



How to Book Free Hotel Stays with Your Dog

A step-by-step guide to earning hotel points
and traveling free with your pup

By ThePointsPup.com

■ *For dog owners who refuse to leave their best friend behind*

Why This Guide Exists

Pet fees are annoying. A \$75 charge just for bringing your best friend along? It adds up fast, especially on road trips with multiple stops.

But here's the thing: **you can make the room itself free**. When you're booking with points instead of cash, that \$200/night hotel room costs you nothing — and suddenly the pet fee is a lot easier to swallow.

I've been doing this for years with my 70-pound GSP/Lab mix, Ansel. We've road-tripped across Florida, stayed in beachfront suites, and explored new cities together — all without paying for hotel rooms. This guide breaks down exactly how I do it.

■ **Dog Parent Reality Check:** *If you're like me, you've scrolled through hotel options only to find "no pets" or "under 25 lbs only" — frustrating when you have a real dog. This guide focuses on chains that actually welcome dogs of all sizes.*

Step 1: Pick Your Hotel Chain

Not all hotel chains are equal when it comes to pets. You want one that:

- ✓ Welcomes dogs at most/all properties
- ✓ Has reasonable weight limits (or none!)
- ✓ Makes it easy to earn and redeem points
- ✓ Won't give you attitude at check-in with your pup

The Best Options for Dog Owners:

Hilton — Best all-around choice

Every Hilton brand in the U.S. accepts pets. Weight limits vary by property (typically 50-75 lbs), but policies are consistent and points are easy to earn. Home2 Suites, Homewood Suites, and Embassy Suites tend to be the most spacious for dogs who need room to sprawl.

IHG / Kimpton — Best for large dogs

Kimpton (part of IHG) has NO weight limits, NO breed restrictions, and NO pet fees. If you have a dog over 75 lbs — or a "scary" breed that gets side-eye at other hotels — Kimpton is your sanctuary. They even have a Director of Pet Relations at some properties (yes, it's a dog).

Marriott — Biggest footprint, most options

More properties than anyone else, which means more availability in smaller towns. Pet policies vary by location (always call ahead), but Residence Inn and TownePlace Suites are reliably pet-friendly

with kitchenettes — great for longer stays when you need to store dog food.

■ **Large Dog Tip:** *If your dog is over 75 lbs, prioritize IHG/Kimpton. Hilton and Marriott properties often have weight limits that'll exclude bigger pups. Nothing worse than showing up and getting turned away because your dog is "too big."*

Step 2: Get the Right Credit Card

This is where the magic happens. Hotel credit cards earn you points on everyday spending — not just hotel stays. Every grocery run, gas fill-up, vet bill, and bag of dog food gets you closer to a free night.

For Hilton Travelers:

Card	Annual Fee	Best For
Hilton Honors (No Fee)	\$0	Beginners, no risk
Hilton Surpass	\$150	Regular travelers (best value)
Hilton Aspire	\$550	Frequent travelers, Diamond status

For IHG/Kimpton Travelers (Large Dogs!):

Card	Annual Fee	Best For
IHG Traveler	\$0	Testing the waters
IHG Premier	\$99	Regular Kimpton stays
Chase Sapphire Preferred	\$95	Flexibility (transfers to IHG)

For Marriott Travelers:

Card	Annual Fee	Best For
Marriott Bonvoy Boundless	\$95	Best sign-up bonus (3 free nights!)
Marriott Bonvoy Bountiful	\$250	Free night cert + 33% point bonus
Marriott Bonvoy Brilliant	\$650	Premium perks, Platinum status

■ **Best Bang for Your Buck:** *The Marriott Boundless has the best sign-up bonus — 3 free nights (up to 50K points each). That's a long weekend with your pup covered from day one. The Hilton Surpass is my daily driver because the \$200/year in credits more than covers the \$150 fee.*

Step 3: Earn Points on Everything

Once you have the card, use it for ALL your everyday spending. The points add up faster than you think — especially when you're buying dog food, paying vet bills, and filling up for road trips.

What Earns the Most:

Category	Hilton Surpass	IHG Premier	Marriott Boundless
Hotel stays	12x points	26x points	17x points
Dining	6x points	5x points	3x points
Gas stations	6x points	5x points	3x points
Groceries	6x points	—	3x points
Everything else	3x points	3x points	2x points

Real Example — What a Dog Owner Earns Monthly:

- Groceries (incl. dog food): $\$700 \times 6x = 4,200$ points
- Gas (road trip fuel-ups): $\$250 \times 6x = 1,500$ points
- Dining (dog-friendly patios!): $\$400 \times 6x = 2,400$ points
- Pet supplies & vet bills: $\$150 \times 3x = 450$ points
- Everything else: $\$500 \times 3x = 1,500$ points

Monthly total: ~10,000 points

Annual total: ~120,000 points = 2-4 free nights

■ **Dog Owner Bonus:** All those Chewy orders, vet visits, pet insurance payments, grooming appointments, and training classes? Put them all on your hotel card. Your dog's expenses are literally funding your next vacation together.

Step 4: Book Smart

When you're ready to book, a few tricks maximize your points:

Use the 5th Night Free Benefit

Both Hilton and IHG offer this: book 4 nights with points, get the 5th free. That's a 20% discount on any award stay of 5+ nights. Perfect for those longer road trips when your pup needs time to actually

relax and explore, not just pass through.

Stack with Free Night Certificates

The Hilton Aspire and Marriott Brilliant give you free night certificates every year. The Surpass and Boundless give them after hitting spending thresholds. These can be worth \$300-500+ at nice properties — combine them with points for longer stays.

Request Pet-Friendly Rooms

When booking, add a note that you're traveling with a dog. Request a ground-floor room (easier for potty breaks), near an exit (quick access outside), or with a balcony/patio if available. Elite status helps you get these requests fulfilled.

■ **Pro Move:** *Call the hotel directly after booking online. Confirm they received your pet request, ask about their specific pet policy (weight limits, designated relief areas), and note any room preferences. Front desk staff remember guests who are polite and prepared.*

Step 5: Handle Pet Fees Like a Pro

Even with a free room, you'll still pay pet fees at most hotels. Here's how to minimize the damage:

- ✓ **Book Kimpton when possible** — no pet fees ever, period
- ✓ **Stay longer** — Hilton's fee is usually flat (\$75-125 total), not per night
- ✓ **Use your credits** — Surpass gives \$50/quarter to use at any Hilton
- ✓ **Check budget chains** — La Quinta and Red Roof have no pet fees
- ✓ **Ask about waivers** — elite status sometimes helps, especially Diamond

■ **Perspective Check:** *When the room is free, a \$75 pet fee for a 5-night stay works out to \$15/night. Compare that to paying \$200/night for the room PLUS the pet fee. You're still coming out way ahead.*

Quick Reference: Hotels by Dog Size

Your Dog	Best Hotel Options	Notes
Under 40 lbs	Hilton, Marriott, IHG	Welcome almost everywhere
40-75 lbs	Hilton, Kimpton, select Marriott	Check property limits
75+ lbs	Kimpton, La Quinta, Red Roof	Kimpton = no limits ever
"Scary" breeds	Kimpton, Motel 6	No breed restrictions

Your Quick-Start Checklist

- Decide your chain: Hilton (most options), IHG/Kimpton (large dogs), or Marriott (widest footprint)
 - Apply for a card that fits your budget — start with no-fee if unsure
 - Hit the sign-up bonus spending requirement (usually \$3-4K in 3 months)
 - Use the card for ALL everyday spending, especially pet expenses
 - Book your first free stay and hit the road with your pup!
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■ Questions? Email woof@thepointspup.com

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