

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S HILLTOP INN

When your pooch acquires his first credit card, the place to use it is the Hilltop Inn in picturesque Sugar Hill, New Hampshire.

Enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of this Victorian country inn, built circa 1895, and the warmth and offbeat humor of owners Mike and Meri Hern.

"In 14 years of ownership we've had a lot of dogs stay here," says Mike. "As soon as they issue gold cards to dogs, people are out of here."

When you and your dog arrive at the inn, you will be greeted by two large, friendly golden/Maremma "puppies," Beemer and Bogie, who will shower you with affection and show you to your room. There you will find a list of things to do, rules of the establishment and a dog biscuit.

Forgot your water bowl? Need a pooch bed? Not to worry. The Herns will supply these essentials. Let them know if your dog may have people scraps or dog treats. Spoiling your pet is their delight!

Six non-smoking guest rooms feature antique beds, private baths, plump pillows, hand-pieced quilts and, in winter, flannel sheets. Available May through October is a two-bedroom cottage for the ultimate peaceful retreat.

A full breakfast is served, including such treats as cinnamon French toast with maple or berry syrup; cob-smoked bacon, ham and salmon; homemade jams; breads and muffins. In foliage season, guests can enjoy candlelit dinners including fresh local delicacies.

Stroll along quiet country lanes before taking in a spectacular sunset from the deck. Relax in comfortable

porch rockers or in the Victorian sitting room.

Walk your dog in their fields, in Franconia State Park or through White Mountains National Park, or take him on a cross-country ski trail adjacent to the inn. Directions to popular hikes and walks are available.

Bowser will love the Hilltop Inn. And the biscuit will not be charged to his card. ●

—Portia Little

The Hilltop Inn, Main St. (Route 117), Sugar Hill, NH, 800-770-5695 or 603-823-5695. Franconia Notch Chamber, 800-237-9007.

