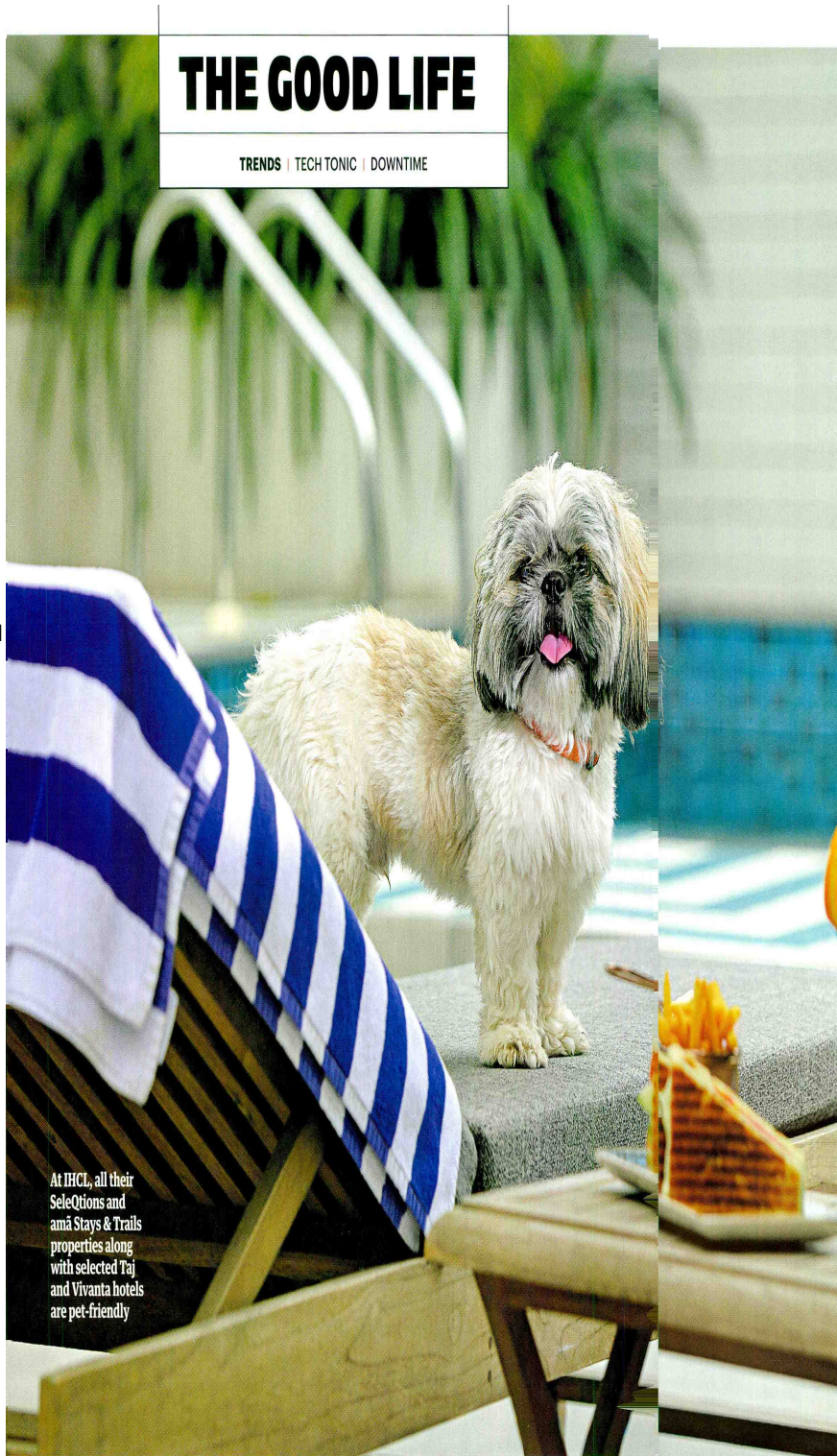


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THE GOOD LIFE

TRENDS | TECH TONIC | DOWNTIME

At IHCL, all their SeleQtions and amā Stays & Trails properties along with selected Taj and Vivanta hotels are pet-friendly

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HAVE A 'PAWSOME' VACATION

With more pet parents wanting to travel with their four-legged babies, hotels are going all out to ensure you have the 'purr'fect holiday

BY SMITA TRIPATHI

PHOTO BY RAJWANT RAWAT

IN THE FIRST WEEK of June as the mercury climbed above 40 degrees Celsius in Delhi, advertising professional Diksha Singh made for the hills with her daughter Lolita in tow. They drove down to the recently opened Hyatt Regency Dehradun, at the foothills of Mussoorie, for a week-long break. Singh chose the hotel because of Lolita—her two-year-old furry baby. For this pet parent, her dog's comfort was most important. Lolita, with her flowing blonde tresses, is a Golden Retriever and finds the Delhi heat quite unbearable. The hills are always welcome but for the longest time Singh had to search for homestays and smaller properties that were more pet-friendly than big hotel chains. However, all that changed post the pandemic. With more people wanting to travel with pets and road trips becoming the norm, a significantly larger number of hotels have become pet-friendly, ensuring that both you and your four-legged companion have a 'pawsome' vacation.

"In the last few years, the number of pets per household has seen a significant increase and guests are looking at pet-friendly properties in the city as well as vacation destinations to take their pet along for the ride. In such cases, the hospitality industry has to be accommodating and accepting of these pooches. As pets are becoming an integral part of the lives of families, it has become imperative for hotels to be welcoming and comforting for guests and their pets," says Sunjæe Sharma, Managing Director - India & South West Asia at Hyatt Hotels Corporation. Besides Hyatt Regency

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Dehradun, Hyatt Place Hampi along with city hotels such as Park Hyatt Chennai and Andaz Delhi, among others, are pet friendly.

As Singh checked into Hyatt Regency Dehradun with Lolita she was escorted to her room where a bed, food and water bowls and some treats and toys were already placed to make Lolita comfortable. The hotel charges ₹2,500 as a one-time fee for deep cleaning and sanitisation. "The hotel has vast open spaces and their staff is dog-loving. They even prepared Lolita's meals the way she is used to eating them at home," says Singh, adding that it turned out to be a great holiday for her as she could relax in the spa, knowing that Lolita was comfortable in the room.

At IHCL, all their SeleQtions and amā Stays & Trails properties along with select Taj and Vivanta hotels are pet friendly. "In fact, our SeleQtions hotels saw an increasing demand from guests travelling with their pets and has introduced a special 'Pawcations' offer across its hotels. Select hotels offer meals, a hi-tea experience and outdoor activities for your furry friend under this package," says an IHCL spokesperson. The 'Pawcations' package was launched in 2020. The team across SeleQtions has also been well sensitised on how to interact with pets and pet owners, to understand pet body language and address questions and concerns that may arise, says the spokesperson. As part of this, IHCL SeleQtions recently held a one-day symposium aimed at helping patrons decode the pet language.

India's pet care market is expected to grow to ₹7,500 crore by the end of 2026, on account of rising nuclear families, double-income households, change in lifestyle, urbanisation, and increasing pet ownership, according to a report by Bonafide Research.

Nearly all these are reasons for more people travelling with their



pets. Nuclear families mean there are fewer options to leave pets behind. Also, the pandemic resulted in more people undertaking driving holidays, making it that much easier to travel with pets. "There has been an exponential increase in the number of pet families that have been checking in, particularly in the past couple of years. One of the impacts of the pandemic is that there was a huge increase in the number of people taking road trips, which then allowed a lot of families to travel with their pets, and hence look for pet-friendly accommodation," says a spokesperson from Lemon Tree Hotels; the chain has three pet-friendly hotels

in Coorg, Goa, and Manesar.

While ITC Hotels launched their 'Petcation' initiative a few years ago, they too have seen an increase in demand post the pandemic. "Post the pandemic, many travellers are seeking destinations that allow pet stays. Everyone wants to enjoy a vacation and the pleasure of having their pets with them really multiplies their joy, besides giving them worry-free stays that they may not have experienced earlier leaving their pets at home," says Anil Chadha, Divisional Chief Executive-ITC Hotels. Welcomhotels at leisure destinations such as Amritsar, Shimla and Jodhpur are pet friendly, along with ITC Grand

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- 1. The recently opened Hyatt Regency Dehradun has a specially curated menu for its four-legged guests**
- 2. Lemon Tree Hotels provides dog walking and dog sitting facilities at its three pet-friendly hotels in Coorg, Goa and Manesar**
- 3. Ensuring that your stay is completely worry-free, ITC Hotels also provides a vet-on-call**



Goa, ITC Chola (Chennai), ITC Grand Bharat (Manesar) and ITC Rajputana (Jaipur). Ensuring that your stay is completely worry-free, ITC Hotels also provides a vet-on-call.

Another pet-friendly chain is the Tree of Life Resorts which has welcomed animals since inception. "Across our 15 operating destinations, we have roughly 4-5 arrivals per day of guests travelling with pets," says Akhil Anand, Director, Tree of Life Resorts and Hotels. Here, besides the curated food menu, treats, toys and a bed, grooming accessories such as combs, towels and nail clippers are also provided to pets.

Marriott International too is pet-friendly with 13 hotels across the country including the recently launched Courtyard Aravali Resort, along with W Goa, JW Marriott New Delhi, Westin Sohna Resort and Spa, among others, welcoming pets.

So, are there any restrictions on pets? Most hotels follow government regulations, which means cats, dogs, guinea pigs, hamsters, turtles, birds and fish are allowed. But if you have a pig or a snake for a pet, you may want to check with the hotel before booking. With regular pets too, at the time of booking you need to inform the hotel that you will be checking in with a pet. Most hotels have a certain number of rooms/suites reserved for pet parents, and if those are sold out, the hotel may not accommodate you. Some restrict the pet's movement in public areas like restaurants, gyms and pools while others have designated areas for pets. It is best to check with the hotel at the time of booking. Go ahead, enjoy a 'purr'fect vacation. **BT**