



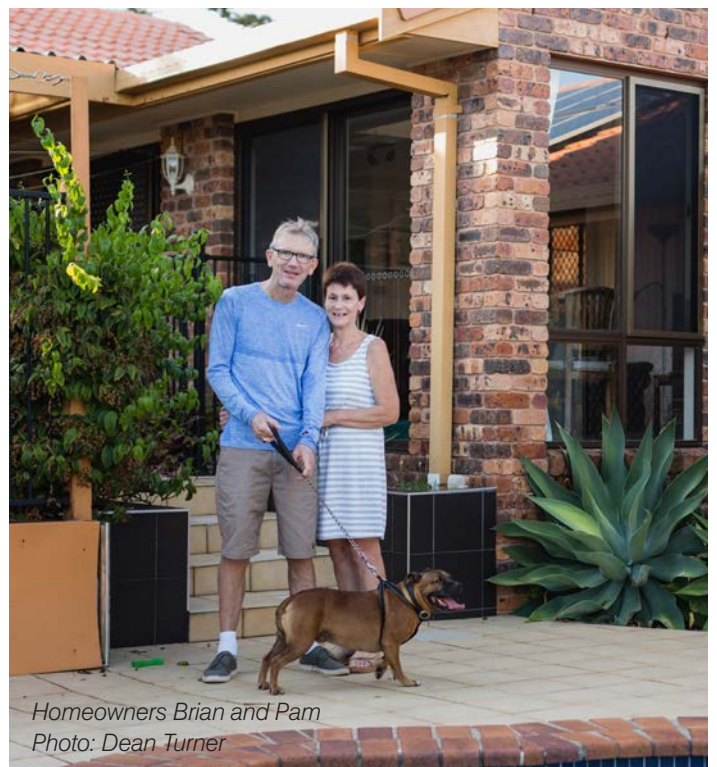
Finding the ^oright house sitter

Avoiding the one from hell

By Justine McClymont

You've got the map out and planned the next adventure. It's been too long between trips and the open road is calling. You picture pulling into that caravan park by the river, unfolding the camp chairs and settling in for happy hour. But there's just one minor detail standing in your way. Who's going to look after your beloved pets and keep the garden alive while you're away?

Whether it's for a short break or an extended caravanning trip, house sitting is becoming an increasingly popular way for people to have peace of mind while away on holiday. In exchange for free accommodation, a house sitter can look after your pet in your own home or take care of the garden and property. It sounds like a great idea and a win-win for everyone. But where do you start?



Homeowners Brian and Pam
Photo: Dean Turner

Brian and Pam from Ballina have used house sitters to look after their beloved English staffie on six different occasions. The idea of organising a house sitter came to them after chatting to a woman who had just spent two years house sitting all over Australia and overseas.

With a trip coming up, Brian and Pam posted an ad on the Aussie House Sitters website to find their first. Before long the enquiries started to flow in and they chose a sitter after reading their profile on the website and checking references.

"All of the house sitters we've had have just been really nice people," says Brian. With trips ranging from a couple of days to a six-week holiday, the couple love knowing that their 6-year-old staffie LeBron (fondly named after a famous basketballer) is being looked after in his own home. It has also saved them a fortune in kennel or pet minding costs.

But it's not just animals that can be looked after by house sitters. "I love my vegetable garden and a lot of the people who come in love gardening," Brian says. "We also have a pool which they can swim in and some of them also help out with the maintenance." House sitters can also collect mail and mow lawns, while those with the right skills can look after larger properties and keep an eye on horses and cattle.

House sitting websites

www.aussiehousesitters.com.au

www.mindahome.com.au

www.happyhousesitters.com.au

TOP TIPS FOR Home owners

Check references

organise your house sitter through a reputable house sitting website and be sure to check references

Have a chat

contact the house sitter in advance and talk to them so you are confident they understand what's needed and are fit for the job

Show them around

make time to show your sitter around when they arrive and explain what needs to be done while you're away

Write a list

write a list of jobs, instructions and emergency contacts for your sitter

Prepare the house

organise a bedroom for the sitter and make space for their belongings

House Sitters - Sammy & Danny

Back in 2012, Sammy and Danny travelled around Australia in their trusty 1975 Ford Transit Motorhome. As part of their travels they did a house sitting stint in north Queensland and became hooked on the unique lifestyle.

"Our first house sit was 'Wattlebank', a rural property north of Rockhampton where our duties were garden watering and minding one boisterous dog," Sammy says. "Millaa Millaa in the Atherton Tablelands was next where we looked after three dogs, three cats, chickens and ducks for a month." They also did a stint on Kangaroo Island

before taking care of a 50-acre property in northern NSW.

"Then up came a house sit in South Grafton looking after a small garden and Molly the dog for three months," says Sammy.

"We liked the area so much, we bought a house!"

"The best thing about house sitting is slipping into someone else's life for a while and hanging out at the local pubs, natural spaces and op shops. House sitting allows you to see a place from the point of view of a local. Without house sitting, we wouldn't have decided to stay in the Clarence Valley

and settle here."

But that's not all this animal loving couple found on their house sitting adventures. "In Millaa Millaa, one of the dogs we looked after was a mini foxy Chihuahua named Fuggles. Danny was especially taken with her," Sammy says. "Three months later we got an email from the owner saying 'I've lost my job and might move back overseas or out west...do you want Fuggles?' We didn't think for long and said yes. She was flown from Cairns to Alice where we were at the time and joined us and our other dog Indigo Velvet on our adventures."



House Sitters Sammy & Danny Photo: Justine McClymont



Motorhome in house sitting property

TOP TIPS FOR House sitters

Spread the word

register on an organised house sitting website
and tell people you're available

Get a reference

provide good references showing you're
reliable and trustworthy

Know your abilities

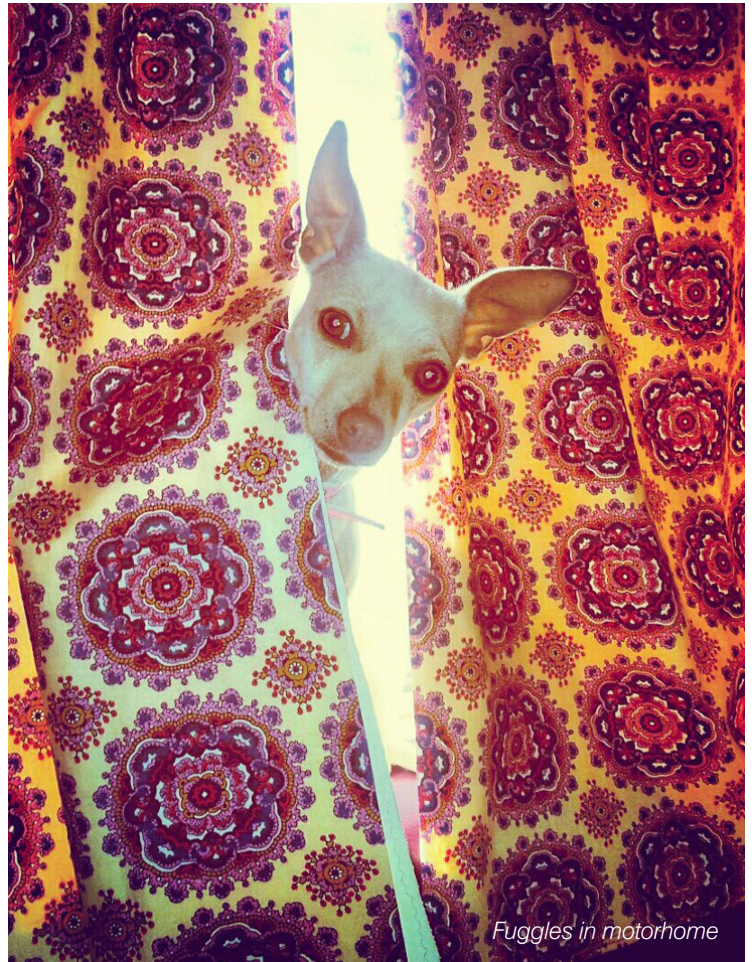
don't take on more than you can handle, particularly
when it comes to properties and larger animals

Confirm arrangements

make sure you confirm exactly what you will be
required to do and clarify who's responsible for
paying phone, electricity and internet usage

Stay in touch

keep in contact with the owners and don't forget to send
the odd update and happy snap of their beloved pooch



Fuggles in motorhome

frontline
EST 1987

Factory/Sales
(02) 9939 0600

Sales Nth NSW & QLD
(02) 6681 1555

Toyota Hiace
from **\$59,900**

VW Transporter
from **\$69,300**



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