

Pet-Friendly in the Kawarthas

Posted November 9, 2015 by Diana Ballon in Ontario

0



Viamede Resort is a favourite with people and pets. (Diana Ballon/Vacay.ca)

Story by Diana Ballon

Vacay.ca Writer

PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO — A resort holiday usually means stealthily heading out the door with our suitcases —leaving our dog Juno lying gloomily on her day bed in the corner of the living room with her sitter. I tell the kids to avoid any conversation of swimming or beaches or leisurely hikes through the forest until we're gone.

Blame it on canine prejudice, I've always told them. But over the years, this is becoming less of a problem. Resorts —and even five-star hotels—are now accommodating our four-legged friends, and even when there's a cleaning fee to do so, it's way cheaper than the \$50 a day you would pay in the city for a dog sitter.

In the Kawarthas, about a 1.5 hour drive northeast of Toronto near Peterborough, you'll find several great pet-friendly options for your next holiday. Here are a sampling of three.

At Viamede Resort on Stoney Lake, where we recently spent a weekend, our check-in included raiding the cookie jar on the front desk—dog cookies, that is—and getting a complimentary red and black polka-dotted kerchief for Juno (which looked stunning against her ebony black hair). We were then shown to our cottage—one of 18 on

property—most with lakeside view, and a second row set just back from the others— all dog-friendly.

Although normally Viamede's off-leash privileges are confined to Maggie's Ruffreation Zone (a half-acre fenced-in area with picnic tables), Toby's Waterin' Hole (their own doggie swim area) and about six kilometres of hiking trails, it's a quietish late-September weekend, and the dogs are free to roam. Our visit comes on the heels of the annual Golden Rescue picnic held on property, so Juno is looking decidedly dark against a half dozen golden retrievers who have booked in for an overnight after the festivities. (The celebrations included a mock wedding between two of the goldens at a small chapel on site: Laya was dressed for the occasion with a veil and garter— and Oakley had on a tie.

It's collective good times here on the beach. Our kids slide off the inflatable iceberg off shore, while Juno, a beagleman and two retrievers chase sticks, a toy poodle stares on from the comfort of her mother's lap, and a couple discretely sip vodka coolers.

That night, we head to The Boathouse, Viamede's more casual restaurant, which overlooks the water, and offers everything from steak to Southern chicken and pub food. After a full-on afternoon, Juno is contented to curl up in the cottage (the resort provides dog bed and bowls on loan), while we are out dining.

The Weather Network Full Forecast

Peterborough, ON

Current Weather

0°C
Clear

Fri Night

-1°C
Variable cloudiness

city name



Juno the dog is making new friend at Viamede Resort. (Diana Ballon/Vacay.ca)

The next day, a romp through some back trails begins with a visit to Viamede's farm, with quail, pigs, ducks, chickens and turkeys—which are being fattened up in time for Thanksgiving. Seventeen turkeys run free, much to our shock and to Juno's—who is fortunately on lead. My husband's eyes grow wide in alarm, as all 17 proceed full steam ahead toward Juno, who he is now holding by two hands on a taut line. I laugh hysterically, as the recreation supervisor Michelle herds them back with her arms, while the kids stand uncertainly, not sure whether to join mum's bemusement or dad's panic.

Fortunately, Michelle saves the day, and peace is restored. Later, heading back to our cottage, the turkeys are now caged, and travelling is easy! Our last night, we get the dinner basket, so we are able to cook a delicious all-prepared meal of trout, ribs, potatoes over the BBQ on our verandah, accompanied by the Caesar salad, and smores in our fireplace.

* * * * *

At Lake Edge Cottages (www.lakeedge.com) on nearby Katchewanooka Lake, pets are clearly considered part of the family. Since opening 18 years ago, the property has been pet-friendly. All eight one- and two-bedroom cottages allow dogs, for a nominal fee of \$10 per night. And with cottages given names like “Hush Puppy” and “Lucky Dog,” you know that the canine experience is not just an after thought.

Although there isn't a restaurant on site, there are several good options in Young's Point a few minutes drive away, or in Lakefield, which is about a five-minute drive from the property. The cottage can also be stocked with beer, wine and breakfast foods, as needed, if you opt for their Starter package.

Of course, it's otherwise BYOB: that means not just bring your own bottle, but your dog bowl as well. The canines are free to romp on its 12.4 acres of walking trails, and to join the family in the kayak, rowboat or canoe, if that's what you choose. Off leash is permissible, if dogs are under control. But the hot tubs on the decks of most winterized cottages are not recommended for canines.



More Canadian resorts are allowing pets. (Diana Ballon/Vacay.ca)

Pam Fischer, who owns Lake Edge Cottages with her husband Peter, says dog ashes have been scattered all over the property from loyal guests who return once their animals have passed.

“We've had a lot of good doggie guests over the years,” Pam says.

* * * * *

Elmhirst's Resort (elmhirst.ca), on the north shore of Rice Lake, is owned and operated by three generations of family who live and work on the property, making the place feel like a home they are proud to share with guests rather than a for-profit business. While you are there, you may meet owner Peter Elmhirst on the horse drawn wagon, giving a sustainability tour while he drives. Or you could encounter his son Greg, who is the general manager, hosting a wine tour in their swanky underground wine cellar, his wife Martina doing a tui na (deep tissue Chinese-style) massage at the spa, their children Ryder and Nadiya offering tours of the hen house – or Peter's other son Stephen giving an introduction to kite boarding or kite surfing lesson.

Kids, grown ups and dogs are all welcome here: 40 per cent of their cottages are pet-friendly (for a nominal cost of \$20 per stay), and include loan of a dog blanket and bowls.

Many come to Elmhirst's for their famous Sunday brunch in the main dining room overlooking the lake, which includes Angus beef, bred and raised on their farm. But there are also some inventive packages here for longer stays. Particularly popular is the two-night mid-week couch potato package, which includes breakfast and dinner and can have you relaxing by the fire with a movie, or getting off the couch to explore six to eight kilometres of trails on site, going for a bike ride around the lake (it's 100 kms on paved road) or along the Lang-Hastings Trans Canada trail, or working out at their fitness centre.

Chances are, your pet will prefer you getting off the couch than on. But regardless, when you're at a pet friendly resort, you can spend your holiday together.