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Santa Paws Is Coming to Town

Pets Can Get in on the Holiday Cheer Too

by Richard Guzman

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - When shopping for your loved ones this year, don't forget the ones that love you unconditionally - your pets.

With Downtown now home to thousands of residents and an untold number of their furry friends, plenty of places have sprung up to meet their (animal) needs. These pet emporiums also offer unique gift ideas, and anything from a day at the spa to fancy furniture is ready to be wrapped up and placed under the holiday hydrant or scratching post.



Pussy and Pooch offers a \$598 dog bed. "It's a contemporary piece of furniture, not just a pillow," said a store employee. Photo by Gary Leonard.

1) Look Good: Everyone wants to look their best at holiday parties, and pets are no exception. That's where Muttropolitan comes in. The Second Street store offers full-service grooming (starting at \$25) to pamper any pooch; options include nail clipping, ear cleaning, teeth brushing, hair trimming and more. Although many hounds

may protest, for \$10 and up pet owners can treat their dogs to a do-it-yourself wash. (No, the dogs don't wash themselves; the owners do the work.) With the warm, soothing water and all the attention that comes from a bath, any dog would appreciate this as a holiday gift.

At 408 E. Second St., (213) 626-8887 or muttropolitanla.com.

2) Sleep Well: One thing dogs and cats can do better than most of us is sleep, so why not reward their laziness with a gift that will allow them to perfect the art of leisure. Pussy and Pooch has several options to make your pet's life even more relaxing during the holidays. Those not impacted by the economic crisis could consider a \$598 bed. "It's a contemporary piece of furniture, not just a pillow," said Lee Marshall of Pussy and Pooch. The curved bed, which resembles a wooden half pipe with a comfortable mattress, will make you want to snuggle with your dog. For smaller dogs, and cats, Pussy and Pooch sells a \$185 "sleep pod carrier," a combo bed/carrier that can be buckled into the car for safety and is airline approved. Also for the kitties is a \$320 scratch lounger. Shaped like half an egg on legs, the lounger doubles as a contemporary piece of furniture where Chairman Meow can take out all of his frustrations without damaging the real furniture.

At 564 S. Main St., (213) 438-0900 or pussyandpooch.com.

3) Dog Day Afternoon: Dogs are social animals, and although they love being around humans, they need to spend some quality time with each other. With that in mind, Bark Avenue's new Main Street location offers dogs an afternoon, or even days, of fun and frolic with its Doggy Daycare. Think of it as summer camp for dogs, where they get to run around in a cage-free play area with other dogs. Canines can be left if you're going out of town, and rates start at \$8 an hour (a week averages \$150). "We have a doggie gym and a full staff that plays with them," said Shannon Sardella, manager at the Downtown Bark Avenue. "It's essentially like a dog park, but we're inside."

At 545 S. Main St., (213) 748-7485 or barkavela.com.

4) Get Walking: An organized tour can be a creative and fun gift for the holidays, especially for a Downtown dog who spends most of his time inside a loft. A call to Walk Fido will get Sir Barksalot out of the house so he can make some friends, get some exercise and learn about the neighborhood. Rates are about \$15 per 30-minute group walk. Dog walkers can even come pick up the pets while the owners are at work, said David Cerwonka, owner of Walk Fido.

At (213) 479-2426 or walkfido.com

5) Ol' Saint Bark: You better not pout, you better not bark, you better not bite, I'm telling you why, Santa Paws is coming to town. At Lofty Dog Academy in the Barker (inadvertent pun!) Block, jolly old Saint Bark will be on hand Dec. 13 from 7-10 p.m. at the Santa Paws Is Coming to Town event. For \$10, dogs can visit the 5,000-square-foot indoor dog park and enjoy live music, gourmet dog food and take pictures with Santa Paws.

Another benefit is that a portion of the proceeds from the party will go to help fund mammograms for women without insurance. All dogs on the "nice list," meaning those with a good temperament, will be allowed in. Unfortunately, those on the naughty list will have to wait until they shape up.

At 525 S. Hewitt, (213) 617-2275 or loftydog.beepez.com.

Contact Richard Guzman at richard@downtownnews.com.

