



Scotland's fastest-growing Destination Management Organisation

Trimontium Museum

# Toolkit

# A Dog Friendly South of Scotland

[www.ssdalliance.com](http://www.ssdalliance.com)



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**Scrumpy, Floors Castle Horse Trials**



# About Us

The SSDA is a small, passionate, energetic and disruptive organisation. We believe in the South of Scotland. We know that by thinking ambitiously, acting strategically, and working collaboratively we can, and will, transform our visitor economy.

We have a key role in developing our destination. This includes supporting businesses and enterprises to help them build quality into the visitor experience - becoming dog-friendly is just one of the many ways to support this ambition.



# Why Become Dog Friendly ?

It's not just visitors or customers, dogs can be great for the team and can contribute to a stronger sense of community.

01



## Opens up new markets

Dog owners are more likely to choose businesses that welcome them and even people without pets often appreciate the friendly atmosphere created by well-behaved dogs.

02



## Customer Loyalty

Customers who bring their pets are more likely to have a positive experience and return and word of mouth means they are more likely to recommend you to their friends and family.

03



## Less Price Sensitivity

Dog owners are more concerned with finding appropriate accommodation and amenities and are not so sensitive to the price. They are also less concerned about seasonality, some preferring out-of-season.

04



## Marketing

Who doesn't love a furry face? Certainly their owners who LOVE to take photos of their dog enjoying a holiday. Being dog-friendly means you can capitalise on this free marketing potential as well as running your own campaigns.

## Some Facts

breath

 **DOG**   
FRIENDLY  
ESTABLISHMENT



### Our 4 legged canine friends

There are 12 million dogs in the UK, and pandemic pets saw a further 3.2 million households get a pet with the highest demographic, at 50%, being 16 - 24 year-olds.



### Spending Power and Motivation

Research shows a key motivator is social benefit\* and a good social experience directly correlates with spending more money and time, for many pet owners guilt or worry of leaving a pet can mean they leave sooner or perhaps don't visit.

\* University of Portsmouth. March 2022



### Increase in trade

DogFriendly\* reported businesses that became pet-friendly for first time in 2022 reported a 20-50% increase in trade. By becoming pet-friendly, shoppers have the opportunity to spend more money with you on pet accessories or other add-ons such as meals for their four-legged friend

\* Pet Business World January 2023

# Owner Considerations

The UK staycation market is still buoyant, although down on 2023. VisitScotland reported in its 2023 visitor survey that 75% of overnight visitors (Scottish Borders) and 87% (Dumfries & Galloway) were domestic visitors, a large proportion of those will have dogs!

Priorities for booking are walks both in rural locations and in towns and villages and 79% want to eat out with their pet. Many of our visitors on holiday with their dogs can't or don't want to leave them to eat, especially evening meals which can result in them not spending money with local restaurants/ pubs etc but preparing food in accommodation.

**Dog owners are often more willing to pay for their pets needs to be met, sometimes paying at least £200\* extra to bring their dog on holiday.**

\*National Coastal Tourism Academy



# Intro to Becoming Dog-Friendly

This toolkit offers useful tips and actionable advice for establishing a pet-friendly setting that caters to both dogs and their owners.

With growing market demand, the South of Scotland is in a prime position to capitalise on this opportunity.

While we acknowledge that various companion animals travel with their owners, dogs predominantly lead the way. Many principles can be applied universally, unless, of course, you have a niche focus on another animal. If someone decides to open a Capybara café, count us in for a visit!



Ferris



***A 36% increase in dog-friendly bookings in 2023 vs the previous year has been reported by Canine Cottages.***

## Examples Of Current Dog-Friendly Establishments

We are lucky to have many enthusiastic members who are embracing dog-friendly options, which may serve as a great source of inspiration. For guests and visitors, exploring new adventures with their canine friends can create a wonderful bonding experience. It introduces them to unique sights and experiences, allowing you to guide them to live like a local, something that many visitors may not often discover.



**Danny**

*Probably 85% of our guests bring dogs,  
many of them repeat year after year. -  
Jennifer Chapman, Kirkennan Estate  
Holidays*



# Current Product Examples



The Cairndale Hotel,  
Dumfries.

From a warm welcome at reception, maybe a treat or two then a welcome pack in the room. A handy dog-friendly guide to Dumfries is in the room to help you make the most of your stay, with a list of walks, length and difficulty, dog-friendly attractions and local services that you might need.



Abbey Team Room,  
New Abbey.

A great tea room with home baking and gift shop with local products, where dogs are made very welcome inside and out and a great range of dog-themed gifts are on offer. The staff are dog owners and come over to make sure you and your dog are settled.



Abbotsford House,  
Galashiels.

Dogs are welcome on leads in Abbotsford's gift shop, café, walled gardens and Witch Corner sculpture trail. On the free woodland and riverside walks across the estate, dogs can be off lead. They also offer food and drinks from an outdoor catering unit on the meadow which is popular with dog walkers and sell dog treats, toys and accessories in the gift shop.



Innis, Galashiels.

Fresh drinking water and poop bags are provided...accidents do happen! Oh and treats, if allowed. Many of the staff are dog owners themselves and this drove the choice to become dog-friendly, it can sometimes be restricting when out with your pooch and you can't nip into a shop for a few 'bit n bobs'.

# Current Product Examples



Hike and Bike Hub,  
Galashiels.

Your dog probably can't ride a bike but the hub is a great source of local walk inspiration, treats and fuss.

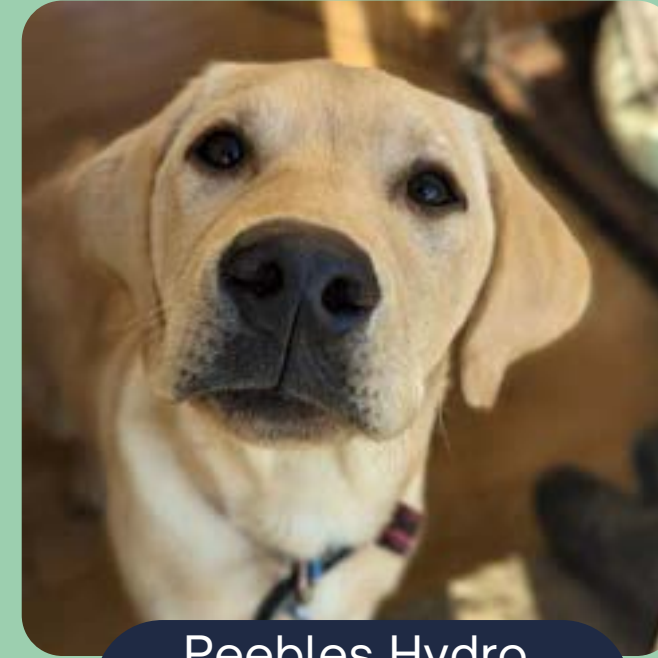
There are regular guided walks (check first if you can take your dog on the chosen walk)



Kirkennan Estate,  
Castle Douglas.

The estate is very dog friendly with a range of on and off lead walking areas. They accept multi dog bookings with no extra charge per dog and with an excellent, clear dog policy page, guests can book with confidence.

They also list a range of walks, local services and places to visit with your dog



Peebles Hydro,  
Peebles.

If your pet appreciates a bit of pampering then where better than Peebles Hydro. Set in the heart of the Tweed Valley, there are walks galore to enjoy

With ample lounges or a cosy fire by the bar for your dog to relax with you, there is even a quiet dog-friendly breakfast area. Their sister hotel The Park in the heart of Peebles is equally welcoming.



Wedale Book Shop,  
Stow.

Dogs (and their owners) are very welcome to visit our bookshop, to browse and rest a while. We always have water and complimentary gravy bones available! They are situated in a small rural village where dogs are very present and very welcome - it makes sense to offer an additional venue for dog-owners to go with their four-legged friends

A hand-drawn illustration on a textured, brownish background. On the left, a dog is shown in profile, facing right. In the center, a smaller dog is depicted with its mouth open as if barking or excited, with three short lines above its head. To the right of the smaller dog is a cup of ice cream with the words "Daggo ice cream" written on it. Above the cup, the word "woof" is written in a cursive, handwritten style, followed by "all" in a similar style. At the bottom of the page, the words "Dog Ice Cream" are written in a large, cursive font, followed by "£2.00". The entire illustration is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent rectangle containing the text "Top Tips".

# Top Tips

# General Tips

## Communicate

Use signs encouraging owners to speak up if their pet gets excited and has an accident so they don't become embarrassed or fearful and not tell you! Likewise for everyone's comfort, keep them on a lead and under control, can save your team from having to have any awkward conversations!

## Reorganise

Remove plants from pet height - some are toxic to pets but could also be seen as a target for the male dogs! Remove small objects/products from pet height that greedy dogs or younger pups might investigate with their mouth and potentially damage or choke on.

## Be Responsible

Let your guests and visitors know about their rights of responsible access under the [outdoor access code](#) especially at certain times of year. You can share the [Nature Scot dog owners' guide](#)

## Customer Feedback

Ask your guests for feedback, every experience like every dog is different, what works for one might not work for another... and it's always nice to hear how great a job you are doing!



**Minnie**



## Elevate Your Offer

Shout about how pet-friendly your business is, make sure it's on your website, social channels and of course, your Scotland Starts Here listing.

# Accommodation

- Have dog towels, covers and blankets available to cover any surfaces.
- List all the dog facilities you have, so when booking it's an easy choice.
- Have a dog section if you have a welcome pack, and find out who locally is dog-friendly
- If you say your garden is enclosed specify how high the fencing is and is it TRULY fully enclosed – in other words could their pet possibly escape?
- Highlight whether there are resident dogs on site or if they might encounter or livestock)
- Are there any big local events that might have a noise impact like fireworks or other loud noises, let your guests know. Equally, shout about it if your area is quiet – many owners look to escape noisy fireworks for their pets.
- Be upfront and clear about any additional cleaning charges, most owners expect a supplement so don't be afraid to list it (usually between £10 and £20)
- Do you accept more than 1 or 2 dogs - let people know, it can be an added incentive.



## Elevate Your Offer

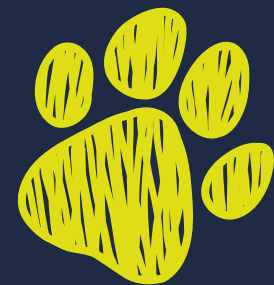
A dog welcome pack with a welcome biscuit or treat, some poo bags and some great walk suggestions. Perhaps an outside dog wash area, from a simple tap through to a sprayer-type cleaner.

## Food & Drink, Retail and Attractions



[Bulldog Bakes, Galashiels](#)

### Elevate Your Offer



Provide a doggy menu with dog-friendly options. It can be simple or offer some of the pet-specific products, which are widely available. Offer blankets for them to lie on especially if you have hard floors, our bonier houndies might not settle well on a cold, hard floor!

- If you have hesitations about letting dogs into the whole business could you have a dog-friendly designated area?
- Ensure water bowls are cleaned and replenished regularly.
- Offer to help pet owners to carry food or drinks if they have their hands full or perhaps are solo pet travellers.
- Easy tap-and-go payment helps too.
- How easy is it for visitors to access the toilet? Could a team member help by watching the dog while they go?
- Don't make any dog-designated area too cramped - like us, not all dogs like being too close to others!

## Your Dog-Friendly Business

By embracing a dog-friendly approach, your business can tap into a growing market, enhance customer satisfaction, and create a more welcoming environment for everyone. Remember to tailor your dog-friendly strategy to your specific business and customer base. With careful planning and execution, you can successfully attract and retain dog-loving customers.



Are you already doing something superbly doggy? Let us know and we can look to include you on our new landing page on Scotland Starts Here.



# Our Canine Consultants

They are a well-travelled bunch and enjoy everything from a luxury spa stay to a campsite or campervan and even an exclusive dog lodge with enclosed wood. They frequently are seen out and about with their respective humans sampling the pet-friendly establishments in the South of Scotland or snoring in the background of Teams meetings!



Ferris  
Word Wizard



Poppy & Pepper  
Entertainment Queens



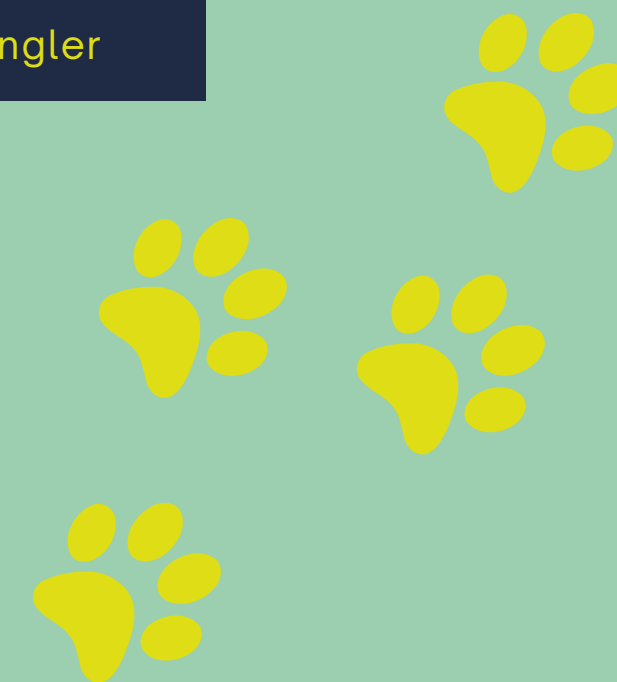
Otis  
Head of Zoomies



Isla  
Lead Bork Builder



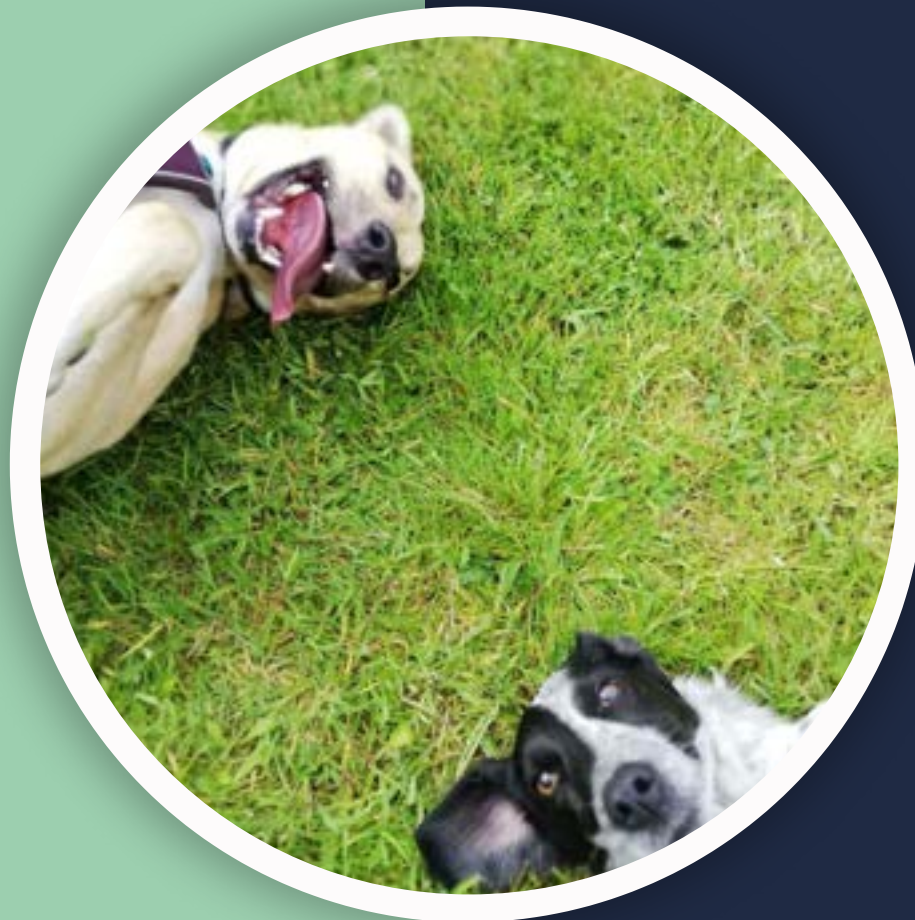
Millie  
Water Wrangler





## FOLLOW US - EVERYWHERE

(LIKE THE DOG... TO THE FRIDGE, THE BATHROOM, THE HALL)



**Spike & Otis**

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Our Consumer Channels

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