

PET SITTING SERVICE

by Chase Binder

Back in October of 2016, a seeming lifetime ago, I introduced readers to a pet/housesitting service called Trusted Housesitters (www.trustedhousesitters.com). The concept was simple—a straight barter system, a web-based platform that matches pet-loving house sitters with folks needing a house sitter who can be trusted to care for their home and beloved pets when they are away. As with most barter systems, no money changes hands. If you have pets, you get pet-care for free. If you're the sitter, you get a place to stay for free—a chance to immerse yourself in a new area and live as resident without shouldering the costs of hotel or home rentals.

The idea appealed to Bud and me from the start. We're retired. Paying very close attention to expenses is part of life now, but we also want to continue indulging our love of travel as much as possible. At the same time, we could never give up our beloved Standard Poodles, Maggie and Millie. [Trustedhousesitters.com](http://www.trustedhousesitters.com) seemed a great solution.

Some research in 2016 and a long chat with the platform's UK originators answered my questions about safety and process. I spoke with some friends who had used the website and loved it—but we hadn't used it ourselves. Now, almost three years later, I can report that we've booked house sitters five times and have another two trips already on the calendar. We're sold!

Granted, it's not for everyone. Bud and I have had house sitters to care for our pets when we travel for many, many years. But they have always been people we knew—local individuals, some young, some



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older, some singles, some couples. All animal-lovers looking for some extra income and willing/able to care for our pets. We're not queasy about having other people live in our space. If you are, this probably won't work for you.

The program is membership based, with a fee of \$119/year which includes access to verified/vetted sitters, an insurance backed guarantee (property, damage and public liability up to \$1 million USD) and 24/7 membership service. We covered the fee with our very first sitter booking and estimate we have saved more than \$2000 so far. Sitters pay their own transportation and are responsible for their own food/beverage. Pet owners provide a home and everything needed to keep the pets happy and healthy—pet food, medications, toys etc.

How does it work? First, you build an extensive profile detailing your pets and their lifestyle, your home and its location and outline

your needs/expectations. Uploading detailed photos is a must. This takes some time and effort, but trustedhousesitters.com offers lots of help and tips—and they're just a free phone call away if you get stuck.

Next, you post the dates of your upcoming trip. We normally add a day on both the front end and the back end to allow for orientation and possible travel snafus—but if it's just a weekend away and we already know the sitter, we cut that short.

Then you relax and wait for potential sitters to “apply” to come and take care of your pets. Sitters, of course, must build their own online profiles, so you'll get to compare their experience as well as the reviews from people who have used them in the past. You can phone them, Skype them—really get to know them.

We were fascinated to find that our listings drew applications from all over the world (yes...world!), 20-30 for each of our longer trips and a dozen or so for the shorter ones. Several were from the UK, Italy, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Some were from Oregon, Washington, Georgia and Texas. Our “weekend” listings drew applications from Boston, Connecticut and, surprisingly, New Hampshire. It turns out that lots and lots of people (pet-lovers all, of course) think Bow, New Hampshire is a fabulous destination!

We selected a retired couple from Australia for our recent trip to Scotland. They had extensive experience on “sits” for three months in southern France, another for two months or so near London and many more. They were already here

in the US on sits in Dallas and Atlanta and flew into Manchester the night before we left. They took wonderful care of Maggie and Millie and the house, became great friends and will be returning in 2020 for another stint. For our upcoming trip to Aruba in the fall we selected a couple from the UK who have had previous sits near Boston and are anxious to see what New Hampshire has to offer.

Now...is it possible that you won't immediately “click” with your sitter? Sure. But reviewing their experience (some do better with cats, some with small dogs, some with big dogs) and getting to know them ahead of time will help immensely. Is it possible that you won't get lots of applications and have a wide selection of sitters to choose from? Yes...but if that happens, a quick call to the help line can often identify the possible reasons and offer solutions.

For lots and lots more detail, visit www.trustedhousesitters.com or shoot me an email chasebinder@comcast.net. Happy traveling!



Our Australian sitter, Christian Jordan, keeps Millie amused while the staff at Pembroke Animal Hospital evaluate Maggie.

WHITE ROCK SAYS TROOP 75 ROCKS!

White Rock Senior Living Community in Bow has a variety of activities presented by our activities committee and dinners by Summit Property and management. Recently we had a dinner followed by carnival type games. Chasing after overthrown hoops and balls would not be possible for us. Help would be needed.

We reached out to Bow Scout Troop 75 and their leader, Jim Webber. Because of Jim Webber's assist, and along with another Troop 75 leader, Liz Mueller, they arrived with at least five or six young scouts, and several scouting dads. We were able to enjoy the games with the scouts and chaperones' assistance. The residents participating in the games were smiling and energized.

The Scouts were truly encouraging while creating an enjoyable atmosphere for residents, especially those reluctant to try playing the games. The scouts opened doors for us, ran for overthrown equipment and awarded the prizes. The scouts and their leader as well as parents showed a well-developed spirit of volunteerism and social skills.

The residents at White Rock feel grateful for the gift of time and courteous thoughtfulness which Bow Scout Troop 75 contributed to all of us. These young people and adult chaperones sincerely made it a happy day for us. We wish all of them continued success with our grateful thanks.



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