

AUGUST MEETING

Robbie Chandler has set up a ZOOM call for anyone who would like to join. In order to participate, send Robbie an email at rbbchandler@yahoo.com. She will send you a link to join the meeting. With this link you do not need to download the ZOOM app. The call will last 40 minutes max and if you would like to share, bring your most positive moment or fun activity since our last meeting in February.

Fall activities

This fall will be different and large group camping trips may not be in the cards.

Reservations at Texas State Parks are open now with a three month window and reduced capacity. Camping is regarded as a low risk activity but social distancing is still recommended.

Here are some ideas for locations that have spacious camp sites.

Wichita National Wildlife Refuge –

Reservations are now required for most campsites.

Cooper Lake SP
Daingerfield SP
Huntsville SP
Copper Breaks SP

ZOOM Meeting in August

Monday August 10 at 7:00 PM

Guests always welcome

ANNUAL DUES ARE \$20



Wichita National Wildlife Refuge 2014



Here's an experience I won't be having this year (2020)

PETSITTING

For several years in the past I have been doing some Petsitting both inside and out of Texas. I started inside Texas just to get the hang of things and if the animals or owners did not like me it would be an easy drive home. I used this website, please know this website is for both those looking to Petsit and those wanting Petsitters. It is \$125 a year, to me that is the equivalent of one night in a reasonable hotel, so if you want a cheap vacation, definitely the way to go.

www.trustedhousesitters.com

2018

I started in Plano with a dog and a cat for 3 nights. That went well after I found where the litterbox was. I forgot to ask, and the owner did not tell me! The owner had changed her bed for me and that is where I slept. Not my preferred choice and something I learned to check are sleeping arrangements.

I moved onto College Station, a couple of streets from A&M, the owners were professors there, I really liked that, I stayed for a week and the cat knew where its litter box was. I had a guest bath and bed which was rather nice.

I had decided to lease my house from after Thanksgiving (2018) and through January (2019) and wanted to travel a bit further afield. I applied and was accepted for a house sit on the east side of

Florida, in Venice, for 10 nights while owners went on a cruise. The sit included two cats and a wee dog. I spent a couple of days driving there spending a few nights on the way with friends in Alabama, Tennessee, and N. Carolina (snowing). A little out of the way but all my friends are great cooks and happy to see me. I arrived in Venice the night before and was made to feel very welcome and taken out to dinner which I did not expect. The lady of the house took me on a walk around the neighborhood so I would get an idea of where to take the dog. The one shock came when she announced that the dog is walked every morning at 7am. I did not mind the afternoon or evening walk but for anyone that knows me, 7am is not my best side. The first morning I set my alarm, rolled out of bed and me, my bedhead and the dog took off for our stroll. I am so glad I made the effort because along the way I met half a dozen people who know the dog and stopped to chat with me while the dogs sniffed around each other. I learned this was a daily occurrence. That was when the light bulb went on! If I had not walked the dog at 7 AM the owners would quickly find out about it when they came back and there would go my "good pet sitter" badge. Accordingly, the alarm continued to go off for 9 more mornings.

There are a few things Petsitters need to be aware off when they sit, mostly good but occasionally not so much, you will hear about these as you go through the narrative. Venice, where I was staying, is a lovely small town on the coast. Afternoon walks were spent on the beach and the lovely old downtown area, where everything was dog friendly. The owners told me to help myself to whatever I wanted to eat however everyone else's tastes are not always yours and it is always good to do some research in advance to find grocery stores etc. I was there over Christmas and some may find this a little lonely. I did not as I had spent Thanksgiving and several days with my family which includes four growing grandchildren, they all like to be heard, quite often and at the same time! I was happy with the peace and quiet. I had my laptop with me, and Wi-Fi was available, I was able to keep up to date with email, the news etc. and the house also came with Netflix and Amazon Prime (both of which I had also loaded on my laptop). I was well prepared, and this is especially important! Another lesson I learned along the way, always be there when owner returns, so they can hear all about how great their pet was.

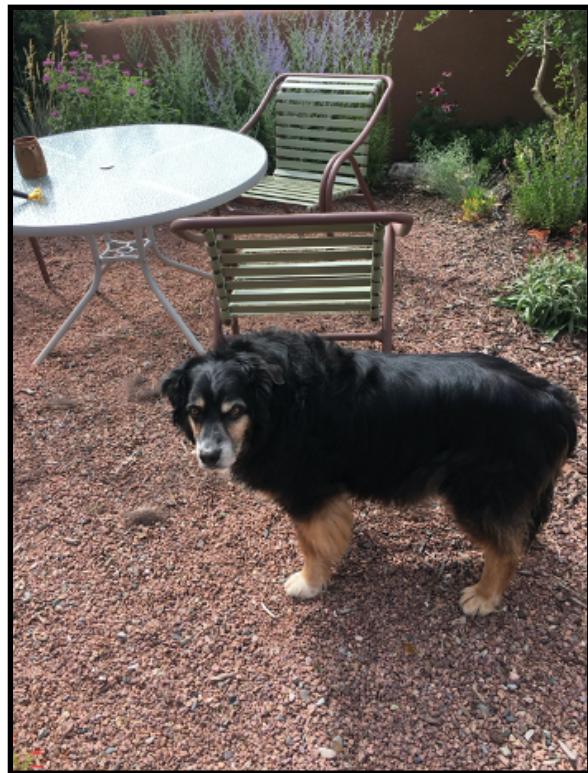
Onto 2019 – A Banner year for Petsitting.

Managed things a little differently for 2019. I decided to make a two-month trip and see the sites in New Mexico and Colorado. This is where your pet sitting takes on a whole new meaning, as you cannot control the owner's life...

In June I accepted a pet sit for three weeks in New Mexico, Carlsbad. I checked over the property and the house online before accepting and looked OK, not the best property I had ever seen but OK. The sit consisted of two horses, two dogs and one cat, no special care listed however when I arrived the day before (as usual) I learned the cat had been sick and had a severe infection and had to be treated with a laser, which consisted of me having to wear special goggles, I said No. I was not prepared to do this, and the owner agreed that it was above the call of a petsitter. The horses wore face masks to protect themselves against flies and I had to take the masks off every few days and put on ointment, I agreed to do that as I am comfortable around horses. Neither of these medical items were mentioned in the listing, so be aware that things are not always as they seem. Now this is where you must be adaptable. Four days into the sit the owners called to say they were coming home as the husband's father was in hospital in Carlsbad and they did not know how long they would be at the house before driving back to their vacation spot. I was not scheduled for my next sit in Boulder CO until two days after this sit was meant to be finished AND I was meeting a friend on the last day of my Carlsbad trip, who was flying in to drive with me to CO. Although the owners said I could stay there with them until I decided what to do I was not comfortable with that, I decided to visit friends in CA. I drove to Lubbock and hopped a plane. I was there a week when owners called me asking if I could come back as they were going to finish their vacation. I said I could be back in two days and I was. I left there on the originally scheduled day, met my friend and headed to Boulder CO.

Boulder CO was great. Three weeks there. Two cats that hid the whole time, except to use litter box and be fed. The property was lovely and lots of sight seeing was done, great sit.

Onwards to Denver, this was interesting. One crazy dog, (I never saw the dog use its doggie door once in the ten days I was there but it had to have done so as there were no messes), one cat and 5 chickens. One chicken



was sick but required no special treatment, other than making sure it was alive each morning when I unlocked the hen house, I locked it each evening before dark. What I loved about the house was the garden and Latte machine, what I disliked was the living room smelled really weird, in spite of me opening windows.....fortunately there was a separate living area else where in the house and I made myself at home there.

Last stop was my favorite that year, Durango CO. Three weeks up in the mountains, in a custom built Adobe house built into a hillside. One gorgeous old dog and 6 hives of bees which required no care except to always keep the habitat locked to prevent bears damaging the hives. I only had to go into that area to add to the compost, I was incredibly careful believe me as the whole area was surrounded by an electric fence. So much awesome scenery, I drove day trips to places I had always heard about, including Telluride, Pagosa Springs and my favorite, Ouray. If I did not have grandchildren, I would be living in the area by now.

No travel this year (obviously) but 2021 I will be heading to Scotland to do some sits.

Here are some Do's and Don'ts if you want to try it out. You can always call me directly.

Do

- Have personal references from some friends whose animals you have taken care of prior.
- Complete your Dashboard page as much as possible, this is your “resume” to potential owners.
- Be honest, if you do not want to take care of snakes, don't list them. You can specify which animals you will take care of.
- Set your expectations for a sit, i.e. no cat lasers.
- Follow through, life happens.
- List dates you are available.
- Always have contact numbers for owners.
- Check if there are cameras etc. in house or alarm system and know how to use them.
- Always follow owners' rules for animals, you may not like them, but you accepted the sit.
- Always leave a review, this is what gets you more sits.
- Start local then expand. This website lists places all over the world.

Do Not

- Expect everything to be perfect when you get there. One house I went to, looked great on-line but was no bigger than a chocolate box and did not have Wi-Fi.
- Expect everything to go as planned, it will not, I mentioned my Carlsbad experience earlier.

• Leave house in a mess, even if it was a mess when you arrived, clean areas you are living in, i.e. kitchen, bathroom, bedroom etc. The owners will never believe they left the mess to start with.

- Be completely negative when leaving a review, the owners will also be doing a review on you.
- Forget to adjust your available dates as you schedule sits, that way there is no double booking.

Adding a couple of photos from my favorite sit and the photo from my Petsitting page. This dog belongs to a good friend and I have kept him several times.

Robbie Chandler

