

Roadside Dog Travel Adventures

Four doggie detours that are uniquely American.

Sally Deneen

When we're on the road, we try to hit the spots that you would call Americana — places uniquely American. And since my husband and I usually have a dog in tow, we're often on the lookout for a canine leg stretch.

Countless times we've called places ahead of time to ask: Do you permit dogs? You'd be surprised by some of the desirable destinations that say yes.

A presidential pooch

Our German Shepherd Dog mix Maggie posed for a photo by spreading out on the cool stone slab at the foot of a statue of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Scottish Terrier Fala at the FDR Memorial and the only major monument dogs can visit in the nation's capital. Her mouth cracked into a smile during this stop on an autumn family road trip.

Once rested, Maggie loved padding down the rest of the dramatic, two-mile-long, tree-lined green space known as the National Mall, marked by the Washington Monument at one end and the Capitol at the other. Pausing beneath one of the nearly 2,300 elms, the history pulsated around us. Just imagine — here, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. It's the location of the Million Man March. The Million Mom March. And on and on. (202) 426-6841; www.nps.gov/nama

Maggie's reaction was less hifalutin. Her favorite part: plopping down on poofy piles of autumn leaves. Her least favorite part: Dogs are forbidden at all monuments, save for FDR's. But she was thrilled just to walk around gawking at passersby and horse-drawn carriages.

'See Rock City'

It's hard to remember how many times, driving around the South, we saw that white-on-black sign on a barn or birdhouse: "See Rock City." What could be more Roadside America?

So when we were relocating from South Florida to Michigan one year, my husband and I caved in and did as the signs beckoned. The dog-friendly Rock City Gardens tourist attraction sits atop that fabled Civil War battlefield, Lookout Mountain, six miles outside Chattanooga, Tenn. Maggie, the trouper, crossed a swinging rope-and-plank bridge found along the three-quarter-mile, self-guided trail. The highlight of the stop, Lover's Leap, offers breathtaking views, and according to Southern lore, you can see seven states. The trail narrows in some places, such as "Fat Man's Squeeze," but Maggie sashayed between the slabs of rock with no problem.

Our lasting image is that of the three of us in one of many goofy picture spots scattered around the park, our heads peeking through cut-out holes in a wishing-well scene. (800) 854-0675; www.seerockcity.com

The end of the road

Once back in South Florida, we hit the end of the road. Literally. We went to dog-friendly Key West and "The Southernmost Point, Continental U.S.A." A giant red-striped, buoy-shaped monument marks the spot farthest south in the mainland United States. A nearby sign reads: "90 Miles to Cuba." Maggie? Blasé. She far preferred sitting at our feet at pet-friendly outdoor cafés and seeking attention from tourists jammed into Mallory Square, where, each day at sunset, street performers wow crowds with circus tricks.

Painted trails

During our move from South Florida to Seattle, a Maggie favorite was Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona. It's a 200-mile drive from the nearest big city, Albuquerque. So by the time we got to The Painted Desert, as it's also known, Maggie happily leapt from the car to sniff crystallized logs that resembled boulders covered with melted crayons. Unlike most national parks, this one lets leashed dogs explore several short trails — seven miles in all. Maggie sniffed a crumbled ancient pueblo. In the distance, the striped pastel landscapes resembled giant melting sundaes. But it was July, and it was hot. Maggie couldn't wait to jump back into the air-conditioned car and head out to find our next stop. (928) 524-6228; www.nps.gov/pefo

Sally Deneen is a DOG FANCY contributing editor. She is co-author of *The Dog Lover's Companion to Florida* (Avalon



Travel Publishing, 2005) with her husband, Robert McClure.