

Come! Sit! Stay!

Reviews of pet-friendly accommodation within reach of the Sydney area.

Neudorf Country Retreat Millfield Hunter Valley

For city slickers, the opportunity to get out of the city for a well deserved country break is made all the more enjoyable if you can pack up the fur-kids - or in our case, the fur and feather children - and stay in a location that welcomes pets without compromising on comfort. We set off for our leisurely drive up to the Hunter Valley with our canine reviewer happily secured into the back seat for the promise of a weekend of country air, gastronomic activity and wine tasting.



We found Neudorf Country Retreat through the net and decided that this looked like a promising getaway spot. Our hosts Regina and Neil mailed us the easy to follow map of the property once booking and payment had been confirmed. They live in Sydney and built the cottage with the view that discerning folk would like a holiday location that was pet friendly, allowing pets inside the cottage.



On our arrival six kangaroos feasting on native grasses greeted us. Two hopped away as we drove through the gate and the other four hung around until they sniffed eau-de dogue. Our canine companion immediately set off for an exploratory run through the vast grounds to check out the sounds and sights. Judging from her nose pinned to the ground, there were a myriad of country smells. The house is set on a hill so as the sun slipped away it provided us with a changing view of the valley. As dusk arrived, some melodious frogs in the pond facing the house, and other local nightlife replaced the bird songs.



After some downtime, reading on the comfy lounge, we headed to Pokolbin to the Peppers Guest House to dine at Chez Pok. As Neudorf's house rules are firm about not allowing dogs unattended in the cottage, we packed our pooch in the car where she slept happily until our return. It was a chilly night and I eyed the bed with apprehension - was I going to be warm enough? My chilly anxiety was quickly allayed - the doona was welcomingly fluffy, comfy and cosy. Electric blankets are on both beds but we didn't need them.

The morning sun streaming into the cottage and the dog whining to get outside broke our country-air-induced coma. The air also develops a healthy appetite so we headed off for a hearty breakfast. A picturesque recommendation would be at Café Enzo situated at Peppers Creek, Broke Road. They're open from 10:00 to 2:00 for breakfast and lunch and serve large quantities of quality food. We've been there a number of times but recently, local council enforcement means pets at six metres from the tables.

After breakfast there was thirsty work to do - wine tasting. On Broke Road you can find Kulkunbulla Brokenback Estate, which has a veranda for tastings. If your dog is under control and well behaved they won't have an objection if you bring them along but it's recommended you ask politely first. You can sample their Cabernet Merlot, Shiraz & incredible Chardonnays.

We headed off to Margan Family Winegrowers, situated at 266 Hermitage Road for more wine tasting followed by lunch at their café Belltree that is open seven days from 10:00 until 5:00. They have a shaded outdoor dining area where you can settle in for a long lunch including Mediterranean inspired salads, seafood risotto and scampi. Dogs can be tied up outside the restaurant within view. It was a short drive back to the cottage for more reading and napping.



Locals recommended Shakey Tables restaurant for dinner at The Hunter Country Club, Rothbury. With vibrant paintings adorning the walls and clever lighting, the funky ambience doesn't overshadow the top-notch nosh. It's a fair drive from the cottage but well worth the trip as the menu is innovative. Sadly, vegetarian options are limited. The wine list is extensive and their sommelier can advise the appropriate match to your meal with an emphasis on local boutique producers.

Neudorf Country Retreat affords guests the perfect, private weekend. It's spacious enough for a family or for two couples. It has a large combined lounge, kitchen and dining area and two spacious bedrooms with queen sized beds. It was built about two and half years ago and although being very modern in its amenities, the owners have included a rustic decorating touch to the cottage, which adds to the charm and comfort. There's a sparkling bathroom with separate shower and bath and the fluffiest of towels. All linen is supplied along with kitchen utensils so you only need to bring your provisions for the weekend.

The sunny veranda is a great location to read and relax while listening to songs of bellbirds and kookaburras. A selection of CDs, books and board games is on hand and there's a TV if you just can't live without it. A combustion stove adds to the cosy feel and for more country ambience you can turn off the lights and enjoy the bright starry evenings. Situated in Millfield, close to Wollombi and Mount View, the many great wineries, galleries and restaurants of the Hunter region are just a short drive from the house.

House rules:

- Pets are allowed inside the house & your hosts ask that your furred ones not be allowed on the furniture.
- If leaving the property please do not leave pets inside unattended.
- Bring suitable bedding for your pets.
- Bring a couple of towels in case your pooch decides to plunge into the dam. The lux towels are for use on humans not animals!
- Dogs inside at night or restrained outside to protect wildlife.
- Pick up your pet droppings.

Neudorf Country Retreat
Millfield
ph: 9560 4686
e: gina_neil@bigpond.com
w: www.neudorf.com.au

Chez Pok @ Peppers Guest House
Pokolbin
ph: 4993 8999

Café Enzo @ Peppers Creek
Pokolbin
ph: 4998 7233

Shakey Tables @ Hunter Country Lodge
North Rothbury
ph: 4938 1744
w: www.shakeytables.com.au

Kulkunbulla Brokenback Estate
Pokolbin
ph: 4998 7140

Margan Family Winegrowers & Café Belltree
Pokolbin
ph: 6574 7004

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened"
Anatole France

We review pet-friendly properties without notifying the management, pay our own bill and do not solicit or trade advertising leverage for reviews. Each edition, we will be reviewing a pet-friendly accommodation near Sydney--within a three hour drive--and one within Sydney's boundaries.

The Hughenden Paddington, Sydney

Just a hop, skip and sashay from the shopping and café hub of Oxford Street, Paddington is the historic Victorian boutique hotel, The Hughenden. The hotel, built 1870, caters to those wanting four-star accommodation with the city in easy reach.

We arrived to a warm welcome from reception staff who efficiently showed us through the parking procedures, breakfast and dining options for our stay then directed us to our 'pet friendly' accommodation. On booking, the hotel staff note the name of your pet/s and run through the accommodation options available. They have two pet friendly rooms available—one Queen and one King. Our room was well appointed with a comfy Queen size bed, bathroom and atrium that lead to a small covered courtyard. Pets are allowed inside the rooms as long as you're there to supervise them. If you leave without your pet you're required to have them contained within the tiled atrium area and ensure the main door to the bedroom remains shut.

The pet reviewers - our dali, Jerri and guest parrot Widget - immediately set about making themselves comfortable and acquainted with their holiday accommodation. Our parrot, amused himself by answering the whistles of workmen in the neighbouring property, whilst our dog reclined on her balcony watching all manner of pedestrian traffic. We amused ourselves by working through the Saturday papers and generally relaxing.

Grumbling tummies heralded the time for lunch so we leashed the dog, locked up the parrot and took a leisurely stroll down leafy Queen Street, past the boutiques, art and antique dealers. We decided on Zigolini's Restaurant, about two blocks down Queen Street. They're licensed and byo and do breakfast until noon and 4:00pm weekdays and weekends respectively. The restaurant has daily lunch specials ranging from salads, pasta and risotto. Outside tables can accommodate well behaved dogs and their owners. A couple of doors down is Nostimo Café, which can also take diners and their dogs at their sidewalk café.

We set about walking off our lunch by shopping and stopping into the many interesting shops and galleries in the general area. There's Churchills the local butcher, Jones the Grocer for upmarket people treats and Pain de Arte for breads and coffee. Then it was time for more reading, relaxing, parrot play and snoozing into the late afternoon.

If some well deserved pampering is on your agenda, you can book into 'Your Sanctuary Day Spa' which is conveniently located across Oxford Street. They specialise in luxury facials and body treatments and have more traditional treatments like waxing, pedicures and manicures. They offer a range of pampering packages including the 'Chocolate Obsession' which consists of a body polish, body wrap, hydrotherapy bath and massage—all with chocolate and coconut smelling ingredients. If you're getting some polishing and pampering, then why not include your four legged companion as well. Planet Pooch in Randwick can organise a pick-up service from the Hughenden and have her/him delivered back to you in time for afternoon tea. \$60 plus the \$18 pick-up/drop-off fee includes 2 washes, a flea rinse, nail clip and ear clean. You should plan any pampering well in advance as both the human and doggy day spa's appointment books fill up fast.

There are a seemingly endless range of dining options in this area so for dinner you'll just be limited to which restaurants have a reservation available to you. We decided to take an educated punt and tried the Four In Hand Restaurant on Sutherland Street in Paddington rather than our usual haunts of Lucio's, Bistro Moncur, Buzo and Claudes. Don't let the rather noisy



pub of the same name put you off-it's filled with a young and raucous crowd happy to yell above each other, mobile phones and the sport on the large screens. Thankfully the restaurant is behind and is a quieter affair. The wine list is large, the menu small and prices are reasonable. The style is French Provincial and they deliver dishes full of flavour like prosciutto wrapped cod, spiced lamb and a tomato and goat's cheese soufflé.

Back at the hotel we checked on the sleeping dog and dozy parrot and settled in for a good night's sleep. Apart from some city traffic noise, the only other disturbance was a frisky possum thumping on to our roof and calling for a mate (no doubt a visitor from Centennial Park) in the early hours of the morning.

A full breakfast at the Hughenden is included and you can have Continental and/or cooked options. Both the dog and the parrot were able to sit with us in the courtyard area of their restaurant, Quaife's. Widget greeted other guests with his rather posh version of 'hello' and took the opportunity to answer another diner's mobile phone ring with his own version much to the delight of a family seated close by. He also embarrassingly requested pasta when our waiter arrived to take our orders. He was, however, content to settle for chopped fruit and Burcher muesli.

The Hughenden Hotel rates highly as a charming, inner city pet friendly location. It's quaint and comfortable, the hotel and restaurant staff are helpful and can advise on the many attractions, dining and shopping options. Centennial Park is a block away for doggie exercise times and toilet breaks. Prices start from \$188 for a queen pet friendly room and includes breakfast for two. There is a cleaning fee of \$50 for these rooms whether you stay 1 night or ten.

House rules:

- Pets allowed in the pet friendly rooms when accompanied by human guest. Pets to remain in the closed pet atrium when left alone.
- Pick up all pet droppings immediately.
- Bring your pets water and food dishes and bedding



The Hughenden Hotel

14 Queen Street
Woollahra
ph: 9362 0398
freecall: 1800 642 432
email: admin@hughendenhotel.com.au
web: www.hughenden.com.au

Four In Hand Bistro

105 Sutherland Street
Paddington
ph: 9362 1999

Nostimo Café

113 Queen Street
Woollahra
ph: 9362 4277

Zigolini's Restaurant

107 Queen Street
Woollahra
ph: 9326 2337

Your Sanctuary Day Spa

495 Oxford Street
Paddington
ph: 9360 5000
web: www.your Sanctuary.com.au

Planet Pooch

29 Clovelly Road
Randwick
ph: 9399 8284

Jones The Grocer

68 Moncur Street
Woollahra
ph: 9362 1222



SUPERCOAT ISN'T JUST SUPER NATURAL, IT'S SUPER TAILORED TO YOU



People ask me what should I feed my dog? And my answer's always the same. Feed 'em Supercoat. Supercoat tailors their nutrition to your dog's changing needs, from pup to pooch. It's made from tasty real meat and enriched with all natural anti-oxidants and Omega 3 & 6 to make your dog super healthy and super happy.



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