

Unleashing canine travel: Hospitality, tourism sector urged to adapt to dog-friendly travel demands

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Becoming more dog-friendly could be a gold mine for the hospitality and tourism industry, according to new research from the University of

Surrey. The research team has urged tourism providers to seize the opportunities offered by a thriving market, reflecting the substantial impact dog ownership is having on travel behaviors.

Estimated to be worth USD \$50.1 billion by 2030, a Surrey team of researchers has uncovered the potential of the growing dog-friendly [travel](#) market. The COVID-19 pandemic drove an increase in U.K. household dog ownership, creating a need for tourism providers to adapt to accommodate these four-legged family members.

The Surrey team set out to understand why people travel with their dogs, how they feel about it, and what challenges they face doing so. The study has been [published](#) in the *Journal of Vacation Marketing*.

Lori Hoy, Ph.D. Researcher and lead author of the study at the University of Surrey, said, "Some reports suggest that the U.K. dog population stands at 11 million, with 29% of U.K. adults having a dog in their home. So, it stands to reason that more people want to include their canine best friend in their holiday plans. Tourism providers who embrace this trend stand to benefit significantly.

"Understanding what influences the decision-making process of people who want to travel with their dogs will enable destinations, accommodation providers, attractions, and transport suppliers to offer tailored, dog-friendly services and [communication channels](#) that resonate with this audience.

"We advise tourism providers to provide clear, easily accessible information about their dog-friendly offerings, alleviate concerns, and communicate how the travel experience will be enjoyable for both dogs and people."

The research highlighted the motivations and behavioral tendencies of

dog owners when it comes to traveling with their beloved pets. The study is grounded in four essential social perceptions, including the human-dog relationship, dog well-being beliefs, information acquisition, and perceived risks, all of which significantly impact the owners' motivation and behavior when considering whether and where to spend their holiday budgets.

The key findings from the research are:

- Dog well-being beliefs: Owners believe that traveling with their dogs enhances the dogs' well-being and happiness, and this had the most substantial positive impact on their intention to travel.
- Information acquisition: The owners' confidence in obtaining dog-friendly travel information significantly influenced their motivation to travel and heavily affected the location and accommodation they searched for and subsequently booked for their holidays.
- Perceived risks: Although the perceived risks did not affect the dog owners' intentions to travel with their dogs, they did have a direct, negative impact on the ultimate decision to travel with their dogs. These risks include concerns about potential problems with transportation, accommodation, and activities while traveling with dogs.

Lori Hoy concluded, "Embracing a dog-friendly approach in tourism goes beyond mere tolerance. It's about creating a welcoming atmosphere and services tailored for the well-being of both dogs and their best friends. This involves offering engaging activities, understanding dogs as sentient beings that are part of the leisure experience, and providing easily accessible information about dog-specific policies.

"Additionally, targeted marketing and clear communication about dog-friendly offerings are essential. By doing so, [tourism](#) providers can not

only enhance the experience for those traveling with dogs but also position themselves as truly dog-friendly destinations, meeting the needs and expectations of both dogs and their guardians."

More information: Lori S. Hoy et al, The social behavior of traveling with dogs: Drivers, behavioral tendencies, and experiences, *Journal of Vacation Marketing* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/13567667231202798](https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667231202798)

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