



HOLIDAY WITH YOUR HOUND

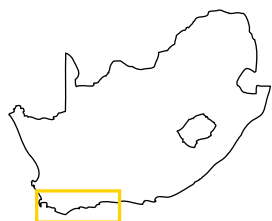
It's hard to leave the dogs at home when you go on holiday, but it's also difficult to take them along because most places aren't pet-friendly. Undeterred, we loaded up two hounds and went looking for the best doggy accommodation and activities in the Little Karoo and along the Garden Route.

WORDS & PICTURES **FRANÇOIS HAASBROEK**



PAWS ON THE BEACH. Glentana is one of only a few beaches on the Garden Route that is pet-friendly and allows dogs free rein.

GOLDEN SPOT. After a day spent smelling the fynbos, Buckley enjoys the view at Modderas Farm Cottages near Barrydale.



Their ears droop as soon as I take the big red suitcase out of the cupboard. While I pack, they give me those puppy dog eyes that make me feel guilty for ever leaving the house. All dog owners will sympathise. Your dogs just know when their owners are about to vanish.

My wife Marilize and I have two dogs: Orio (6), a Biewer terrier that weighs about 2 kg and is the boss of the house, and Buckley (2), a golden retriever.

Life as a dog in the city can be a little boring, especially if you're stuck between Vibracrete walls all day. There are three highlights to Buckley and Orio's day: food, a walk and that moment when Marilize or I come home from work. Every day, without fail, they greet us as if we've been gone for years. And they stick close to us for the rest of the night to make sure we don't disappear again.

Tonight is different. We're on holiday and we're all together! Marilize and I are drinking wine on the stoep of our unit at Shadowlands Guest Farm near Oudtshoorn and Buckley and Orio are asleep in front of the fireplace inside, exhausted after two days of running in the veld, swimming in farm dams and meeting new people.



BLACK & WHITE. Orio is a Biewer Terrier, closely related to a Yorkshire Terrier. The Biewer is a relatively new breed in South Africa.

A holiday for the whole family

You still meet the odd Rottweiler whose sole function is to scare off burglars, but for most people, their dog is like their child. It's hard to relax in your deck chair when you know your fur kid is back home missing you like crazy.

For this reason, there are an increasing number of places that accommodate pets, although finding this information online or in guidebooks is often difficult. My plan is to explore the Little Karoo and Garden Route – South Africa's holiday HQ – and look for pet-friendly accommodation, restaurants and activities.

Our first stop is Modderas Farm Cottages near Barrydale, about 250 km from Cape Town. The units at Modderas aren't fenced, but they're far apart from each other so you can let your dogs run free.

The next morning we carry on to Shadowlands near Oudtshoorn, three hours away. We drive past the farmstead with its koi pond, donkeys and ostriches, to a cabin called Kannaland on the banks of the Kammanassi River. The river is overgrown with reeds, but there's a farm dam nearby and like any golden retriever worth his salt, Buckley jumps right in.

We wake the next morning to mist in the valley. While we pack up, we have to keep an eye on Buckley who fancies another swim. On our way out we stop at the main house to say goodbye to owners Anton and Betsie Roets. Betsie leads us down a path from her lawn to a big pool in the river and Buckley finally gets his chance for one last dip.

Karoo scrub makes way for fynbos as we crest the Outeniqua Pass. Near George we turn onto the Saasveld Road, which links up with the Seven Passes Road built by Thomas Bain – the original road between George and Knysna.

We pass dairy farms and small forestry towns like Woodville, Keurhoek and Karatara. The road winds through the forest and crosses many stone bridges, over Kaaimansgat Pass, Silver River Pass, Touw River Pass, Hoogekraal Pass, Karatara Pass, Homtini Pass...

After Homtini Pass we follow the Bibby's Hoek road north to the Jubilee Creek picnic site in the Garden Route National Park, but we're stopped at the park gate: no dogs allowed.

So we make a U-turn and drive 2 km to Nieu-Wherry Meadow, our stop for the night. Nieu-Wherry is a smallholding on the edge of the forest and caretaker Khumbo Jassie meets us at the gate with his own dogs.

Our room has access to a big fenced lawn. Inside there's port and chocolates waiting for

us, next to a CD player loaded with Pearl Jam. Done deal! We'll be spending the rest of the afternoon right here.

Walkies in the forest

By now I'm starting to realise that travelling with dogs isn't easy. Lots of places simply turn you away. Nature reserves seldom allow dogs through the gates. Guide dogs can go into restaurants and shopping centres, but your unruly mutt will probably have to wait outside. Then there are places that claim to be pet-friendly, but in reality there's a cage outside where you can lock up your pooch while you have coffee inside.

That's the reason for this story. I want to find the best pet-friendly places. They are out there! Like Pledge Nature Reserve in Knysna, a 10-hectare reserve in town with 11 hiking trails. Buckley and Orio spend a morning cavorting through the trees and around the dam.

On Leisure Isle in the Knysna Lagoon, the dogs explore Steenbok Nature Reserve and splash in the muddy shallows. The reserve encompasses about 15 hectares of the island. Entrance is free and there are dispensers with plastic bags so you can clean up after your dogs.

After a day of fresh air and exercise, Buckley and Orio bed down in a forest cabin on Fern Gully Farm near Rheenendal. It's fun to show your dogs the world.



As far as pet-friendly restaurants go, we seem to be finding more and more. Recommendations already include Smitswinkel in Oudtshoorn, Totties Farm Kitchen near Rheenendal and Nadine's Corner in Knysna.

Karooboom Braai Restaurant is on the R62 between Oudtshoorn and Calitzdorp and it has been a real highlight so far. When we arrived, Buckley ran over to owner Neil Saayman's six-month-old sheepdog to say hello. The little sheepdog rolled onto his back to show his stomach, doggy code for, "I come in peace."

WATER STATION (left). A road trip can be tiring for you and your dogs. A special dog hammock will protect your car seat and will stop the dogs from sliding around. See page 92 for more about this hammock.

SUNRISE IN THE SHADOWLANDS (below left). The units at Shadowlands Guest Farm near Oudtshoorn aren't fenced, but they're far enough apart for your dog to run free.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Not all places are equally pet-friendly and some have a list of terms and conditions. Enquire before you book.

Is my dog small enough?

Many places to stay don't allow large breeds.

Are all breeds welcome? Some places don't allow pit bulls, despite how cute and cuddly yours might be.

Will there be other dogs? Most owners of pet-friendly places have their own dogs. Yours should be socialised.

Is there a fence? If your dog will be with you the whole time, this isn't a problem. But a fence is important if you'll be staying for a few nights and you'd like to leave your dog while you go to the café down the street.

Do I have to give Fido a bath?

You won't get into trouble if your dog plays in the mud, but make sure they don't have ticks and fleas. Bring their bedding.

In case of emergency? Make sure you know where the nearest vet is and how to contact them.

Medication? Treat your dogs for ticks before you leave. There are different kinds of treatments – ask your vet what is best for your dog.

Is my dog road-trip fit? Dogs soon tire of sleeping in a different place every night. Rather choose one or two places and spend a few nights at each.





CAN YOU SEE DOLPHINS? Keep your dogs on a leash at the Dolphin Point Lookout on the Kaaimans River Pass. The cars zoom past on the N2 close by.

WALK YOUR DOG ON THE BEACH

Many beaches are off-limits to dogs. At beaches where dogs are allowed, stick to the rules. You might have to keep your dog on a leash or only visit at certain times of the day. We visited these dog-friendly beaches:

- Leisure Isle (Knysna)
- Buffalo Bay main beach (only on a leash)
- Myoli Beach (only on a leash)
- Glentana
- Still Bay West
- Kassiesbaai and Arniston Beach
- L'Agulhas (only on a leash)
- Pearly Beach (only on a leash)
- Grotto Beach (only on a leash)

The dogs played in the yard and eventually settled next to the braai, hoping for a piece of wors. (All the meat dishes on the menu at Karooboom are cooked over the coals.) Our meal was served with fresh bread with pork lard, crackling and coffee, courtesy of Neil's wife Irene.

Now we're at the RiverDeck Restaurant on the banks of the Goukamma River near Buffalo Bay. The river is calm and there are no roads close by – we let Buckley splash around while we drink our coffee.

From the RiverDeck we head to Buffalo Bay itself for a walk on the beach. Not many Garden Route beaches allow dogs and the ones that do, like Buffalo Bay, stipulate that they must be leashed.

So we carry on west to the free-running beach at Glentana, about 65 km away along the N2. We play fetch with Orio while Buckley swims in the waves. Freedom!

We arrive in Still Bay at sunset. My family spent almost every December here and over the years I've watched the village become a proper town, with traffic jams on the way to the beach in peak season.

Right now it's low season and quiet. We drive to Harbour Cottage next to the harbour,

where Tine-Mari van Zyl and her Jack Russell greet us in the parking area. The self-catering house is fenced and overlooks the harbour and the mouth of the Goukou River.

Buckley isn't used to having the ocean so close by. So much temptation! He doesn't sleep a wink and softly whines as he stares at the moonlit water through the sliding door. At 3 am I draw the curtains.

The next morning Buckley and Orio have only one thing on their agenda: a swim. The beach across the road is the only pet-friendly beach in Still Bay and the dogs burn off all their energy on the sand.

The easiest and shortest route from Still Bay to Hermanus is along the N2, but the gravel roads to the south are much more enticing.

At Malgas we pay R50 to use the pont to cross the Breede River. I have to hold Buckley tight to prevent him from jumping overboard.

Outside Malgas the dogs have a drink of water from the fountain at Breede River Trading Post, where humans can buy pies, marmalade and jam. Dogs aren't allowed inside the shop so we have ice cream on the stoep while an African grey parrot chats away.

The southernmost dogs in Africa

Before we check in at Arniston Seaside Cottages, we let the dogs run on Roman Beach while the sun sets over the Indian Ocean.

Roman isn't the only pet-friendly beach in the area. The next morning we take the dogs to the historic fishing village of Kassiesbaai. In Kassiesbaai you can visit Willene's Restaurant next to the parking area for fresh seafood. The dogs can come if they're on a leash.

From Arniston it's a 45-minute drive to L'Agulhas, where we pull up at the lighthouse. The southernmost tip of Africa is about 800m away along a boardwalk, but African black oystercatchers breed in the area so dogs are not allowed.

Instead, we buy chips at L'Agulhas Seafoods in the main road and drive to the tidal pool on the western side of town. It's a blustery day and the dogs aren't convinced – they want to get back in the car! So on we drive, keeping to the back roads past Voëlvlei Dam,

Wolvengat, Die Dam and Pearly Beach.

Fernkloof Nature Reserve (18 km²) is just behind Hermanus. There are five hiking trails and the Blue Route is dog-friendly. The dogs have a blast and so do we, climbing high above town with views of Walker Bay.

As clouds roll in from the sea, we head to Grotto Beach for one last swim. Grotto is wide and long – a favourite dog beach among Hermanus locals. But before Buckley can launch himself into the sea, the heavens open.

We flee the beach and arrive at Eastbury Cottage in driving rain. Soon the damp dogs are snoring in front of the fireplace.

The next morning we drive back to Cape Town. We pull into our driveway and the dogs jump out to mark their territory, letting all the other dogs in the neighbourhood know that we still live here.

When I put the big red suitcase on the bed to unpack, there are no droopy ears and no guilt trips. The two hounds are curled up in their usual places, fast asleep.

SCENT-MARKING. After a swim at Grotto Beach in Hermanus, head to the Fernkloof Nature Reserve and walk the dog-friendly Blue Route. It should take about an hour.





HARBOUR COTTAGE, STILL BAY



NIEU-WHERRY MEADOW,
RHEENENDAL

STAY HERE

BARRYDALE

Modderas Farm Cottages

Basic units in the foothills of the Langeberg. The units aren't fenced, but they're far apart so your dogs won't bother the other guests. Drive slowly on the farm – owner Graham Strachan has an old sheepdog that is deaf.

Rates: From R700 per night for two people. (The units sleep 2–7 people.)

Where? The turn-off is about 3 km west of Barrydale on the R62.

Contact: ☎ 028 572 1722;
✉ modderas.co.za

OUTDSHOORN

Shadowlands Guest Farm

The farm has four unfenced units. Swim in a pool near the farmstead or in the farm dam, paddle in a canoe or walk between the ostrich camps. The Kannaland unit is the

furthest from the action if you're worried about your dogs wandering off to meet the ostriches.

Rates: From R700 per night for two people. (The units sleep 2–5 people.) Meals on request.

Where? Drive along Langenhoven Road towards George. Turn left into Onverwacht Crescent after you've crossed the railway line. The farm is on your right after 3,3 km.

Contact: ☎ 082 448 9719;
✉ anton@roetz.org

RHEENENDAL

Nieu-Wherry Meadow

Three of the four rooms are pet-friendly and each has a fenced garden. You can leave your dog here while you take a drive in the Knysna Forest.

Rates: Rooms from R600 per night for two people, plus R50 per dog.

Where? On the Rheenendal Road. Turn at the Bibby's Hoek/Jubilee Creek sign. Drive 1,2 km and turn left at Leeuwenbosch Estate. The farm is on your right after 500 m.

Contact: ☎ 083 758 9338;
✉ nieu-wherry.co.za

STILL BAY

Harbour Cottage

This beach house overlooks the harbour. Keep your dogs in the garden while you braai on the stoep or let them run on the beach across the road.

Rates: From R800 per night for two people. (The house sleeps up to six people.)

Where? 1 Skuitpad Road

Contact: ☎ 028 754 3122;
✉ cottage@webmakers.co.za

ARNISTON

Arniston Seaside Cottages

These whitewashed, thatched cottages are within walking distance from the beach. The units are different shapes and sizes: Some overlook the sea; others share a courtyard where the dogs can play safely away from the road.

Rates: From R360 per person sharing. The cottages sleep 2–8 people.

Where? Huxham Street

Contact: ☎ 028 445 9772;
✉ arnistonseasidecottages.co.za

HERMANUS

Eastbury Cottages

Eastbury has four cottages in a quiet suburb a few minutes from the town centre. Two of the units, Garden Cottage and Courtyard Suite, are pet-friendly. Each has a small, fenced garden.

Rates: From R300 per person sharing.

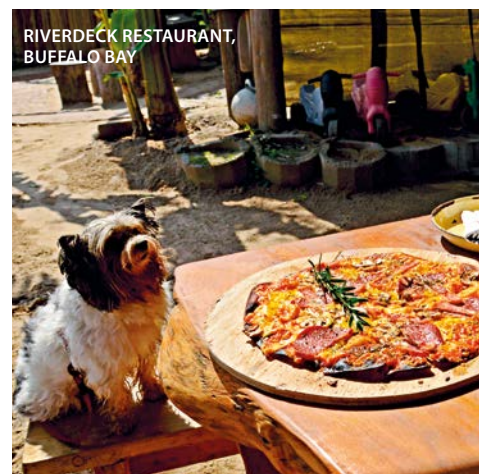
Where? 36 Luyt Street

Contact: ☎ 028 312 1258;
✉ eastburycottage.co.za





FOOD & FUN



CALITZDORP

Karooboom Braai Restaurant

Order an ostrich rump steak (R100) cooked over the coals and let the kids and dogs run around on the lawn. There's a farm stall on the property where you can buy jam and rusks.

Where? About 20 km east of Calitzdorp on the R62.

Contact: 044 007 0034;

karooboom.co.za

OUTDSHOORN

Smitswinkel

This farm stall in Oudtshoorn has a shop that sells everything from ostrich leather to soap. There's also a restaurant, a nursery and a big play park for kids. Dogs on leashes are welcome.

Where? 45 Langenhoven Road

Contact: 071 658 7127

RHEENENDAL

Totties Farm Kitchen

Dogs on leashes may sit outside. Book a table for the Sunday buffet (R150 per person).

Where? About 1,5 km west of Rheenendal on the Seven Passes Road.

Contact: 044 389 0092;

tottiesfarmkitchen.co.za

KNYSNA

Nadine's Corner

Have a scone with strawberry jam and cream (R20) under the fig trees before you explore the rest of Leisure Isle on foot.

Where? 12 Kingsway, Leisure Isle

Contact: 044 384 1746



Pledge Nature Reserve

This reserve, established in 1991, was once a brick factory and landfill site. Now it's a small forest with close to 300 plant species, home to 100 recorded bird species. Look for malachite kingfisher and Knysna turaco.

Where? 10 Bond Street

Entrance fee: R20 per person.

Contact: 044 382 3712;

pledgenaturereserve.org

Steenbok Nature Reserve

This small reserve is a doggy paradise – there are grass fields, wetlands, pathways and a lagoon to explore.

Where? 159 Links Drive, Leisure Isle

Entrance fee: Free.

Contact: 044 384 1896;

steenboknaturereserve.org.za

BUFFALO BAY

RiverDeck Restaurant

You'll be greeted by the smell of roosterkoek and pizza when you arrive. Kids and dogs can play in the

Goukamma River while you keep an eye on them from your table.

Where? On the Buffalo Bay Road, 400m after the N2 turn-off.

Contact: 078 134 5873;

riverdeckrestaurant.co.za

MOSSEL BAY

Delfino's

Watch the surfers while you enjoy calamari and chips (R69) on the stoep. The restaurant is opposite the tidal pool at The Point, and a park where you can walk your dog on a leash.

Where? Point Road

Contact: 044 690 5247;

delfinos.co.za

ALBERTINIA

Shell filling station

This filling station has a big pet park with separate sections for large dogs, small dogs and cats. Water bowls and poop bags are provided.

Where? On the corner of Station Street and the N2.

Contact: 028 735 1316

STILL BAY

Matchbox Trading Store & Coffee Shop

Sit inside, on the deck or in the garden and look out over the Goukou River. Browse the adjoining shop while you wait for your food.

Dogs are allowed outside and in the garden if they're on a leash.

Where? Uitsig Street

Contact: 028 754 1445;

matchboxsa.com

ARNISTON

Willene's Restaurant

Willene transformed her house in Kassiesbaai into a small restaurant where beachgoers can grab a light meal like fish cakes with potato and salad (R35). She also sells artworks made by the community. Bring cash. Dogs are welcome outside.

Where? Kassiesbaai parking area.

Contact: 028 445 9995

HERMANUS

Europa Restaurant

There aren't many pet-friendly places in the town centre. At Europa, your dog gets biscuits and water.

Where? Village Square

Contact: 028 312 4377; europa

restaurant-hermanus.co.za

Fernkloof Nature Reserve

Learn more about fynbos at the info centre and explore the mountains along one of five hiking trails. The Blue Route is dog-friendly.

Where? Fir Avenue

Entrance fee: Free.

Contact: 028 313 0819;

fernkloof.com