

Best friend WELCOME

Your summer holiday is just weeks away – why not share in the fun with your pooch pal at these pet-friendly venues?

WORDS JESSICA GOULBURN

Pender Lea Chalets, Snowy Mountains

No matter the season, the Snowy Mountains is a beautiful place to explore. Whether you're after snow or sun, Thredbo, Perisher and Jindabyne don't disappoint with family and dog-friendly activities all year round.

Situated on the Alpine Way, Pender Lea Chalets caters to all of your needs. Rooms range from boutique alpine chalets and historic farmhouses to cottages and cabins, with space for two or 19. And the best thing about it is your best friend doesn't have to miss out.

Pender Lea Chalets is ideally located in the heart of the Snowy Mountains. The ski tube is just five minutes drive away, providing direct, all-weather access to Perisher Blue, the largest ski resort in the southern hemisphere. Alternatively, Thredbo Village is just down the road and Jindabyne is 10 minutes away to service your retail needs.

When the snow begins to thaw, the mountains become a picturesque and serene destination, perfect for bushwalking, horse riding and fishing – all which can be done on the 2800 acre Pender Lea plot. Sonja Schatzle from Pender Lea Chalets says it's the perfect destination for people who want to bring their dog to the Snowy Mountains, as they are close enough to all the action without actually being in the Kosciuszko National Park, where dogs are prohibited. "We're pretty much the closest to the National Park that you can get and bring your dog," she says.

Sonja adds that while dogs are definitely welcome on the property, it's BYO bedding to ensure your dog stays nice and healthy. Dogs are allowed in all of the different types of accommodation, however they cannot be left unattended. As a solution, Pender Lea asks that upon booking, you hire the private state-of-the-art kennels that the resort offers. "It's got a fenced-in yard out the front and then a large enclosure inside," Sonja explains. "In winter, there's even heating available."

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Pender Lea has its own private, secluded spot on the Thredbo River.

Pender Lea supplies dog bowls for your water and a pooper-scooper to keep the kennel clean.

The properties at Pender Lea Chalets are all self-contained with fully equipped kitchens and log fireplaces, and some even come with their very own hydrotherapy spa and sauna. Each property is uniquely designed, depending on how many people it can accommodate and where on the estate it is situated. If you'd like a break from cooking, the Gourmet Pantry Meals allow for private, in-room dining and Pender Lea also has a private chef available for an indulgent culinary experience.

Alternatively, if you'd like to go out, the Crackenback area has a number of local eateries.

Activities

There's plenty to do in the mountains, no matter what the weather or the kind of experience you're after.

In the winter, there are ski slopes galore for your skiing, snowboarding and snow tubing needs. While many resorts have banned people from tobogganing due to a number of accidents, Perisher Blue has a purpose-built snow tubing park, Tube Town. The tracks are floodlit which means you can enjoy the thrill of the tracks day and night. Snow tubing is perfect for the whole family, whether you're experienced skiers or first-time visitors.

In the summer, there's plenty to do, without actually leaving Pender Lea Chalets. Harness your dog and take it out for a bushwalk to experience the crisp mountain air, whether you want a relaxing stroll through the wilderness or a hike up the steepest mountain. Why not take a picnic and escape the heat among the alpine wildflowers? Sonja also recommends taking your dog to Jindabyne for a leisurely stroll around the lake.

A particular highlight is the Kosciuszko Sunrise Tour. In the early hours of the morning while the stars are still out, you can walk to the top of Mt Crackenback to experience the first rays of sun sparkle across the peaks around you. You are then rewarded with a beautiful champagne breakfast.

Of course, there's a lot for you to do if you choose to leave your dog in the luxury of its heated kennel.

Pender Lea has its own private, secluded fishing spot on the Thredbo River and you can also experience the mountains on horseback.

For the more adventurous, you can explore Jindabyne or Thredbo by mountain bike and there's also bobsledding in Thredbo village as a fun family-friendly activity. Or, if you'd prefer to experience some water sports, there's waterskiing, canoeing and whitewater rafting. →

About Pender Lea Chalets

Where: 1056 Alpine Way, Crackenback, NSW 2627
Phone: 1800 352 088 or (02) 6456 2088
Website: www.penderlea.com.au
Cost: Prices start at $80 per night and range right through to $5775 per week, depending on the type of accommodation and the time of year, and whether you are bringing your own linen.

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Your dog can even sign up to the Pepper Tree Pet Club for some fantastic goodies that include a dog lead, a treat and a bottle of wine for you.

Tuscany Wine Estate Resort, Hunter Valley

Tuscany Wine Estate Resort is set on 10.5 hectares of prime Hunter Valley land, the heart of Australia's premium wine country. And, it welcomes your precious pooch.

The four-star property offers four specialty dog rooms, situated at the end of each wing. Kirsty Woods, General Manager, says this is to help other guests feel comfortable: "Ideally, it's to make sure that people with an allergy to animals aren't affected by them, and also from a noise perspective." Dogs, however, should still be on their best behaviour.

Kirsty says that preferably, only one dog is allowed in your room and there is a maximum size, up to 20kg. There is also an extra cost of $25 per night if you choose to bring your dog along.

Your dog is not allowed to stay in your room unattended. There are plenty of services around that can dog-sit if you choose to explore the area without your pooch. Kirsty recommends the Critter Sitters, who will come to the resort, walk your dog, and look after it in your absence.

The resort's two restaurants, The Mill and Brokenback – BBQ and Tapas Bar, welcome your dog, however, only in certain areas outside the restaurant.

What's in the area?

There's plenty to do in the Hunter Valley, with or without your pooch. If you fancy a winery tour without the hassle of driving, there are many companies that will take you on a private or group tour to boutique and larger vineyards. These are usually on buses so you'd have to leave your dog behind.

Alternatively, if someone is prepared to skip the wine, you can drive around the vineyards yourself. Many wineries in the area won't be opposed to your dog visiting, as long as it stays outside. Kevin Sobels has a winery dog named Archie who will greet you at the Cellar Door, and he would probably love some company.

Pepper Tree Wines also welcomes your best friend to have a play with their winery dogs. Your dog can even sign up to the Pepper Tree Pet Club for some fantastic goodies that include a dog lead, a treat and a bottle of wine for you. Your dog will be given some water and treats on any visit to the winery. Pepper Tree Wines also has an annual Pooch Picnic featuring training demonstrations and trick shows as well as dog competitions.

To unwind from a hectic week, treat yourself to a massage at Tuscany Estate or if you'd rather the full package, head to one of the day spas in the area. Your dog can also be treated to a luxurious day with Ooh La La Pet Spa, which will bring its van to you for some pooch pampering including clipping and bathing. •••



About Tuscany Wine Estate Resort

Where: Corner Hermitage Road and Mistletoe Lane, Pokolbin, NSW 2320
Phone: (02) 4998 7288
Website: www.tuscanywineestate.com.au
Cost: Prices start at $185 including a full cooked breakfast, depending on the room type and the time of year. There's also the $25 surcharge for your dog.

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