

Rent a pet program, a great idea:

Ahh...there's nothing like a much needed vacation. Like most pet lovers, we look for pet friendly places so we can bring along our furry family member. Traveling out of state on a plane though requires they stay home in the care of pet sitters. Wouldn't it be great if you could take a faraway vacation and yet still enjoy having a pet?

The Aspen Colorado animal shelter has a rent a pet program just for that. Their program allows tourists and residents to take a dog for a few hours or the whole day. You can go hiking, walking around town, or just spend some fun time in the park. It's a great program for the dogs because they are out of the shelter and socializing with people. The people get the benefit of enjoying a pet for a day while on vacation or they can use the time as a trial run before considering adoption.

The program was easy enough; we gave them our personal information and the shelter staff explained the dogs available and their personalities. We chose a vibrant 10 month old Husky sled dog mix named Noble.

As we put him in the car, we could tell he was ready for some fun. He stood tall on the seats and gleefully put his head out the window and let his ears flap in the wind while his nose captured the potpourri of smells.

His curiosity and tenacity on the trails around the Maroon Bells Wilderness area was entertaining. While we'd pause and admire the wildlife, Noble would attempt a thorough investigation, complete with digging. If a squirrel or chipmunk ran across the path, he was extremely eager to chase it. Being a young sled dog, he was quite strong and bright. I would crest a hill and Noble would stop and just stare. Knowing his keen sense of perception, I'd eagerly wait and ask "what do you see, a bear, a bobcat, a fox?" Most of the time I didn't see anything, but I'd still wait for him before moving on. Just because I don't see something, doesn't mean it's not there. He loved exploring and any time we were near a stream, he'd dive in, drink some and then splash around. Noble enjoyed being a dog in the great outdoors, which was part of the reason for having him along.

After 6 miles of beautiful and sometimes steep hiking in the rocks and forest, we returned to our car where he climbed in and promptly went to sleep. That was the first time we'd seen Noble still all day. He remained zonked out for the half hour ride back to the shelter.

Returning him to the shelter was just as easy as picking him up. Just walk him in, the shelter did a quick look over and then put him in an outdoor area to play with his buds. It was a fun day for all and provided a unique experience for our vacation.

Here in Fla, we have miles of waterways and parks that thousands of visitors enjoy. A rent a pet for the day could be a success for all. For the locals, we could spend the day with a pet to see if we like it enough to adopt, or just take it for a walk in the park to enjoy some outdoor time. For the visitors who are missing their pets at home, they could enjoy the companionship of a furry friend while enjoying our beautiful scenery. It's a great idea that hopefully our local shelters can consider.