

CANINES RUFF IT AT ADORABLE DOGGYTOWN

Dogs socialize at South Shore facility, get pampered at Griffintown grooming spa



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Hotel Intel

I see tails wagging and noses quivering with excitement. While Montreal's snowbirds plan their vacations, their pets are making tracks to Adorable Doggytown.

I read about Adorable Doggytown in the New Yorkie Tribune. There are two locations: a grooming spa in Griffintown and a spacious boarding facility on the South Shore (with free transportation between them). Doggytown works a bit like

Hairbnb. Each dog gets a private sleep space, and owner Dominique Firetto and his team act as hosts, organizing activities.

I asked about deluxe amenities like Petfix or Dog Pérignon, but no way — Doggytown is rather rustic. The boarding facility is in the heart of farming country, and the dogs love ruffing it in the barn and in the large fenced field.

You never know who you'll meet. The guest register lists Very Important Pooches such as Justin Retriever and Bark Wahlberg. Brad Pit Bull has made the scene, but he's only welcome back if he's on his best behaviour.

Diversity is fundamental to Doggytown's ethos, and the facility welcomes all breeds and colours. It has hosted a Tibetan terrier, a Rhodesian ridgeback,



Dominique Firetto and some boarders at Adorable Doggytown, a canine country resort on the South Shore. PHOTOS: MARJOLAINE MAILHOT

an Irish wolfhound and a British bulldog.

The ultimate in political correctness? Doggytown even accepts cats.

Country resort: Adorable Doggytown Country Club operates in a former ranch in a pastoral South Shore community. Its exercise program sets it apart from many other boarding places: the canine guests spend hours running and playing freely, in groups. There's a large enclosed field with a climbing playground, so the dogs can bound over rock gardens, up ramps and through tunnels that approximate some of the obstacles their ancestors encountered in forests and fields.

"Even city dogs have a little wild in them," said Firetto, who lives on the property and is hands-on in managing the kennel. "Their priorities are to socialize, run like crazy and have something to chew.

"Dogs are lonely when all they have is a dog walker coming a few times a day. Going to Doggytown means fun, fresh air and new friends.

"Dogs don't care about fancy things," said Firetto.

To that end, the boarders stay in a barn that has been divided into rustic sleeping spaces. Each dog has a 2.6-square-metre "room," with a pillow for comfort and wood chips to absorb dampness.

"The dogs aren't crying or howling to get out of their kennels, because they get lots of exercise. We play classical music, and the most important thing is that we also give hugs," said Firetto. "They're happy to be outdoors, but they also are missing their owners, and we recognize that."

Griffintown spa: Adorable Doggytown's downtown branch handles grooming and hourly daycare (but not overnight). Treatments include baths, manicures, hairstyling and trims around the bikini, the belly and the paws. Facial care includes the cleansing of eyes, teeth, ears and nose.

Signature spa services include the SOS Mouffette (anti-skunk), anti-shedding shampoos and vanilla infusions, which give a pleasant aroma to damp fur.

Backstory: Firetto is an award-winning dog handler who breeds Siberian huskies. He has extensive experience in show grooming and judging, training and animal welfare. His philosophy focuses on a harmony between the physical and mental well-being of each animal.

The neighbourhood: St-Jacques-le-Mineur is in a rich agricultural region. Pet owners who come to see Doggytown can also visit the vineyard Domaine St-Jacques (domainest-jacques.com), which is a stop along the Route des Vins, a seasonal food and wine

IF YOU GO

Adorable Doggytown in Griffintown: 514-846-3444, doggytown.ca; 1905 Centre St. Grooming salon. Doggie daycare, \$6 per hour, \$25 for four hours or more. Grooming, \$26.99 to \$69.99. Closed Sun.-Mon.

Adorable Doggytown Country Club: 514-846-3444, doggytown.ca; St-Jacques-le-Mineur. Prices fluctuate: \$30 to \$40 a day for dogs, \$17 for cats; includes transportation to and from Montreal, private room with heat and A/C, outdoor group exercise for dogs three or four times a day, indoor dog run, doggie treats. BYOF (bring your own food). Open Mon.-Sun. for boarding. Closed to human visitors Sun.-Mon.

route.

The farm Au Fil du Vent (aufilduvent.ca) grows grapes, berries, hazelnuts and alpine plants, and sells gourmet products including fruit pâtes, syrups and its signature beverage, verjus.



The climbing playground at Adorable Doggytown provides endless exercise.

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