

# Great Getaways

HOLIDAYS

Whether you take your dogs with you or leave them in responsible care, with a little planning you can ensure they have just as great a holiday as you do

## Keeping it in the family

The Ludowyke family from Willoughby in New South Wales have run their pet-sitting service for Don't Pet Fret for more than two years, welcoming many a mutt into their hearts and home while dog owners escape the city.

Danielle and Russell Ludowyke say the experience is a rewarding one for their two sons, Cameron, eight, and Ryan, five, who take on many of the responsibilities of caring for the holidaying hounds.

"They take it very seriously and walk the dogs once or twice a day, as well as grooming and feeding them," says Danielle. "And dogs that are used to sharing a bed with their owner can find a nice spot to curl up on Cameron's bed."

The Ludowyke family like to make their visiting dogs' days fun and as well as regular trips to the park, the dogs get to spend time exploring the family's jungle-like backyard alongside Zip, the friendly resident Retriever. The Ludowykes integrate their visiting dogs right into the family and they often have dogs dropping in for regular stays.

"We feel that if you have a dog it should be treated like a member of the family, so our visiting dogs are entitled to sleep in the house," says Danielle. "The only place they can't sleep is in

our room because that's our cat's domain."

Danielle and the family have seen many canine characters come and go over the last few years and while one crazy chewer won't be invited back, the vast majority were well-behaved and fun to have around. "We had two characters — Bob and Harry, a Terrier and Basset Hound — that tried on several occasions to stow away on our bed," she recalls. "When their owners picked them up, the four-year-old daughter said the dogs slept on her parents' bed with their heads on the pillow, so we figured where that behaviour came from."

The Ludowyke family have found life as pet-sitters to be hard work, but the whole family benefits from the experience.



Judy Cox, pictured with her Shar Pei, was so sold on the Don't Fret Pet concept that she bought the Brisbane North franchise.

"Zip loves having a playmate and the kids are learning responsibility as well as making great friends with the dogs," says Danielle. She believes pet-sitting is a great alternative for people who can't take their pets away with them and has found the family environment helps the dogs adjust quickly and happily into a new routine.

Danielle suggests that anyone looking for a pet-sitter should first go to the home where their dog will be staying before making a decision. "We invite owners and their dogs over to view the home and backyard and also to introduce their dogs to Zip, to make sure they are compatible," says Danielle. "You should also ask where the dog will be sleeping and what sort of exercise the pet-sitter is willing to give the dog each

day, especially if it is a larger dog," she says.

Danielle says the most important thing is to start looking early as many families are booked out months in advance. There are various pet-sitting agencies throughout Australia, with Don't Fret Pet being the largest pet-sitting franchise in the country.

Everything your dog wants you to know!

# Don't Pet Fret Life

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