



The PURR - FECT
HOLIDAY
Home

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International travel can be affordable thanks to an increase in house and pet sitting options. In exchange for a roof – sometimes a really amazing roof – over your head, you’ll provide love and care to someone’s pet(s), and make a home look lived in.

This is something I’ve been doing for a little over a year now. It helps me to justify an international trip every few months because I’ve got a free place to stay.

How to find one

Like anything, there’s a heap on offer. Some websites I’ve used and recommend include:

TrustedHousesitters – Offering a higher level of security than other sites, sitters must submit a form of identification before they are approved to use the service. You can pay extra for a police check to sit against your profile, although I haven’t done this and it hasn’t bothered any of the owners I’ve sat for.

housecarers.com

MindMyHouse

House Sitters America.

Each of these sites charge the sitter an annual membership fee. Homeowners pay to join TrustedHousesitters, but can sign up to housecarers.com, MindMyHouse and House Sitters America for free.

I’ve also browsed Nomador and House Sitters Canada, but there hasn’t been a sit on either site that’s piqued my interest. Yet.

Starting out

Now you know about some of the better house and pet sitting sites, here’s some advice to help you get a sit.

Experience. When I started out, I didn’t have any ‘experience’. I’d looked after a family member’s house and pet, but I hadn’t done sits for strangers. I think as long as you can look after your



own home and pet, this should be enough. And don't forget to mention you have your own pet, provided you actually have one, on your sitter profile. Uploading photos of you with your pet, or of your pet, also helps.

First, find a local sit. If something does happen to go wrong on your first sit, at least you have a pre-existing local support network to reach out to or you know who to call. Example: On a recent sit in Boulder, my car wouldn't make it any further up a snowy mountain. I was stuck five minutes away from my destination (i.e. the house I was looking after). This was until a stranger eventually stopped to tow me. If I was in Brisbane, and it snowed in Brisbane, I could have called a friend or roadside assistance. But if this was my first house and pet sit, I would've been a mess. Homeowners usually give you a list of emergency contact details (friends, family, their vet clinic), but I don't think that would have helped my car situation.

Keep it casual. When you've found a sit you're interested in, write your application like how a real, down-to-earth person would communicate with their friend or workmate. You're not writing a job application or an assignment. Simple words and short sentences. Maybe two or three sentences about you and your experience, and why you'd like the sit. Most of the information the sitter wants should

Message the owner each day to let them know how their pet is doing.

be on your profile – don't repeat yourself. The application is also an opportunity to ask the owner any questions you might have or seek further clarification on anything you need.

Be prompt. Hopefully the owner is prompt, too. Try to respond to any messages you get on the same day they're sent. Some owners give the sit to the first person to apply or reply.

Make a good impression. Owners – just like employers – can always Google you to find out more about who you've said you are. You might want to think about a social media clean up or an update to your privacy settings.

How to get that 5-star review

So you've got yourself a sit. But remember, it's not a hotel. Here's some extra advice to make you become a sought-after house and pet sitter the world over.

Message the owner each day to let them know how their pet is doing. Send photos and videos as well. I usually use WhatsApp to connect with the owners. If you've encountered any problems, contact the owner ASAP.

Let the owner know if a parcel has arrived and where you've stored it. Some of the parcels I've received while house sitting have actually been cat treats and cat food, and the owner has said to use these products while I'm there.

Throw out any fresh food before it expires.

Vacuum and sweep the floors on your last day. Take any rubbish out and put fresh liners in the bin(s).

Wash the sheets before you leave and put a fresh set on the bed. Put fresh towels out also.

While it's not expected, I always leave a thank you note and a small gift from Australia for them to come home to.

You might even score a second sit with the owners when they come home to see they've got fresh sheets on their bed. Or, better still, they'll leave you a 5-star review to help you out on your house and pet sitting journey.



ABOUT **Madolline Gourley**

Madolline is an Australian writer and editor making her way around the world house and cat sitting for strangers. She's seeing the world one cat at a time.

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