

Rover R&R

Make it a weekend in St. Augustine without leaving your best friend behind. By Nancy Moreland

For more information, visit floridashistoriccoast.com. Type "pet friendly" in the search bar.

YOUR FIRST CLUE THAT ST. AUGUSTINE HAS gone to the dogs? It's not watching them frolic on the wide white sand beaches. It's not the plentiful pet-friendly hotels and restaurants. The tipping point is the Tour de Chocolate. On this tasting tour through time, you learn that the first ship bearing chocolate to the New World docked in St. Augustine. You also discover that—contrary to popular opinion—dogs and chocolate aren't mutually exclusive. While dogs don't sample the sweets, "Travelers can bring their four-legged family members on any of our tours," says Isabelle Miranda, coordinator for City Walks Tour St. Augustine.

In its 448-year history, St. Augustine has embraced many cultural trends; pet-friendly tourism is the latest. "America is becoming more like Europe in accepting dogs in public places, says retired tour guide and dog-lover Alice Sutherland. "St. Augustine is on the forefront of that trend. It's a walking city, and dogs and walking go hand in hand."

With numerous hotels and outdoor cafés accepting dogs and a historic downtown that is best explored on foot, the Oldest City is a dog lover's dream destination. Here,

museum employees dole out dog biscuits. A scenic boat tour welcomes pets aboard. The Fountain of Youth invites human and canine visitors to sample its legendary waters. As long as your dog is leashed and well-behaved, he basically has the keys to the city.

Here's a glimpse into St. Augustine's pet-friendly scene.



HISTORY ON THE GO

One of the best ways to understand St. Augustine history is to walk through it. Upon arrival, you and Fido can stretch your legs and your knowledge on Tour St. Augustine's Plaza Stroll, a compact, yet comprehensive overview of city history. To cover more ground,

hop on an iconic Country Carriage horse and buggy ride. Next, stroll along colonial-era St. George Street to the Oldest Wooden Schoolhouse. After learning about 18th-century education, enjoy recess in the garden while your pet munches on complimentary dog biscuits. Travelers with dogs can also explore all of the exhibits and enjoy both of the restaurants in the recently revamped Colonial Quarter. The living history museum is a two-acre time machine traveling through three centuries of settlement.

CHOW TIME

Dogs have a reputation for always thinking about their next meal, but tourists are likewise tempted when contemplating St. Augustine's savory restaurants. The city's plentiful alfresco eateries expand your pet-friendly dining options. Even upscale establishments like Old City House Inn and Restaurant accommodate diners and lodgers with dogs. Just call ahead to reserve a courtyard table or pet-friendly room. While you swoon over the ahi tuna, your dog relishes his own side dish and water bowl, courtesy of owner Juan Solano. Another option is the pet-friendly patio at The Floridian, a local favorite for farm-to-table fare.

BEACH: CYCLE HERE MEDIA; BALCONY: STACY SATHER



After dinner, relax on the spacious grounds surrounding Castillo de San Marcos. Dogs are not permitted inside the fort, but the lawn overlooking Matanzas Bay is a pleasant place to watch sailboats drift by.

DOG DAY AFTERNOON

Speaking of boats, St. Augustine's beauty is best appreciated from the water. The St. Augustine Scenic Cruise offers excellent views of the city, fort and lighthouse. If you're lucky, dolphins might swim alongside.



TOUR: STACY SATHER; BOAT: PET FRIENDLY BOAT TOUR

Got a terrier to tire out before heading to the hotel? Run, swim and play on the beach (all beaches in St. Johns County are dog-friendly as long as your pet is on a leash). If sand and sun aren't your thing, visit the Fountain of Youth Archeological Park. Its shady environs feature 16th-century boatworks, a Timucuan Indian Village and other historical exhibits. You'll get the most from your visit with the guided tour, but take time to walk along the pier for beautiful views.

LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE

There's no shortage of pet-friendly places to stay around town. St. Augustine Beach House, in nearby Vilano Beach, is among the friendliest. Innkeeper Dylan Cadwalader furnishes water bowls, treats, pet waste-bag stations and pet beds. His \$15 pet fee, regardless of how many pets you bring along, is one of the town's most reasonable. Like a concierge for canines, Cadwalader can recommend dog-friendly restaurants and attractions, too.

OTHER PET-FRIENDLY CITIES

Flagler Beach

When a beach town promotes surfing and paddle boarding with your dog, it's begging to be explored. Flagler Beach has dog-friendly beaches, parks, restaurants and hotels like Si Como No Inn. From October 10-13, the beachy Bohemian inn offers a people and pets retreat, with yoga and massage for you and your pooch. palmcoastandtheflaglerbeaches.com

Mount Dora

The Lake County city is loyal to dog lovers, with pet-friendly inns, shops, dog parks and two monthly events celebrating canines: Yappy Hour and Paws for Mount Dora. whattodoinmtdora.com

Indian Harbour Beach

Indian Harbour Beach offers the only dog-friendly beach in Brevard County. Canova Beach Park includes a pavilion, grill, picnic shelter, restrooms and outside showers. With close proximity to Indialantic, Satellite Beach and Cocoa you will find a variety of pet-friendly dining and lodging options. brevardcounty.us and search "dog friendly."

Pet Blessing

Visit St. Augustine in early October, and you can participate in Cathedral Basilica's annual pet blessing. Confirm this year's date by emailing cathparish@gmail.com

ASK THE VET

Q: Are vitamins or supplements necessary for pets?

A: Most research reveals that if your pet is on a high-quality commercial diet there is no need for additional supplementation. Trust your veterinarian to recommend such a diet. However, there are certain instances such as kidney or cardiac disease, or orthopedic conditions that require specific dietary restrictions. Your vet can discuss these and make recommendations for your pet's specific needs.

Dr. Taj O'Sullivan
Animal Medical Clinic of Orlando

Q: What should I do now that my pet has been diagnosed with cancer?

A: While many animal cancers are not curable, they are treatable and a good quality of life can be achieved in many patients. Once your veterinarian has made a diagnosis, a consultation with a veterinary oncologist can help you clarify how treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiation are applied in animal cancer therapy. Veterinary oncology, like its human counterpart, is a rapidly evolving field with many exciting new diagnostic and therapeutic tools coming to the fore, including tumor-specific vaccine therapy, targeted antibody therapy and bone marrow transplants. Even if therapy is not pursued the knowledge that you have explored the options will help bring closure in knowing the best decision has been made with the best information available.

Dr. David Lurie
Affiliated Veterinary Specialists

Q: Is too much catnip dangerous for my cat?

A: Only about half of cats are sensitive to catnip, and researchers aren't sure of the neurological explanation for their reaction. Cats affected by it can be silly, extra active or rub against everything. Some cats that get aggressive around catnip can bite or scratch if an owner gets too close. It should be avoided for these felines as well as cats prone to seizures. Catnip can cross the placental barrier and although it has not been proven to harm the fetus, it may be wise to avoid in pregnant cats. Catnip should be used in moderation: Ingesting too much may cause gastrointestinal upset.

Dr. Anne Scholl Mealey
Chickasaw Trail Animal Hospital