

Canine discovers a taste of the good life on a weekend getaway

Even room service is available for pets if you are in the right place

I'm headed out to Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando Resort for the weekend. I can certainly use a vacation. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, and a weekend getaway is exactly what I need to refresh my spirit.

I'm no ordinary traveler, though. My name is Hope, and I'm a 62-pound, yellow-lab mix. There are certain preparations that need to be made before any trip, and it's no different for dogs.

The day before we leave, my master takes me to the veterinarian for a check-up and updated shots. Ouch! My vet also writes a letter that says I'm in excellent health and have an excellent temperament. This second part is definitely true. The hotel requires the health information, and we arrive prepared.

I hear my master say that Loews Loves Pets, so I feel good about the place before we even arrive. I feel even better after we pull up in front of the hotel. It's the cat's meow.

The advice book

The Portofino Bay Hotel is listed in *Traveling With Your Pet: The AAA PetBook®*, which my master carries with her whenever we travel together.



CHECKING IN — They make you feel at home.

To find out how you can obtain the PetBook, visit AAA.com/petbook. The book lists emergency animal clinics, pet-friendly attractions, lodging pet policies, and more.

It lets us know that there will be a \$25 one-time flat fee added to our room cost at Portofino. As you may know, some dogs shed or have acci-

dents — I am a shedder, but I've never gone inside, and I don't mind bragging about it.

All the humans who work at Portofino Bay are very friendly. They even deliver a special doggie bag full of goodies to our room right after we arrive. It contains two dishes, one for my food and one for my water, some yummy star-shaped treats, and a box of scooper bags for, well, you know, when I go outside, so my master can clean up after me and keep the environment clean.

In addition, there's a plastic lid to put on top of my dog food can, but I happen to eat dry food so don't need that, and a special door hang-tag to let the maids know when they should and shouldn't enter our room.

Our room is on the first floor of the hotel, and there's a beautiful garden walk just up some stairs in the back. On my first walk, I see a rabbit, several birds, lizards, and a couple of other dogs walking with their masters. I'm usually really well-behaved, but I admit to trying to run after the rabbit because it jumps out of the bushes and frightens me. My sniffer tells me something is there, but before I've had a chance to figure it out, I'm practically nose to nose with the brown bunny.

Lick and a promise

In the evening, my master, her boyfriend, and I sit outside in Portofino's beautiful piazza and eat ice cream as we people- and dog-watch. Kids love me and want to pet me all the time. I like to be petted. I also like to lick people. Sometimes my master tells me to stop it when I'm licking someone in the face, but most people, especially kids, don't seem to mind. It's my way of showing affection.

We meet a lot of nice people and their dogs. Some of them tell us they come here several times a year because it's such a beautiful place. I'm very impressed that one of the stores on the piazza has placed water bowls outside, and I enjoy drinking the water when I get thirsty.

There's a large bay at Portofino, and

it's full of ducks. If I didn't have my leash on, I might chase after them, but my master keeps it on me. She says that's the responsible thing to do. She also says that some people are afraid of dogs — I guess there are some mean ones, just like there are mean people — so it's better if I let people approach me, if they want to.

Doggie in the window

A couple of times my master leaves me alone in the room so she and her boyfriend can go to dinner and visit the theme parks — Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure. While they're gone, I sit by the window and look outside, watching the boats go back and forth on the bay and thinking about how much I'd like to play with the ducks.

If I were the type of dog who's afraid to stay alone in a strange place, they could have boarded me for the day at the Studio Kennel at Universal Orlando. It's air-conditioned, of course. The hotel also makes sure they have my master's cell phone number so they can contact her if necessary.

Just when I think it can't get any better, my master says: "Let's order pet room service." At first, I think she's kidding, but, then, she pulls out a booklet from the drawer and starts reading out loud.

"Bow Wow Tenderloin of Beef, Power Bark Nutritional Snack Bar, Chow Hound Chicken."

My mouth starts watering, just thinking about it. When the waiter arrives at our door with my special treat on a tray, I admit to feeling like a queen. It's going to be hard to go back home and eat my regular food.

What I like best about our trip to Loews Portofino Bay Hotel and Universal Orlando Resort is that the entire family gets to have a good time together, including me. My master doesn't have to worry about me while she's away, and I'm happy to be able to wag my tail and lick my way through a great time.

Oh, we also get a AAA discount at the hotel, so contact your AAA Travel professional for more information. You won't be barking up the wrong tree.

Editor's note: This article was provided by Hope Long, a 3 1/2-year-old yellow lab mix, who lives with her master in Winter Park, Fla.



NO CHASING — Scooters are interesting.