

RENTALS

A DOG'S LIFE

Caroline Phillips and Daisy Finer find four places for the perfect canine staycation

HALES HALL, Norfolk

It's a haunting place, if not haunted. You can almost hear the Tudor hounds and patter of paws past. This is Hales Hall near Norwich, Norfolk, a drop-dead gorgeous medieval estate in formal gardens of topiary, box hedging and lavender avenues. It boasts nine acres of moated meadowland and buttercups with fairytale cottages and a Great Barn (perfect for parties) – offering overall accommodation for 25. The hall itself is a Grade I-listed masterpiece built by Sir James Hobart in the 1470s. Inside it's all impeccably tasteful and modern luxury – perfect for posh pets – with three reception rooms and seven double bedrooms, plus Vispring mattresses, piping hot rainfall showers and strong WiFi. It's so big – think 40-foot kitchen – that your hound can exercise inside, so forget putting him on a lead, take a SatNav and set off on a walk around the 8,267 sq/ft house to admire its mullion windows, copper pans and antiques. And roll-top baths, beams and flagstone floors. Then curl up on a sofa piled high with velvet cushions and watch man's best friend snooze by a crackling fire. It's tranquil enough to hear a doggie choc drop.

BOOK IT: Three nights exclusive hire, from £4,125. norfolkcottages.co.uk



HOUD HALL



DOGA BUNNIES

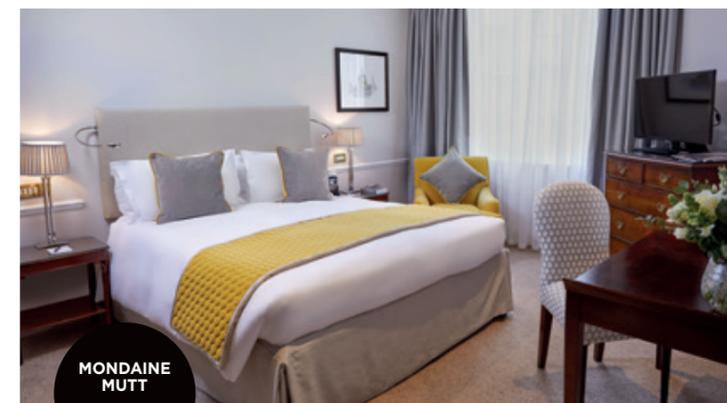


RADISSON COLLECTION ROYAL MILE EDINBURGH, Scotland

This Scottish boutique hotel has decor so daring – restaurant with fuchsia tables and zany rainbow columns – that you'll want to wear shades. The hotel has contemporary suites, mixologists and staff in kilt, plus a dogs-OK-in-the-restaurant policy and handmade edible pooch treats in the bedroom. It's set in Edinburgh's Old Town with The Writers' Museum a few strides away, and just seconds from the café where JK Rowling penned her early Potter. (Staff turn a blind eye to Fido being left behind in your room, unless he's howling.) Bag the Strathmore suite with its wraparound views of Arthur's Seat – a steep and dog-friendly hill best enjoyed at sunset – then chill while a walker runs your four-legged darling around the nearby Meadows for £25 per hour. You can even do Doga here – a yoga class to enjoy with your pooch,

excellent for bonding and downward-facing dogs. Finish with a tail-wagging party: up to three hounds are permitted to kip with you.

BOOK IT: Doubles from £209 B&B. The pet package is £50 per pet per stay and includes housekeeping services, dog bed, dog bowl, treats and a soft toy. radissoncollection.com/en/royalmile-hotel-edinburgh



MONDAINE MUTT



DUKES HOTEL, London

Tucked away in a tiny alleyway off St James's Mayfair, this might not be an obvious hotel to bring your pup to. After all, Dukes dates back to 1908 and this elegant, classically English townhouse hotel remains one of the most traditional places to stay in London. The still legendary bar is where author Ian Fleming coined one of Bond's most famous phrases: 'Shaken, not stirred'; the martinis here are killer. But Dukes has always stayed up to speed, and has recently undergone a bells and whistles makeover, including the GBR restaurant in all its freshness, and – best yet – you can now bring four-legged friends for a sleepover in the big smoke. It's an adventure from the start: a luxury dog bed with comfy cushions, chewy treats to gnaw on, recommended walks, even a special doggy shampoo and in-room dining menu. If your dog is the needy type there are dog sitters available – though imagine the fun of walking around this area with your pooch. It seems like everybody wants to talk to you and Dukes will even pack you up the most perfect picnic to have in Hyde Park.

BOOK IT: Doubles from £320 B&B. Dogs from £25 a night. dukeshotel.com

THE GALLIVANT, East Sussex

Great for a houndmoon, The Gallivant is a hip motel across the road from Camber Sands beach. 'Eat, sleep, beach', as the brochure puts it. The rooms have a homely coastal vibe with muted colours and bathtubs (but no mutt washing, please, requests a sign) in the bedroom. There are goose down pillows and a king-size bed for master, and doggie shampoo and a takeaway drinking bowl for Lassie. Plus five miles of sandy beach and dunes for exercising furry creatures (although only in designated zones between 1 May and 30 September). The restaurant serves modern British food – such as pork cheek croquettes – while smiley reception staff take care of your pampered pet. A range of relaxing treatments – using natural, ethical products – is on offer in their Beach Hut, but no doggy grooming. The hotel – blissfully near Rye with its cobbled streets, antique shops and Tudor houses – is a magnet for birthday celebrants, anniversary couples and dogs.

BOOK IT: Doubles from £95. thegallivant.co.uk



BEACH BITCHES



HOUNDS FOR HIRE

If you don't have a dog to take on a staycation, sign up for Borrowmydoggy.com. It's the ultimate site for borrowing – and lending – urban pooches. Premium membership (£44.99 a year) costs less than a sack of dog food and gives access to a wagtastic community and veterinary advice. Or you can join for free, with fewer benefits. Its staff offer a helping paw to potential borrowers and also give tips to owners on marketing their hound to wannabe walkers.