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Fido's Kind of Town

Chicago and all that Fido-loving jazz.

by Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell

The moment that I walked into the Palmer House Hilton, located in Chicago's loop, I felt as if I had walked into something very special, not just for the human guests, but also for the four-legged ones.

Immediately upon my arrival, I saw several people with dogs, and nothing makes me smile more when traveling away from my own four dogs than seeing some others who are able to travel with their people.

I was on a mission while in Chicago, to find my maternal family's roots, and being in the Palmer House put me in the mood for some history. The Palmer House Hilton dates back, almost to the day, to the Chicago fire in 1871. The hotel, which was built by Potter Palmer for his bride, was completed just 13 days before the historic fire, and unfortunately, was destroyed.

The hotel was rebuilt immediately and then expanded in the 1920s. The results of the hotel's recent extensive (\$170 million) renovation are stunning. The hotel oozes of the Victorian era, from the stunning gilded columns in the lobby to the marble.

I inquired about the pet policy, which is very liberal. "We've long been recognized as a pet-friendly hotel," said Ken Price, who works in media relations. "We want to be hospitable to all family members, and that includes the four-legged ones."

After meeting with a few staff members at the hotel, I realized that their welcoming pet policy isn't just lip service. Many members of the staff have pets at home (who sometimes visit the hotel), and their empathy for the pet-loving traveler is genuine.

The hotel has held Doggy Tea Parties, which have been very popular with guests.



"WE WANT TO BE HOSPITABLE TO ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, AND THAT INCLUDES THE FOUR-LEGGED ONES."

Palmer House hotel guest, Macy, a two-year-old chocolate, English Labrador retriever is visited in her owner's suite by Todd Temperly, Hotel McInagar, and Wendy Romero of the hotel's Executive Committee. The Palmer House was among the first hotels in America to be pet-friendly.

However, the pet policy isn't limited to canine family members. Some of the more famous pet guests at the hotel include the three Budweiser penguins and the AFLAC duck.

Upon arrival, guests are asked to sign a standard pet agreement. Like many other hotels, the Palmer House asks that pet parents not leave their pets unattended in their rooms without being crated. The pet fee is \$75 (non-refundable), and up to two pets of no more than 75 pounds are allowed.

Dogs are given use of food and water bowls, a pet bed and a free Palmer House Hilton pet tag as a souvenir.

One of the best pet features connected with the Palmer House Hilton is that the hotel is just around the corner and up a few blocks from Millennium Park, where Fido can get some grass time. This is the perfect amenity for families wanting to stay in the middle of the city with their four-legged companions.

As well, dogs are allowed leashed at Navy Pier, on the boat rides and on carriage rides through the city. Pets that are not service animals are not allowed on public transportation, but Chicago is such a walkable city and The Palmer House Hilton is so centrally located, that this should not be an issue. *The Palmer House Hilton, 17 East Monroe Street, Chicago, IL; (312) 726-7500; www.hilton.com/thepalmerhouse.*