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Have pet, can travel

St. Charles visitors bureau IDs pet-friendly locales

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By ROMI HERRON For Sun-Times Media

The challenging economy of 2009 has prompted some travelers to stay close to home, with others making sure their budget-conscious travel plans include the family pet, according to Jenny O'Brien, sales manager for the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The organization has set out to make it simple for pet owners to plan a trip to St. Charles with their pet, through a Web page launched in December at www.visitscharles.com/molly.cfm.

"I, too, am someone who has enjoyed bringing along my dog on both business and leisure trips," O'Brien said. "St. Charles needed to have pet-friendly travel information easily accessible for visitors."

To make it happen, O'Brien invited Rod and Amy Burkert, the creators of www.gopetfriendly.com, to spend a day with her and her dog in St. Charles. The Burkerts made it a road trip and brought their pets along during Thanksgiving weekend.

The Burkerts offer a daily blog, forums, news feed and photo-sharing element on their Web site, where they've posted these goals: "We believe it should be simple to include our pets in all of our leisure activities. However, we found this was not always the case when we were traveling. ... Rather than give up on the idea of 'family' vacations, we chose to develop a resource that takes planning a trip with your pet to the next level."

With O'Brien, they visited parks, hotels, pet stores and the CVB office, and from there, the group worked together to create the one-stop-shopping depot for St. Charles-bound travelers and their pets, O'Brien said.

"St. Charles is very fortunate to have five out of 11 hotels that are pet-friendly. Between the hotels, dog parks, pet-friendly shopping and dining, and various outdoor activities, we have our pet-friendly travel specialist on the Web site and users can find an 'everything you need to know' as well as a sample itinerary for their visit," she said.

The CVB Web site, which features O'Brien's yorkie-poo, Molly, lists the local retailers and hotels that accommodate pets, as well as events and activities where they are welcome. Included on that list are summer events such as Concerts in the Park at Lincoln Park, and Sculpture in the Park at Mount St. Mary Park.

[How to Have a Jet-Set Pet](#)

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From Dog Blog

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