

Volunteer Vacation:

A New Definition of Best Friends Forever

BY SALLY EASTWOOD



The red rocks of the Southwestern desert stand between you and the vivid blue sky as your child walks next to you, discussing the merits of ants. Just like the ants, you are walking. No cell phones buzzing or video games chiming. Horses gambol in the paddock nearby and a falcon circles slowly above. Sounds like a dream, right?

Welcome to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary: the largest no-kill animal shelter in the United States. Built in 1984 near Kanab, Utah, the sanctuary cares for over 1,700 animals on just over twenty thousand acres of land.

When Best Friends opened, 17 million shelter animals were being euthanized every year. With a clear mission of "no more homeless pets," the founders worked tirelessly to reduce that number.

Not just a sanctuary, Best Friends Animal Society is a national organization with nationwide adoption events, spay and neuter programs, and local programs in cities including Los Angeles. The number of animal shelter deaths is now down to around four million every day to lower that number even further.

From the beginning, volunteers have been an essential part of operations. Each year, thousands of volunteers from all over the United States, from San Diego, California, to the Florida Panhandle, Piggy Paradise, Bunny House, Wild

available for sleepovers, but beware, you just might fall in love.

If horses are your dream, Horse Haven offers the opportunity to help out with feeding and grooming and socializing. You'll also have a chance to help with the sheep and goats.

For a completely different experience, volunteer at Piggy Paradise, a safe haven for pot-bellied pigs. Spend time socializing (pigs are very intelligent) and going for walks (be prepared for a slow pace). Piggy sleepovers are also possible if you are staying on-site.

EAT, STIM, LOVE

For accommodations, you can stay at the sanctuary in either cottages or cabins. Cottages sleep up to four, offering one bedroom with two queen beds, a living/dining kitchen area, and a bathroom. Cabins are smaller and sturdier, sleeping up to two with a kitchenette and bathroom. There are also recently prepped horse and dog trailers in the yard. Horses have dog-friendly, dog-friendly, dog-friendly.

Monday through Saturday, the Best Friends staff prepares a delicious vegetarian and vegan lunch for only \$5.00. Sifted at the communal tables with the other volunteers can be a lot of fun, especially when one of the founders joins the table and shares the latest sanctuary news.

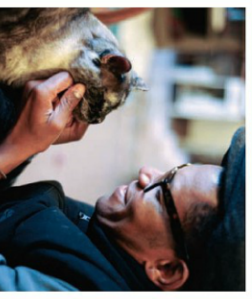
If you're in the mood for a home-cooked breakfast, try local favorite Houston's Trail's End. For dinner, visit the eclectic Rocking V Cafe, where you can try the Kanab-A-Dabba Doo Burger and outrageous key lime pie.

At the end of a day spent volunteering, you'll be tired, dirty, and hungry. But after you've had a shower and a warm piece of pie, you and your kids will feel happily connected. Time spent together with a clearly focused goal of helping the animals and without the tedium of electronic equipment is, as they say, truly priceless.

DOGS AND PIGS AND HORSES, OH MY!

Dogtown was made famous by the *Method* Geographic TV series of the same name. The program focused on rescuing and rehabilitating dogs that were deemed a lost cause, such as the abused pit bull terriers saved from NFL quarterback Michael Vick's illegal dog-fighting operation.

Signature octagon structures have cozy beds and large dog doors. Volunteer work includes feeding, moping floors and picking up poop. Some dogs are also



[MAIN WEBSITE]

bestfriends.org
[VOLUNTEER INFORMATION]
volunteer@bestfriends.org | Email: volunteer@bestfriends.org | (435) 644-2001, extension 4119

[GETTING THERE]

- FLY FROM JOHN WAYNE AIRPORT to Las Vegas, and then drive four hours north.
- DRIVE ALL THE WAY: around nine hours in total.

[STAYING THERE]

- ON-SITE COTTAGES from \$95 to \$140 per night, depending on the season. On-site cabins from \$60 to \$92 per night, depending on the season. See website for full amenities and details.

[LOCAL HOTELS AND HOTELS]

- QUAL PARK LODGE || qualparkodge.com || Rates from \$69 to \$119 per night, depending on the season. Pet-friendly with discount for Best Friends volunteers.
- BEST WESTERN HOTEL || bestwesternredville.com || Rates from \$59 to \$120 per night depending on the season. Pet-friendly rooms with discount for Best Friends volunteers.

[FOOD]

- VEGETARIAN BUFFET LUNCHEON in Angel Village at the sanctuary
- HOUSTON'S TRAILS END at 32 East Center Street
- ROCKING V CAFE at 97 West Center Street. Don't miss the key lime pie.

[LOCAL ATTRACTIONS]

- The following are within 90 minutes of Best Friends.
- BRUCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK || nps.gov/bca
- GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK || thecanyon.com
- LAKE POWELL || lakepowell.com
- ZION NATIONAL PARK || nps.gov/zion

[WHAT TO BRING]

- Sturdy hiking boots; old jeans; camera; sense of adventure
- [WHAT NOT TO BRING]: Dressy clothes, video games, fear of getting dirty



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