

VERMONT'S PAW HOUSE INN

A resort for dogs and their humans

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This year, our ski vacation went to the dogs — or, more accurately, to a Jack Russell terrier named Quimby. The cute canine found its way into our plans when our son, David, called to say that he and his girlfriend, Gabriela, wanted to come from Chicago to ski with us during their week off. The couple had become so attached to the rescue dog they had recently adopted that they couldn't think of leaving him with a sitter or in a kennel. Would it be possible to find a place that not only tolerated pups but also offered doggie day care?

We all did some online sleuthing. In the vicinity of Killington, Vt., roads led to the Paw House Inn.



You want me to go where? Quimby ponders the options at the Paw House Inn, a hostelry with doggie day care.

While humans are out skiing, golfing, hiking or dining, pups are quartered in a cheerfully decorated temperature-controlled building furnished with 4-by-8-foot dog runs and a TV monitor continuously tuned to Animal Planet. During the day, with permission, the dogs are taken out and walked, exercised and played with and, if owners agree, given a chance to socialize with other canines. There is no extra charge for dog-related services.

After reservations had been made, David and Gaby were e-mailed a form to fill out about Quimby, whose papers and vaccination records would accompany him. We learned that the week we were coming, the owners would be out of town, leaving the inn in the care of two very capable young women.

At home in the doghouse

We were the first to arrive at the Paw House, a homey place decorated in a comfortable mix of antiques and dog-related artifacts. As it turned out, our family would be the only guests much of that week. My husband and I stayed in the Rin Tin Tin room, decorated with memorabilia depicting the onetime canine film star. David and Gaby were in the room called Spot. Like all the inn's accommodations (interestingly, off limits to children younger than 12), it was equipped with a doggie bed.

Shortly after everyone had arrived, Bethany, one of the caretakers, conducted a tour of the facilities and explained the rules. Owners were responsible for cleaning up after their pets, using the receptacles outside,

and would have to pay for any damage done by them. We were all impressed with the nursery-school-like ambience of Mario's Playhouse, named for one of the owners' two Labrador retrievers (Shakespeare is the other, and the resident golden retriever is Brooklyn.)

As welcoming as the building

looked, neither David nor Gaby wanted to abandon Quimby after such a long car ride, so we opted to order pizza from a recommended local place. It was surprisingly New York-quality.

Breakfast the next day was served on ceramic plates, each decorated with a picture of a different breed of dog. For the next

four days, we would be greeted by a different two-course morning meal that began with either a home-baked muffin or a fruit concoction followed by such dishes as individual Cheddar and apple frittata, blueberry-nut and cream French toast, banana Belgian waffles with sausages, and pancakes with bacon.

Because of uncooperative weather, we skied Killington only one day. While we were on the slopes, Quimby was taken on a romp on the park-like property, joined by retrievers Mario, Shakespeare and Brooklyn.

We returned from the mountain to find a written report of Quimby's activities, posted on a little slate that hung outside his quarters. He had been a very good boy.

IF YOU GO

While a number of inns and hotels allow pets (check out www.petswelcome.com, bringyourpet.com, takeyourpet.com and dogfriendly.com), not many cater to them. If you're willing to sniff around, though, you can find more. Here's a sampling:

Paw House Inn, 1376 Clarendon Ave., West Rutland, Vt. (1-866-729-4687); pawhouseinn.com, pawhouse.com; week-end doubles start at \$165 a night.

The Lazy Dog Inn, Chocorua, N.H. (888-323-8350, lazydoginn.com) near Black Mountain, Attitash and Bretton Woods ski areas and right by Mount Chocorua, has seven guest rooms, all of which accommodate dogs. While owners are out, pups can stay in a doggie lodge, where they receive day care. There's also an enclosed play area. Doubles start at \$120. Nearby summer activities include hiking, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, shopping and antiques.

At the Inn by the Sea in Cape Elizabeth, Maine (800-858-4287, innbythesea.com), pets are greeted with a welcome letter and treats; they also get their own goodies at turndown every night. A special doggie menu includes house-made biscuits. Pet-sitting and grooming are available for a fee. Two-night Dog Days Pet Packages start at \$349, depending on the season.

— JOAN REMINICK



Looking good, dog. A table setting at the Paw House Inn.

Sit, stay, rest

A driving rainstorm kept us indoors the next day. We contented ourselves playing board games in front of the wood-burning stove in the parlor. Included in the inn's collection was Dogopoly, a dog-centric version of Monopoly. It was an unusually laid-back and relaxing few hours.

On our last full day in Vermont, ski conditions were sketchy, so we drove first to the town of Woodstock, where we poked about the shops. Then, we headed farther East to Quechee, where we enjoyed a spectacular lunch at Simon Pearce, a combination restaurant, glass-blowing workshop and retail store in an old mill perched over the Ottauquechee River. The big news when we got back to the Paw House was the arrival of two women and their three pugs.

Perhaps this didn't turn out to be the ski trip we had envisioned, but we did get to learn how sweet it can be, on a rainy afternoon, to watch a happy dog chase its own tail.