

Hotel Pennsylvania Goes the Extra Mile

The facility caters to visitors in town for the Westminster Dog Show.

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During the days and weeks leading up to the annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at New York's Madison Square Garden every year, many nearby hotels turn dog friendly in order to attract visitors in town for the show.

But the Hotel Pennsylvania's all-out efforts to go the extra mile to attract dog owners have earned it the reputation as the "official unofficial" hotel for people and their pets in town for the show.

Westminster, one of the most prestigious and well-known of national dog shows, is the second-oldest continuous sporting event in the United States, after the Kentucky Derby. This year's event took place Feb. 12 and 13, at Madison Square Garden, right across the street from the Hotel Pennsylvania.

And the hotel, over the past five or six years, has gradually added more dog-friendly amenities, including a live feed in the hotel lobby so that the media can interview show participants, plus a doggie spa and even special restrooms for male and female dogs.

"We love dogs," hotel spokesman Jerry Grymek said. "We're New York's fourth-largest hotel and are pet friendly year-round. And we accept pets of all sizes, which makes us somewhat unique."

A special feature this year is a commemorative postcard for guests. The card features an image of the hotel, with the words "131st Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show February 2007" emblazoned across the front of the hotel in bold capital letters.

But the most visually striking thing about the postcards, which are given out during check-in, is the three giant dog illustrations – at least seven stories high each – surrounding the hotel.

Grymek, who also serves as the hotel's "doggie concierge" during the dog show, said the hotel starts gearing up for the event weeks ahead of time.

"Planning begins early in the year. It literally begins right after the holidays, in January. After the holidays, it's dog season," he said.

Because Hotel Pennsylvania welcomes dogs year-round, the staff are already adept at service elements of non-human guests, such as dog waste clean-up.

"We have no problems with that (dog shedding, waste, etc.). But again, these are show dogs, so they're usually well trained," Grymek said.

In addition to mastering the dog-care basics, Hotel Pennsylvania has gone the extra mile in a variety of other ways to provide onsite activities and amenities to coincide with the show. Among them: The hotel has converted its lower lobby ballrooms into an indoor doggie spa for show participants. Among the amenities offered: a bathing/beauty parlor/salon, an exercise area, a walking area and even his and hers relieving areas. There's also a "Dog-tor's Corner," which includes a veterinarian, canine masseuse and an animal psychic. A hotel doggie concierge, who attends to all canine requirements, such as handling interviews and special doggie food orders, and a "Paw Mall." A live pre-show broadcast satellite feed on Feb. 9 from the hotel's main lobby with participants of the Westminster Dog Show. The pre-show feed, set up in association with the Westminster Kennel Club, was to give media outlets around the country an opportunity to interview participants from their local television market. A pre-Westminster benefit fashion show and live auction on Feb. 10 in the 18th floor ballroom, with proceeds going to the Animal Cancer Foundation. The fashion show featured gown and tuxedo designs for dogs.

"It's all about the guests – four-legged and two-legged," Grymek said. "We've become hand-in-hand with Westminster."