

The Suite Life

Cats and dogs that stay at PETSuites get star treatment

By Maria Schneider

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Percy Aronoff is a pampered guest at one of the area's finest resorts, a five-star establishment dedicated to catering to its guests' every need. For the past week Percy has led a privileged existence, socializing with fellow guests, lounging in bed, watching television and dining on gourmet food from room service.

And today, the day he is checking out, is no exception. The last several hours the staff has been diligently preparing him for departure, helping a relaxed Percy primp and preen for the return daily life with the family.

Spotting his mother as she enters the lobby, Percy runs to greet her, leaping into her outstretched arms and greeting her with a lick on the cheek and a bark of glee. "I have such spoiled babies," says a grinning Janet Aronoff, cheek-to-cheek with Perry, her treasured Maltese.

Percy has spent the past week as a guest at PETSuites in Erlanger. To call PETSuites a kennel would be...well, downright crass. As pet boarding facilities go, this place is the Ritz.

Owners Joe and Tracy Mason, who opened PETSuites in November last year, prefer to think of PETSuites as a resort. In fact, their company motto is "The Pet Resort by the Airport." PETSuites caters to the most pampered of pooches and the most finicky of felines (both referred to as guests), along with the owners (moms and dads) who love them (and foot the bills, of course).

When Joe Mason needed a reliable place where he felt comfortable leaving his dog, Elvis, he couldn't find it, and thus was born the idea for PETSuites. Elvis, a Dane-Akita mix, has special needs, including juvenile arthritis, that has required multiple surgeries. Since business travel; took Joe and Tracy out of town often, they worried about the quality of care he was receiving.

Considering you're in Kentucky, the winding lane with its white rail fence and surrounding grassy hills that leads to PETSuites suggests you might be approaching a small horse farm. The building does present a certain equestrian exterior, with its hunter green roof and trim, columned porch and impeccable landscaping. Not a thoroughbred to be seen however—just some yappy dogs chasing Frisbees in the runs out back.

The entire facility provides an enclosed, temperature-controlled environment. There's a cathedral ceiling over the back o the house where dogs stay, as well as soft halogen lighting and a glowing color scheme of light butterscotch walls and cream-colored runs.

“I think bright colors really make a difference in the mood of the animal,” Tracy says. Easy listening music is played throughout the facility “to soothe the beast within,” according to a PETSuites brochure.

Step inside the lobby and you’ll find a panoramic window view of the canine quarters. A small goldfish pond with a fountain and colorful silk flowers sits directly in front of the \$29-a-night town houses. Six well-appointed guest rooms lie behind graceful wrought iron gates. Each 6’ X 8’ town house comes furnished with a quilted toddler bed, a ceiling fan and a television. For most houseguests, it’s all Animal Planet all the time, according to the Masons, but guests are invited to indulge their individual viewing preferences. “There is one guest who prefers The Food Network,” Joe says with a grin. Percy’s preferred digs are the town houses. If they’re booked, “he has to camp,” says Janet Aronoff, meaning he stays in one of the 108 dog suites. Suite sizes range from small (3’ X 10’) to extra large (5’ X 14’), with prices from \$16.50 a night for a small suite for one guest, to \$22.50 a night for one extra large dog.

PETSuites also offers an array of playtime activities that can be purchased separately or in packages. For \$5 you can sign your dog up for The Charles BARKley, 15 minutes of ball chasing. Spayed and neutered dogs can participate in “Yappy Hour,” a half-hour mingling session for \$10. Just about any appreciate an activity labeled “Love me Tender,” 15 minutes of belly rubbing and ear scratching. Spa packages include bathing, grooming and massage.

French lessons are also included on the list of playtime options. The brochure reads: “If your dog is more interested in the Cannes Film Festival than the Westminster Dog Show, this is a must! Designed for the International canine, our course in basic conversational French will prepare your pooch for his next Parisian trip!” (No takers yet on the \$125 French lessons, but Joe has instructed his staff to sign up anyone who requests it. “We’ll have them barking French fluently when their owners pick them up,” he says.)

As for the food, only haute cuisine will do—IAMS and Eukanuba premium pet foods are included in the price of lodging, as well as a bedtime treat. Guests with special dietary needs or desires are always accommodated.

Although dogs are PETSuites’ primary guests, a section of the building is devoted to cats. Each four-level cat condo has its own air purification system to prevent the spread of feline viruses. The condos offer room-with-a-view charm, and some have tropical fish tanks to provide cats hours of feline entertainment. Or if the kitty is more of a Sylvester vs. Tweety Bird mindset, he may prefer a condo with a window to the outside world including unlimited bird watching at window-level bird feeders.

The two and-a-half acre PETSuites property lines adjacent to I-75 in Erlanger, just off Donaldson Road, the path many take en route to the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. Joe chose the site for its convenience for travelers needing to drop off pets on their way to the airport. “I always wondered why there weren’t kennels close to the airport,” Joe says.

Elvis now works alongside Joe and Tracy in the growing business he inspired, serving as the PETSuites mascot, welcoming visitors and guests with an amiable spirit that prevails over his arthritic body. And if you hear a dog around town barking in fluent French, it has probably spent some time at PETSuites.