

Bow-Wow Boarding Kennel

Written by Janet Goodman, BT Contributor
January 2020

Design your own stay at SoMi Pet Resort



Miami Beach client of mine owns two Labradoodles. She looked around Miami-Dade for a decent place to board them for a week and discovered the mother lode of boarding facilities: SoMi Pet Resort at 2950 SW 71st Ave. in unincorporated Miami-Dade.

She raved about the place and how much her dogs enjoyed their stay: “It’s clean. No doggie smells. Private rooms with private yards attached. Two swimming pools -- in-ground ones, not plastic kiddie wading pools.”

When I visited on the busy Thanksgiving weekend, I too was impressed about the quality amenities and the cleanliness of this facility. Even with 180 dogs and 20 cats boarding over the holidays, 10 dog kennel buildings, 2 cat rooms with 32 air-conditioned condos, 15 private outdoor play yards, and 2 huge dog parks, each with a pool, there was nary a urine smell -- a remarkable achievement.

Constant cleaning is the secret sauce, but so is the smart, pet-friendly design of every detail of the 1.5-acre resort with 13,000 square feet of building space. SoMi part-owner and architect, Manny Gutierrez, of Gutierrez & Lozano Architects in Fort Lauderdale adopted many of the design elements from the firm’s previously designed boarding facilities in Broward County and made them to fit the long property located in the South Miami industrial area off Coral Way.

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Strategically placed hoses allow water access for easy cleanup, and slightly slanted kennel-building floors funnel waste and disinfectants into the center aisle drain troughs. Doggie doors are kept open in most of the kennels to encourage guests to do their business outside in attached fenced-in private yards. Park and play yards are designed with artificial turf laid over sand and rock for drainage, and are sprayed by a sprinkler system throughout the day.

The absence of dirt and mud in the outdoor parks helps keep swimming pools and interior floors tidy. Each pool is chlorine- and chemical-free to prevent damage to dogs' eyes, skin, and fur. Having 18 full-time employees also helps to keep the place in ship-shape order.

Manny's brother Rafa Gutierrez and his wife, Kathy, are co-partners in the SoMi enterprise (there are six co-owners in all), which opened in December 2018. Rafa's Candas Construction carried out the building of the facility, and Kathy works there as assistant office manager. They gave the *BT* a guided tour, pointing out important details offered in the unique boarding experience. Webcams are in each kennel building, cat room, and play and park yard; pet owners can log in with special codes to watch their dogs in their appointed rooms. A television is also installed in every kennel building. The luxury suites with translucent half-glass gates, often reserved for older dogs, are equipped with TVs, webcams, and hosing units, and are completely indoors.

The spacious, high-ceilinged reception area has a showcase window overlooking the large dog park managed by Cullen Horachek, who lives on the premises. General manager Samantha Burbank also stays on the property. Both supervised dog parks are cooled by industrial-grade UV shade tents, and the pools have maximum water depths of 18 and 30 inches, with shallow edges and beach entries. Horachek notes that dogs in the parks are segregated more by their temperaments than by size. Non-neutered dogs are welcome, but they must get their outdoor exercise in private play yards.

Besides cleanliness and design, key to SoMi's popularity has been its location. The facility is close to Miami International Airport, and many of its clients drop off pets on their way to catch flights. SoMi's day care is open seven days a week and handles an average of 40 to 50 dogs a day, many of which are owned by staff of nearby Nicklaus Children's Hospital. People drive from Pinecrest, Coral Gables, Westchester, Brickell and beyond, as well as South Miami to board their pets.

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Customers can choose from a menu of room accommodations and activities to lessen stress levels (both dog stress and human stress). The 5-by-6-foot standard indoor/outdoor rooms are \$45 a night; the 8-by-16-foot grand suites are \$55 a night; and the indoor luxury suites run \$75 a night. Playtime costs per day are two hours for \$10; four hours for \$15; six hours for \$20. Mandatory baths are \$25-\$35. Office duty (where dogs can hang out with humans at the reception area) is \$12 a day. Day care is \$35 a day or discounted with the purchase of a multiple-day punch card. Cat boarding is \$30 a night.

Once a month, a dog customer is chosen by the staff, and Rafa's sister paints its portrait. The artwork is displayed in the reception area until being gifted to the happy dog owner. Nice touch.

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