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Wanted: A dog-sitter to care for dear old Bonny

Ask Frank

By Frank Barrett



Q WE HAVE quite an elderly labrador called Bonny who gets very forlorn if she's left at the kennels for even just a couple of nights. In the past when we've gone away on holiday or for a short break, we've depended on relatives and neighbours to look after her. We have a two-week break booked for Florida with the grandchildren in July. I've heard there are organisations that will look after your dog in your own house. How much does this sort of service cost and do you think it's a good idea?
Marlene, by e-mail

A IF YOU think you have a problem with your dog, you should try dealing with our two cats who apparently understand two words, 'food' and 'cattery'. At the first mention of the 'c' word, they both attempt to hide themselves in the faint hope that we will cancel our holiday if we're not able to find them (fat chance of that, I have to say).

Dogs, admittedly, seem to present more of a problem for anybody thinking of taking a holiday. A recent survey suggests that just ten per cent of dog owners use kennels, while 28 per cent leave the dogs with friends or neighbours (a third of whom, according to the survey, are unwilling pet hosts).

There are several companies that offer a home-sitting service – someone comes to stay in your house to feed your dogs or cats or to look after your garden and house plants. You can find the main companies in this business by entering 'pet sitting services' or 'home sitting' in the Google search engine. You can expect to pay from around £40 a day to a home-sitting service. (Some people are happy to pay this in order to have someone living in their home while they are away: not only looking after their pets but also deterring any potential house-breakers).

An alternative might be to leave your dog with a 'host' family. Barking Mad, for example, provides a 'home-from-home' care service for dogs while owners are away, matching your dog with a suitable family. Further information from Barking Mad (015242 76476, www.barkingmad.uk.com).

I'd be interested to hear from anyone with experience of any sort of pet-minding service that we could post on our newly relaunched internet site www.travelmail.co.uk.

Q DO YOU have information about a new musical production being staged this year in Venice in the open air? We're planning a trip later in the year and would like to get tickets (if we can afford them!).
Barbara Copestake, Dorking

A JOHANN STRAUSS'S operetta *A Night In Venice* will have a summer season at an open-air amphitheatre on San Giorgio Maggiore (the island directly opposite the Doge's Palace).

A Night In Venice follows the escapades of the notorious womaniser the Duke of Urbino and his comrades on the night of the Carnival. Described as a brilliant riot of masques, mistaken identities and faithless lovers, the show was a triumph in Vienna in 1883 and since then has become one of Strauss's most recognisable works.

The three-act operetta, directed by the

well-known German Wagner tenor René Kollo, will be performed from May 19 to October 7 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 9.30pm, and Saturdays and Sundays at 5pm and 9.30pm (duration approximately three hours, with a half-hour interval). In addition to the original German, the text will be subtitled in English, Italian and Japanese.

Prices range from £59 to £99. For an additional £79, a VIP package includes access to the VIP area with a welcome glass of prosecco, refreshments during and after the operetta, a complimentary programme and a CD.

The open-air theatre that will be home to the operetta was originally created in 1954 with the collaboration of architects and acoustic experts from La Scala in Milan.

After an active but brief run until the early Seventies, the theatre lay virtually unused except during film screenings for the 2000 Biennale festival.

For further information visit www.teatro-verde.eu.





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