

## Dog-Friendly Cleveland Exposed

**The Ohio hangout you didn't know was dog-friendly.**

*Robin Whitsell*

"You're kidding," my friend laughed.

"Nope, we leave tomorrow," I replied. My family and I were traveling from warm North Carolina with our yellow Labrador Retriever, Foster, to Cleveland for a family visit — in December.

"It's a big city. It's freezing. With Foster, there's nothing for you to do!" my friend said.

She was right — Cleveland is big and it was chilly. But she wasn't entirely right. Cleveland offers hiking trails, dog parks, galleries, shopping, and an amazing arboretum. My family and Foster enjoyed them all. And now that spring has sprung, Cleveland is more welcoming than ever to you and your dog.

### Great outdoors

Rain or shine, my family of four humans and a yellow Lab is more content outdoors. Luckily, Cleveland has The Holden Arboretum. With more than 20 miles of hiking trails, Holden lets us romp with our pup past gorgeous plant displays and lush ponds. The grounds of the 75-year-old arboretum, including all the gardens except a shallow-rooted wildflower area, are open to leashed dogs. Foster enjoyed the smells of the surrounding flora and wildlife, expressing an overly-enthusiastic interest in the geese. In the fall, Holden will be the new location for the Geauga Humane Society Rescue Village's annual Woofstock event. The staff predict that more than 800 dogs will be joining the fun this year with pet-friendly activities, live music, and plenty of places to hike and explore while raising money and awareness for pets in need of homes. (440) 946-4400; [www.holdenarb.org](http://www.holdenarb.org)

For hiking, biking, bird watching, or just wearing out a yellow Lab puppy, Cleveland Metroparks and Lake Metroparks offer a series of parks spanning almost 30,000 acres that inspire even the biggest couch potato to get moving. For our sake, we were happy to tromp with Foster on a trail that we shared with some fragrant pine trees, tall grasses, and a few cheeky birds. (216) 635-3200; [www.clemetparks.com](http://www.clemetparks.com); (800) 227-7275; <http://lakemetroparks.com>

### Play n' wash

Being a puppy, Foster has more energy than my other family members, so post-hikes he was still eager for more. With more than eight local dog parks — some featuring wheelchair access — we hit the South Euclid Dog Park while my husband and children napped. Foster frolicked off leash with four other happy dogs until he was more chocolate-colored than yellow. (216) 621-6888; [www.clevelanddogparks.com](http://www.clevelanddogparks.com)

With my seriously dirty Lab, the only reasonable next stop was a dog wash. I tried Cleveland's U Dirty Dog do-it-yourself dog wash. Using a yummy treat purchased at Just Dogs! Gourmet — a dog bakery conveniently located in the same building — I lured Foster up a ramp and into a wash basin where I scrubbed him until his yellow coat returned. After a towel-off and blow-dry he was ready for more Cleveland adventure. (440) 442-9637; [www.uddog.com](http://www.uddog.com)

### Shop around

My family needed a break from hiking, so we planned a shopping excursion. A 30-minute jaunt from downtown Cleveland, Chagrin Falls features boutiques, furniture shops, galleries, and gorgeous waterfalls. Many merchants have "Dogs Welcome" signs with treats and water bowls outside their shops. We stopped in Paw Prints pet bakery to pick up some special treats for Foster. Lucky dog! (440) 247-3611

The next day, a still-clean Foster strutted his stuff in Shaker Square, the oldest shopping area in Ohio, with high-end stores, art galleries, restaurants, and Breeds Apart, a grooming spa and pet boutique. There, Foster was greeted with treats and cuddles while I shopped for dog toys, designer leashes, and dog sweaters, and watched gorgeously coiffed pooches and their owners come and go. (216) 295-2725; [www.breedsapart.com](http://www.breedsapart.com)

### Creative paws

On our last stop, we paid a visit to Gallery 222, a Cleveland-area gallery and an extension of the nonprofit Art on Wheels program that brings art projects to people with disabilities, kids in schools, and the elderly in nursing homes. In response to public encouragement, Gallery 222 has a pet-friendly mandate, so Foster was not only invited into the gallery, he was



given some water amid the artistic bowls for sale and invited to attend an art festival featuring doggie painting (using non-toxic substances like jelly and peanut butter smeared on paws), a food-safe ceramic dog bowl-making workshop for owners, and pet massage. (216) 731-3199; [www.aowinc.com/gallery222.html](http://www.aowinc.com/gallery222.html)

Pet-friendly Cleveland offered the best of city life and country life for my rambunctious yellow Lab — shopping, hiking, bird-sighting, frolicking, and even a place to clean up. Foster was worn out! And in our house, a tired dog is a good dog.

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