

The Pet Set

As emotional-support status for dogs and cats gains traction, seemingly every airplane, fashion show, and nail salon is suddenly an animal house. Chloe Malle investigates the hype—and the healing potential.

Photographed by
Steven Klein

gone to the dogs

At a growing number of luxury spas, four-legged friends are not just tolerated; they're catered to, with coat-enhancing oil rubs, butler service, and à la carte—menu items. Model Guinevere van Seenus wears a Proenza Schouler jacket and skirt; Proenza Schouler, NYC. Fashion Editor: Phyllis Posnick.



T

here is nothing therapeutic about Phyllis. Anytime she veers from her typical ten-block radius along the eastern perimeter of Central Park, her bug eyes become even larger than usual, and any friendly stranger who leans down to say hello is met with a disdainful recoil. To successfully argue that

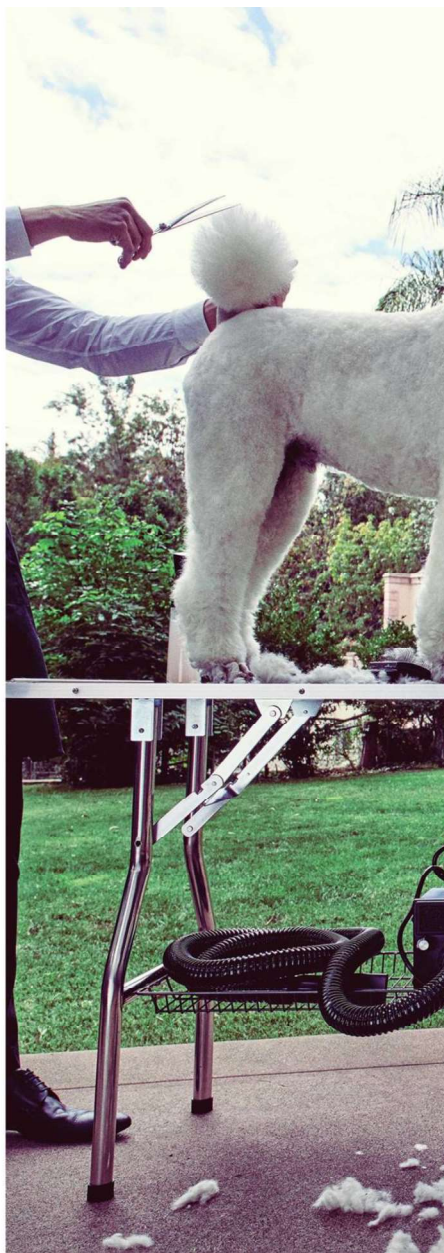
the eleven-year-old cavachon is a nurturing crutch would demand herculean creativity, not to mention chutzpah. This is the assumption, however, when Phyllis and I enter the Parker Meridien, where three of the hotel's basement-level beauty retailers—Tenoverten nail salon, the blowout mainstay Drybar, and Blushington makeup studio—welcome us without question. Phyllis is my mother's dog, so today I am multitasking pet-sitting duties with a long-standing manicure appointment, and both of us are pleasantly surprised when not an eyebrow is raised at the sound of Phyllis's own nails clacking across the tile. My manicurist, Gladys, even offers her a *peticure*, but the dog demurs with a nervous lip quiver.

Tenoverten is just one of the many human beauty establishments likely to accept four-legged friends as guests (when in doubt, call ahead). And these are not just croissant-size purse inhabitants; one regular at the chain's midtown location always brings her 65-pound greyhound, the dog's sleek head eye-level with the Christian Louboutin lacquers on the manicure tables.

Whereas Toto's accompanying Dorothy all the way to Oz may have seemed like a curious anomaly, now it would be strange if Judy Garland had traveled without the cairn terrier, thanks to the glut of easily obtainable Emotional Support Animal letters; after spending mere minutes filling out a questionnaire on certapet.com, I was informed that I am an excellent candidate for an emotional-support animal and that I could get a therapist's evaluation and, if deemed fit, a confirmation delivered in 48 hours for \$150. From Cara Delevingne's husky mix Leo, a regular at Claridge's in London and front row at Chanel couture, to Hector, Thom Browne's wirehaired dachshund (who prompted the line to stock dogwear), pets have become a tolerated extension of their owners, accompanying them everywhere they go. It was only a matter of time before spas and resorts followed suit.

These latest animal-friendly bastions go out of their way to offer cosseted companions an experience as luxurious as the ones enjoyed by their human escorts. At Las Ventanas al Paraíso in Cabo San Lucas, pets receive their own cabana and can choose from the "Canine Delights" menu presented to them by the "dog butler" on hand for walks and massages. The Inn by the Sea in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, has an equally diverse room-service menu, including homemade Meat Roaff and their signature dish, K-9 ice cream, a soy milk-based honey-and-vanilla confection topped with dog-bone crumble. Spa options are just as robust; Pennsylvania's Nemacolin Woodlands Pet Resort & Spa offers blueberry facials, hot-oil treatments for dull coats, and mud baths to soothe parched skin. (À la carte nail grinding and tooth brushing are also on offer.) In an age when wellness is the new luxury, it is perhaps unsurprising that the time, energy, and money people are spending on their own well-being should extend to their families, which

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GROOM SERVICE

With animal interactions said to increase levels of the so-called love hormone oxytocin, a well-coiffed poodle can be both emotional salve and sartorial twin. Van Seentus wears a Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello dress and sandals; Saint Laurent, NYC. Chloé necklace. In this story, hair: Garren of Garren. New York; for R+Co; makeup: Yashin. Photographed at 110 North Mapleton Drive. Details, see in This Issue.

quell a dark mood, attacking a punching bag replicates that plate-breaking feeling without the waste or cleanup. My desire for release has recently flared up, spurred by a totally unforeseen divorce and a spell of academic nomadism that has had me breezing in and out of college towns.

Shortly after moving from Chicago to Oxford, Mississippi, to be the visiting writer at the university, I began looking for a boxing gym, but I doubted that a near-violent workout would suit the mild feminine sensibilities that I remembered from growing up here. I imagined the shadowboxing aerobics of the nineties and early aughts, a room of bored women blithely punching the air.

But the students at Oxford Fitness Kickboxing are not there to play, and most of the instructors compete in pro or amateur fights put on across the state. Forty punching bags loom in a grid in the center of the hangar-size gym, space that proves crucial once the other students—many of them the seemingly demure sorority sisters I see around campus—begin striking. Their bandage dresses and smiles are replaced with boxing gloves and brutal uppercuts.

Seeing these young women unleash a torrent of strikes with narrowed eyes, I remembered something Winston had said to me during our call: “Most learning comes from the body up to the brain rather than the other way around.” My fellow fighters were enacting a power they already possessed. No longer will women be hospitable to a fault. All over the country (yes, even in Mississippi), female ferocity is afoot. □

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include canine, feline, porcine, and even leporine members. (I can direct you to not one but two bunny acupuncturists, should you be in the market.)

New York–based holistic veterinarian Tracy Akner, V.M.D., C.V.A., who specializes in veterinary acupuncture, Chinese herbs, and cold laser to help repair tissue while reducing pain and inflammation, says those who seek her out these days are better educated than they were ten years ago: “There’s so much more information. It’s people who think, I’ve evolved in my life to realize that the pills my doctor gives me may not be the best treatment for me in the long run—so why wouldn’t the same apply to their pet?” Akner, who recommends a homemade diet for pet patients that maximizes antioxidant-rich vegetables and meat, says that the whole-foods trend and gluten-phobia has been a gateway for this change in mind-set. “I used to have to spend a lot longer explaining why

Purina might not be the best choice,” she says. Akner cites the rise of fresh pet food-delivery services, such as the Farmer’s Dog and Ollie; at Ollie’s inaugural Pupsaving dinner this past November, the turkey feast served to bipedal guests was derived from the ingredients used in the company’s new turkey recipe, which was simultaneously prepared for pet guests in red-and-white china dog bowls.

But all this effort may better serve the owner than the animal. I understand that, for many, ensuring the comfort of a pet—and having its comfort in return—is irreplaceable, as is the convenience of traveling with them. (Although taking the Hampton Jitney with Phyllis—who is not only allowed on the coach in a carrier but fawned over by passengers—is the opposite of calming if you forget her Dramamine.)

“When I have her with me, I don’t have to worry about leaving her alone or with a cat sitter, which is the source of most of my anxiety anyway,” says *Last Week Tonight* writer Juli Weiner, who has traveled to Los Angeles for the Emmys with her Persian, Pajama. Whether that means Pajama should be allowed on a plane—or in a spa—remains a question, as everyone seems to have an emotional support-animal horror story. Who can forget when that purported “service” marmoset bit a Target employee in 2015, fanning the flames of the debate on social media?

But the reciprocal nature of human-pet wellness is real, according to Steve Marsden, D.V.M., N.D., a veterinary and naturopathic doctor who runs one of the world’s only shared animal-and-human holistic medical centers, in Alberta, Canada, with his wife, Kären Marsden, D.V.M., C.V.A. “It’s a common experience to see a pet’s and its owner’s health status intertwined. If the owner is not doing well, that will affect the animal and vice versa,” says Steve Marsden, whose dual treatment centers used to be in the same building; due to increased demand, the human facility has moved across the street. (The reception area—and Chinese-herb dispensary—remains communal.)

Phyllis drooling on the marble next to me at Drybar in no way enhanced my blowout experience. But I do enjoy visiting Ana, the Maltese at Sharon Dorrham Color at Sally Hershberger salon on New York’s Upper East Side. On a recent afternoon, Ana (after Pavlova) was presiding over her domain while her father, stylist Tim Lehman, saw his regular clients. “She really does provide emotional support,” Lehman explains, adjusting the tissue paper secured with rubber bands that protects the Westminster Best of Breed 2017 champion’s pristine white hair from breakage. “People get nervous coming here, and

she helps take the focus off them. She’s a great desensitizer.”

Lehman confirms that animal tolerance in the salon has certainly shifted. “We’re like Europe; everywhere you go on Madison Avenue now you can take your dog,” he says before recalling a client who used to come to his salon years ago, petrified that the resident Italian greyhounds would relieve themselves on her cognac Birkin bag. “That would never happen today,” says Lehman; a Goldendoodle is the new Birkin bag.

I am only allowed to pet Ana in the direction of her hair growth, so as not to derail her *mise en plus*, and as I sit down to have my own curly strands blown straight, I can’t help asking what products she uses to achieve such silkiness. “Everyone is always asking that,” Lehman says with a spin of the round brush, name-dropping her favorites from Vertu’s line. “They wish they could look as good as her!” □

LET’S GET PHYSICAL

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(recreational) interest in climbing. (He’s also an investor in the company.) The decidedly anticorporate headquarters in East Austin, our next stop, consists of one large white-and-plywood-accented room with desks everywhere, along with dogs and music. The staff looks a lot like the 20- to 35-year-old city-based customer they are designing for—someone who’s interested in working hard, but not too hard, before finding a great place to hike on the weekends. In a little cove designated as the art department, designers are surrounded by inspirational images that draw deeply on the seventies and eighties, a time when people got their aerobics in aerobics classes, bodies were softer, and happy was cool. On the bookshelf is the 1977 classic *The Complete Head to Toe Exercise Book*.

The big news in the art department has to do with color, initially anathema, more recently loved—in moderation. “There is so much color in nature,” says women’s design director Alexa Day Silva, her field guide to wildflowers conspicuously nearby. (Color, like clothing design in general, seems to be in Haney’s genes: When she was a kid, her dad screen-printed T-shirts, while both her mom and her aunts made extremely colorful clothes. “Their youthful spirit is a lot of the personality of OV,” Haney says. “The whole spirit is about growing up in Boulder with people who make things.”)

Lunch is at June’s All Day, a restaurant run by Haney’s boyfriend, Larry McGuire (the couple make a point of spending every weekend together, no matter how far Haney’s travels may have taken her in the in-between). CONTINUED ON PAGE 102