

Lap of Luxury for Dogs

Take a peek inside one posh dog boarding kennel.

Andrea Bravo

Photos courtesy PetSmart.com A warmly lit fireplace crackles in the corner. Soft music and luxurious leather chairs invite visitors into the main lobby. A woman sits snugly in one of the oversized chairs waiting for a guest to finish the final check-out procedures. Her face lights up as she sees her friend approach from behind the glass exit doors. Her beloved Saint Bernard, Derby, has just had another magnificent stay at a PetSmart PetsHotel, one of many new luxury boarding options opening up around the country.

Here, associates wait on their guests hand and paw, making sure that each pet experiences the ultimate in canine comfort. And Derby, one of the hotel's regular clients, has earned a little celebrity status since he helped cut the red ribbon at the November grand opening of this Southern California location.

The hotel offers two room options for dogs, an atrium room and a suite. While the atrium rooms let their canine guests cuddle up with lambskin blankets, the more discriminating dog owner might splurge on a private suite for their pet, complete with a Poochy Cot and TV tuned to pet-themed shows.

Room service delivers specialty treats daily, including lactose-free, fat-free ice cream with doggie biscuits. And supervised group playtime with Doggie Daycare gives your dog a chance to mingle with other canine guests.

When it comes to mealtime, such a pampered pooch can't be satisfied by kibble alone. Some guests are served filet mignon and homemade biscuits in addition to the gourmet treats already provided. A computerized tracking system allows PetsHotel associates to monitor special feeding requests such as "must have three rubs on her belly before dinner," as well as how well guests sleep and how many times they do their business.

Separation anxiety? No problem, you can call anytime to "speak" with your dog at the PetsHotel Bone Booth, built especially for owners who just have to hear what a great time their pets are having during their stay.

Amenities like these are raising the bar in pet boarding facilities. Luxury services mimic those offered at five-star hotels for people. Some pet owners will pay a little extra to ensure that their dog stays just as pampered while away from home. So, next time you decide to board your pet, ask yourself, does the facility offer free ice cream and 24-hour TV?