



The Port of Oakland's cargo cranes and dock area inspired the interior design of the Cat Town Cafe's Cat Zone.

COURTESY CAT TOWN CAFE

Get Your Fur Fix at a Cat Cafe

believe that the ultimate endorsement that a place is a bona fide tourist attraction is when it's included in the pages of a reputable travel guide, such as the popular *Lonely Planet* series.

So that makes cat cafes “official” tourist destinations, as many of the world's most popular cat cafes are now listed in the series' guides to numerous international travel spots. London, Paris, New York, Amsterdam, Bangkok — name the destination, and you are likely to find a cat cafe, each one with its own special charm created by the cats that are lucky enough to call such cafes home.

From a cat lover's perspective, it's all about the “fur fix” when you are traveling and away from your own fur kids and missing them.

And let's face it: Cats and cappuccinos go together as wonderfully as whiskey and soda.

The country most associated with cat cafes has to be Japan. And while Japan seems to take the credit for having the most cafes and creating the most tourism-friendly hype around them, the original cafe is believed to have been the Cat Flower Garden, also known as Cafe Dog & Cats, which opened in Taipei, Taiwan, in 1998. The intention was to provide Taiwanese cat lovers, whose own homes were too small or didn't

allow residents to keep pets, a place to go and enjoy cats. The cafes caught on in Japan for the very same reason.

But, as far as I am concerned, they exist for an even more important reason than a fur fix: They provide a wonderful, home-like environment for the adopted cats that live there. In cities without restrictions on keeping cats in homes, they offer a social venue where people can come, spend time enjoying their company, and, in some cafes, even adopt a feline that has stolen their heart.

And it is this very reason that makes cat cafes possibly the most important social phenomenon for felines since the invention of



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The original cat cafe is believed to be Cat Flower Garden, also known as Cafe Dog & Cats (above and top right), which opened in Taipei, Taiwan, in 1998.

cat litter. Add to this the fact that from a tourist standpoint, they are also great places to go to meet and mingle with the locals in cities around the world.

Cat Town Cafe in Oakland, California, was America's first permanent cat cafe. It's co-owned by Ann Dunn and Adam Myatt. Ann has been running a nonprofit called Cat Town for a number of years, rescuing at-risk felines from the Oakland Animal Services city shelter. Adam, a photographer and musician, is known for his Hoodcats calendars featuring Oakland felines.

Ann and Adam harnessed the power of crowdfunding to raise money for the project, which features a separate cafe area adjacent to the Cat Zone where 15 to 17 adoptable cats reside, and where visitors can sit and interact with the felines while enjoying freshly brewed coffee and a bagel. You and a feline friend can also imbibe in catnip tea. (Health regulations prevent cats from being



Cat Town Cafe features a catcentric art gallery, along with cat-related merchandise you can buy.

COURTESY CAT TOWN CAFE



You can buy food and beverages at the cafe, then enjoy them in the Cat Zone while you interact with new feline friends.

COURTESY CAT TOWN CAFE

All of Meow Parlour's cats are available for adoption through KittyKind, a local rescue group.



Meow Parlour is New York City's first permanent cat cafe.

A Meow Parlour cat takes advantage of the cafe's toy selection.



PHOTOS BY ETHAN CONEY



6 Cat Cafes Around the World

SUPUJ PONGPANCHAIROEVI/SHUTTERSTOCK

If you are traveling, check out this list of some of the more popular cat cafes located in international destinations. Several more are apparently opening in different U.S. states, too. Verify with the local tourist authority that the cafe you want to visit will be open at the time of your trip.



London

Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium:
152-154 Bethnal Green Road,
London E2 6DG



New York

Meow Parlour: 46 Hester St.,
New York, NY 10002



Tokyo

Nyafe Melange: 1-7-13 Ebisu,
Shibuya-ku
Cat Cafe Nekorobi:
1-28-1 Higashiikebukuro, Toshima-ku
Neko Maru Cafe:
7-2-2 Ueno, Taito-ku



Paris

Le Cafe des Chats:
16 Rue Michel le Comte,
75003 Paris, France

Meow Parlour sells pastries and other goodies, including cat-shaped macarons, out of Meow Parlour Patisserie, a neighboring storefront.



in the area where drinks are prepared, but once you have bought your food and beverages, you can take them to where the cats are waiting to entertain their guests.)

The Port of Oakland's cargo cranes and dock area are the inspiration for the interior design of the Cat Zone, and the cat play structures are based on buildings from the downtown Oakland skyline. The cafe also features a rotating cat-centric art gallery, along with various cat-related merchandise you can buy.

Since the cafe opened last October, 118 of its cats have found permanent, loving homes as of press time.

"This is so rewarding, and the numbers have exceeded our wildest expectations," Ann said. "The best part is that the relaxed setting gives shy and nervous cats a place to let their true personalities shine through, which ultimately makes them more adoptable — and (get adopted) more quickly.

"In the first week of opening, a cat named Pilot, who had been in

our shelter for four months, found a home!" Ann added. "And this scenario keeps repeating itself."

Guests are welcome to walk in to the Cat Zone for a free hour-long visit or, for a small donation, are able to guarantee entry via an online reservation system at towncafe.com/reservations. And feline treats are on sale, so you can spoil the kitties, too.

The Cat Town Cafe is located at 2869 Broadway, at 29th Street, in Oakland. Learn more at cattowncafe.com.



Ziggy (pictured) and Fudge "work" as feline muses for Sandy Robins, an award-winning multimedia pet lifestyle expert and pet industry personality. They

have helped "write" three books, including The Original Cat Bible (I-5 Press, 2014). When he is not lying on her desk blocking the computer screen, Ziggy likes to play fetch with his wand toys and direct food operations in the kitchen to ensure the kibble is always topped up. Learn more about Sandy at sandyrobinsonline.com.



Have you visited a cat cafe that blew you away? Tell us about it! Send your letters and photos to catstermag@i5publishing.com (subject: Cat Cafes), or mail them to Catster magazine, Cat Cafes, 3 Burroughs, Irvine, CA 92618.

Note: We may edit letters for length and clarity. Please include your name, address, phone number, and email address.