

Welcome to...

# Pet Paradise

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Eddy Seleman gets out of his car, hustles underneath The Barkley's large, arched walkway and into the 15,000 square foot complex. He squints as the sunlight beams through the high glass ceiling. Teddy is so excited for his overnight stay he pees on the floor.

The Barkley staff is prepared for this sort of thing. "That happens 20 times a day," Barkley owner Howard Perlmutter says. Teddy had never personally peed on the floor before, but the golden retriever couldn't help himself today. The Barkley Pet Hotel & Day Spa is the only place of its kind in the entire country.

Perlmutter likes to think of his brainchild as the "Hilton for dogs." That statement, however, is not entirely accurate. How many Hilton's offer full-grooming, extra potty breaks, limo rides, bed time stories, and – if you need it – a good de-skunking? The Hilton should actually work to become The Barkley for people.

Perlmutter, who resembles actor Sean Astin (real life Astin, not his character in Lord of the Rings), thought of the idea for a swanky pet hotel and day spa, complete with pool, park and play area, while working in the music business in Los Angeles. It all

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The indoor park area, surrounded by iron-gated suites, provides a welcoming play area for pets during their stay.



ABOVE LEFT: A view into an executive suite.  
LEFT: Pets of all sizes can find the perfect sized room to suite their taste at The Barkley.

started with his pal Bailey, one of his acting clients. Bailey has acted in Saving Silverman, Be Cool, and Air Bud. Bailey is, of course, a dog – golden retriever to be exact. She is retired from acting now and follows Perlmutter around The Barkley all day.

“I was realizing how much money people spent on their pets,” Perlmutter says. “The pet industry at the time was a \$34 billion industry, which is 2 billion more than the airline industry in this country.” Despite the big bucks in the pet world, he noticed there was no real franchise for pet boarding

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and grooming. Perlmutter heard opportunity barking.

For two years Perlmutter conducted extensive research. He visited 200 facilities all over the country. He consulted pet architects on the best building materials. He sought out pet psychologists for the best animal treatment methods. The floor that Teddy saturated was picked specifically for its animal-soothing color and its animal-comforting surface. It’s also the best floor for cleaning up pee.

But pets aren’t into that stuff; they want the frosty paw ice cream treats and “paw”dicure bubble baths. The Barkley is about pampering. A dog like Teddy can look forward to a standard dog-grooming package that includes a shampoo, comb-out and blow-drying. If he’s been extra special, Teddy’s owners may tack on an anal gland cleaning, teeth-brushing, ear treatment, nail “paw”lish, relaxation massage, or facial. The health and wellness services could throw in acupuncture, some aromatherapy and a chiropractic stretching for good measure.

“Every dog is different, but it’s more about how the owner responds to the ‘paw’lish and stuff like that,” Perlmutter says. “Because dogs are becoming humanized, the owners think that the dogs want what the owners want. Like ‘what would I want if I was here?’”

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The Barkley’s private limousine will pick up and drop off your pup to make the experience more convenient for you.

Apparently some owners want a plasma screen TV (playing Animal Planet 24/7), a couch, a bed, a fireplace and a view of the pool. Those owners can fork over the \$69 a night and make it happen. But, of course, room service, tuck-in, bedtime stories and tummy-rubs will cost a little extra. For those into the true high-society doggy care experience, Perlmutter will actually send out The Barkley’s limo.

“We do pick up and delivery. It’s called our trans’paw’tation,” Perlmutter says. “We take dogs for rides if an owner schedules a ride. We also will take the dogs to McDonalds for a burger – with the owner’s consent of course.”

Perlmutter seems ready for every bark and call of even the snootiest shnowzer, but one question still sits and begs: Why Cleveland? This area is about hard-working, blue-collar people not limo-riding, diamond-studded dog collar people.

“If I opened one in Los Angeles, and it did well, what’s to say it will work anywhere

else?” Perlmutter says. “If I do it in LA, it’s going to cost twice as much, and even if it succeeds it’s not showing me anything because it worked in LA where everyone would think it would work anyway. But why would it work in Cleveland, Detroit or Columbus?”

Perlmutter is from the Cleveland area and likes its close proximity to other locations such as Akron, Erie, and Pittsburgh. Also the economic inadequacies of this area do not seem to translate when the love of a pet is involved. If the Barkley continues to excel in this area, Perlmutter is looking to extend The Barkley name beyond the monogram towels hanging by the pool in Cleveland, possibly into Columbus.

“That’s the goal anyway,” Perlmutter says.

One can imagine the national ad campaign reading something like this: Whatever happens in the Barkley, stays in the Barkley, and whatever stays in the Barkley can pee on the floor.

## The Accommodations

**Standard/Petite Suite**  
Raised-flooring, glass privacy doors, resting cots. Petite suites are scaled-down versions for smaller dogs  
**\$29 per night**

**Barkley Park**  
Iron-gated suites with bed, plasma TVs surround and indoor park area with artificial turf and cirlice garden with stone fountain  
**\$49 per night**

**Executive Suite**  
A 14x 14 room with couch, bed, fireplace, plasma screen TV, with secure glass door with a view of the indoor pool.  
**\$69 per night**