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Recession bites but pampered pooches relax

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LOS ANGELES (AFP) — For the canine clientele of an exclusive boutique hotel in Los Angeles, the financial crisis affecting the human world is just a shaggy dog story.

Whether it's gourmet meals cooked to order or flat-screen televisions playing DVDs of "101 Dalmatians" and "The Lady and the Tramp", all needs are catered to for the four-legged guests of Hollywood's D Pet Hotel.

At 110 dollars per night for an "uber suite", some rates at the sleek establishment outstrip those found at popular tourist destinations. Las Vegas's MGM Grand recently offered rooms at 52 dollars a night.

Alissa Cruz, 32, a former real estate agent who opened the hotel with her husband Allan in December 2008, said the business targeted "people with an unlimited budget."

"We have very eccentric people, people who have money. We've had a client who just for the fun of it requested to have his dog picked up in a Lamborghini," Cruz told AFP.

"He just wanted the dog to be picked up from home and when the day was over take him back."

The most expensive room at D Pet Hotel is the "Uber Suite", which offers a queen size bed and a 42-inch flat screen television and chic decor.

Other rooms include the "Sensational Suite" at 90 dollars a night and the "BowWow suite" for 65 dollars.

But while no expense is spared for those pet owners seeking to board their dogs, the hotel also offers luxurious spa and daycare services.

For pooches who have had one dog treat too many, customised "doggie treadmills" and personal training is available.

Other guests, meanwhile, can indulge in an array of spa treatments, including massages, body wraps and vitamin baths.

More active residents are able to socialize in the hotel's 6,000 square foot indoor dog park, which is subdivided into three separate areas depending on a dog's size. "A French bulldog will not play the same as a 70 pound lab," Cruz says.

Cruz said she started the business out of her own experiences as a dog-owner. "It started out of the needs of my own dogs, because we traveled so much for work in our past careers and I always had to board them," Cruz said.

"I've been to a lot of good, bad, and ugly places and it always reminded me of a tunnel, a cage and my girls are princesses.

"So many times I've walked into places and cried when I left my girls, because the place smelled horrible, you don't trust the people behind the scenes and they didn't let me see a lot of things."

Customers: "I don't want to say their names but we do. We have a rock star that comes and drops his dog off, a couple of actors.

"They know they can come here and not have to worry about it and you take phenomenal care of their babies.

"One of our rock star clients, brings his dogs here and brings videos of him performing. They see the owner and be like 'Oh you are still there!'"

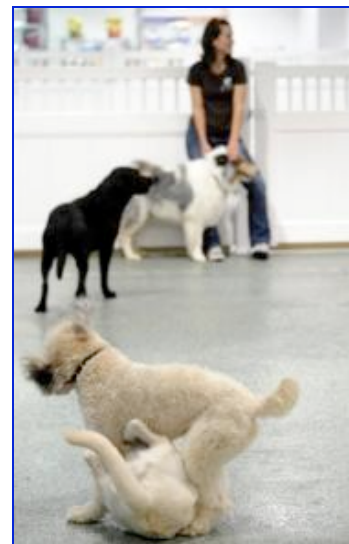
D Pet Hotel publicist Bryan Cole says the hotel has so far escaped the ravages of recession.

"It's Hollywood you know," Cole told AFP. "For the majority of people out here, their pets and their animals are their children and they would love to sacrifice lots of things in their lives before sacrificing their children.

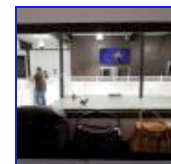
"If that means not eating out once or twice a week they'd rather bring their dogs here and leave them in day care for 65 dollars," he added.



Photo 1 of 3



The D Pet Hotel in Hollywood



Map

