are permitted inside the interpretive center and cafe at the top. Hop on the shuttle to Red's Meadow (\$7 for humans, free for dogs) where you can access the 75-mile stretch of the John Muir Trail between Yosemite and Kings Canyon national parks, the only section of the trail where dogs are allowed. Or take your dog on a short hike to McLeod Lake in the Mammoth Lakes Basin.

Mammoth Mountain gondola, www.mammothmountain.com.

Red's Meadow/Devil's Postpile shuttle, sfg.ly/NNUKDn.



Mammoth Mountain provides one of the best 360-degree views in California, and dogs can ride for free on the gondola to the 11,053-foot summit.

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San Francisco Chronicle | SFGate.com

ROAD HOUNDS' SPOTS

Carmel: Town seems designed with dogs, devotees in mind

When Dog Fancy magazine went looking for the most dog-friendly small town in America, it chose Carmel as best of show. And for good reason: From Doris Day's cynophilic Cypress Inn to the town's dazzling white leash-free beach to galleries that hang paintings at dog's-eye level, everything about Carmel seems designed with dogs in mind. A good thing, too, because the town gets 50,000 canine visitors a year.

Walk down Ocean Avenue, the main street, and you'll see dispensers of dog waste bags on the corners, "hitching posts" for leashes outside shops, and big jars of dog treats on the counters of boutiques and galleries. A sign outside one shop summed it up nicely: "All Dogs Welcome."

Step into City Hall, and you'll spot an oil painting of Pal, the "town dog." It's been hanging there since Pal died 79 years ago. Pal is the only village resident ever buried within Carmel's 1-square-mile city limits. (Father Junipero Serra almost makes the list, but he was technically never a Carmel resident because the town wasn't incorporated until 132 years after his death.)

Sleep: The Cypress Inn is a great spot to encounter dog-loving celebrities. I never saw owner Doris Day (who rarely drops by these days) or Betty White, a frequent visitor,

but during yappy hour I found myself chatting with Barbara "I Dream of Jeannie" Eden, who told me she named her Labradoodle Djinn-Djinn after a dog she had on the show. "We come here two or three times a year," she said. "It's the only place we stay in Carmel, because of Djinn-Djinn."

The Old World-style hotel, built in 1929, rolls out the red carpet for canine guests, who are served "mutt-tinis" at yappy hour (a water bowl in the shape of a big martini glass with a tennis ball dyed to look like an olive) and specially prepared dog treats at afternoon tea. Dog owners — about a third of all guests — are issued dog beds, blankets and water bowls at check-in. The hotel has even installed a dog-themed brand of toilet in its rooms: Toto. Details: www.cypressinn.com, (800) 443-7443. Rooms start at \$188, including breakfast. Pet fee, \$30 per night.

Not quite what you had in mind? Carmel has 24 other dog-friendly hotels in all price ranges. www.carmelcalifornia.org/pet-friendly-inns

Eat: I was casually scanning the menu at the Forge in the Forest — the 8-ounce New York steak was tempting — when I noticed the words at the top: Canine Cuisine. The human menu was just as appealing, though, and I can attest that the odd-sounding Reuben egg rolls were improbably



Photos by John Flinn / Special to The Chronicle

The Rodrigue Studio in Carmel, on the west side of Dolores Street between Ocean Avenue and Seventh Street, features original "blue dog" paintings by popular Louisiana artist George Rodrigue.

tasty.

Forge in the Forest is regularly voted the best dog-friendly restaurant in Monterey County, and it's easy to see why. It has transformed its enclosed Oak Tree Patio into the 14-table Dog Pound, with its own entrance, shade in the summer and heat lamps in the winter. Canine guests are immediately brought a water bowl, sometimes even before their human companions get their water glasses filled. Located at Junipero and Fifth in Carmel. www.forgeintheforest.com, (831) 624-2233. Dinner and lunch entrees (for humans), \$7.50 to \$36.

More choices? Carmel boasts 24 restaurants where you can dine with your dog on outside patios and terraces. www.carmelcalifornia.org/pet-friendly-restaurants.



Deborah Karas divides an order of chicken strips from the Canine Cuisine menu at Forge in the Forest, which also has an appealing menu for humans.

Play: At the end of Ocean Avenue is the finest dog beach in Northern California. Wedged between Point Lobos and Pebble Beach — you're just a few feet from the 10th fairway — its white sand is so sugary it squeaks beneath your feet. It's shaded by cypress trees and lapped by aquamarine surf, and it's all off leash. Users are conscientious about cleaning up, and you should follow their lead.

If it's cool and foggy at the beach, as it often is on summer mornings, head inland to the Carmel Valley and 4,462-acre Garland Ranch Regional Park, where your dog can hike off-leash on trails through the oak-studded foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountains. Some trails even sport doggie drinking fountains. www.mprpd.org.

Mendocino: Inns, restaurants cater to pets and canoeing estuary is a real dog paddle

They serve animals in the restaurant at Mendocino's dog-friendly Stanford Inn, but they don't serve animals.

Uh, let's try that again: You can bring your pet into Ravens' restaurant, but you won't find any meat products on the all-vegan menu. "We love animals too much to eat them," said hotel owner Jeff Stanford.

With at least 20 pet-welcoming lodging options, the town of Mendocino makes a great base for sniffing around the wild Mendocino Coast. Your dog can go canoeing on a river, ride the Skunk Train through the redwoods, go whale watching, accompany you into tasting rooms, and scamper leash-free on a driftwood-tossed beach.

Stay: The Stanford Inn was first along the Mendocino Coast to welcome pets, and in many ways still leads the pack. Sixty to 70 percent of guests bring pets, and they're not all dogs. Iguanas, parrots, hairless Egyptian cats and baby pot-bellied pigs have also come for a visit. Dog owners get dog sheets, toys, water bowls and organic treats made out of sweet potatoes and yams by the hotel. Dogs under voice command have the run of the 10-acre grounds.

Details: www.stanfordinn.com, (800) 331-8884. In-room fireplaces, free Wi-Fi, refrigerators and microwaves in room, breakfast included. Rooms start at \$185, including breakfast. One-time pet fee, \$45.

Other options range from the Inn at Schoolhouse Creek, which is a short walk from a pri-



Stanford Inn

The Stanford Inn sets up tables in the lobby for guests to dine with their pets, and dogs under voice command can run freely on the 10-acre grounds.

vate, leash-free beach, to the Little River Inn, which has its own pet concierge. www.mendocino.com/dog-friendly.html

Eat: Stanford Inn's Ravens' is one of the few restaurants where your dog can join you indoors for a meal. They do this by setting up tables in the lobby, which apparently gets around the normal restrictions. The innovative vegan restaurant is part of the international slow-food movement, and the menu includes such specialties as sea palm and root vegetable strudel and hazelnut-almond-encrusted tempeh. Details: www.ravensrestaurant.com, (800) 331-8884, (707) 937-5615. Dinner entrees, \$16 to \$25.

Pet owners unwilling to amend their carnivorous habits have their choice of a dozen Mendocino restaurants with

dog-friendly outdoor patios, from Mendo Burgers to the landmark Café Beaujolais. Note that many outdoor patios are open in summer only.

Play: At Catch-a-Canoe, next door to the Stanford Inn, rent a canoe to explore the flat, sheltered water of the Big River estuary with your dog. For stability, choose an outrigger. A few miles up the coast, in Fort Bragg, your dog can romp off-leash at Noyo Harbor Beach, thanks to a partnership between the city and the Mendocino Coast Dog Owners Group. Dogs ride free on Fort Bragg's 127-year-old Skunk Train, which chuffs past mossy redwood canyons and Zen-like waterfalls. Your pet can accompany you on most of the whale-watching and fishing excursions offered by All Aboard Adventures, also in Fort

Bragg. Many wineries in the renowned Anderson Valley permit you to bring your pet into the tasting room; phone ahead to confirm.

Catch-a-Canoe: www.catchacanoe.com, (707) 937-0273. Adults, \$28 for up to three hours; children half price; dogs free.

Noyo Harbor Beach: From Highway 1, take North Harbor Drive, follow it to the end, and park below the Noyo Bridge.

Skunk Train: www.skunktrain.com, (707) 964-6371. The standard excursion runs from Fort Bragg to Northspur and takes four hours. Adults \$28; children \$24; dogs free. Check the website for other excursions.

All Aboard Adventures: www.allaboardadventures.com, (707) 964-1881. Whale-watching trips offered Dec. 26 through April 30. Two hours, \$35; dogs free.

Humboldt County: Redwoods, 6 beaches allow leash-free runs

If your dog has a certain affinity for trees — and what dog doesn't? — he'll certainly enjoy a fragrant stroll among the tallest in the world.

Humboldt County has one of the few places we know where you can let your dog scamper off-leash among redwoods. And while other regions boast of having a single off-leash dog beach, Humboldt has six of them — one of which awaits at the end of a dazzling, 5-mile coastal trail.

Go ahead and tie that red bandanna around your dog's neck: With its easygoing, back-to-the-earth vibe, Humboldt is one of the few places in America where it won't look ridiculous.

Sleep: For dog-friendly hotels in the Eureka-Arcata area, you're mostly looking at chain motels. The Quality Inn in Eureka's Old Town has no breed restrictions and doesn't charge a pet fee. Plus, it's close to Halvorsen Park on the waterfront, site of the annual Mutt Strut dog parade. Visit www.qualityinn.com/hotel-eureka-california-CA611, (707) 443-1601. Rooms start at \$90 a night; no pet fee.

Not your style? There are 14 others to choose from in Humboldt County. Details: humboldt.info/html/pet.html.

Eat: In Eureka's handsome Old Town district, Café Nooner has a Mediterranean-Cajun menu that includes everything from falafels and dolmas to po' boy sandwiches and "creole kabob" plates. Dogs are

welcomed on the outside patio.

Details: 409 Opera Alley, Eureka. www.cafenooner.net, (707) 443-4663. Open daily 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Meals, \$7-\$15.

Play: Dogs are permitted to roam off-leash on the first 3 miles of the walk into the Headwaters Forest Reserve, 6 miles southeast of Eureka. For a more casual, but on-leash, walk, head to Eureka's Sequoia Park, 67 acres of redwoods, meadows, ponds and creeks. Or try Arcata Community Forest, with its 2,134 acres of second-growth redwoods. North of Arcata, leashed dogs are allowed on the Hammond Coastal Trail, which follows an old rail line for 5 miles through coastal bluffs and meadows to off-leash Clam Beach in McKinleyville. Less-ambitious beachgoers can drive straight to the parking lot. Five other Humboldt beaches — Big Lagoon, Moonstone, Luffenholtz, Mad River County Park and Samoa Dunes Recreation Area — also allow dogs to run free within the wave slope.

For information on the Headwaters Forest, Sequoia Park, Arcata Community Forest, dog beaches and Hammond Coastal Trail, visit www.redwoods.info and use the search tool.

John Flinn is the former editor of Travel. He dedicates this story to his dog Tucker, who passed away while it was being researched. E-mail: travel@sfgate.com