

TOP

CAT-FRIENDLY CITIES

BY SANDY ROBINS

Find out who put the “kitty” in city with our top picks.

Fun feline attractions along with a strong welfare presence for the cat community drive our picks to what makes a city cat friendly.

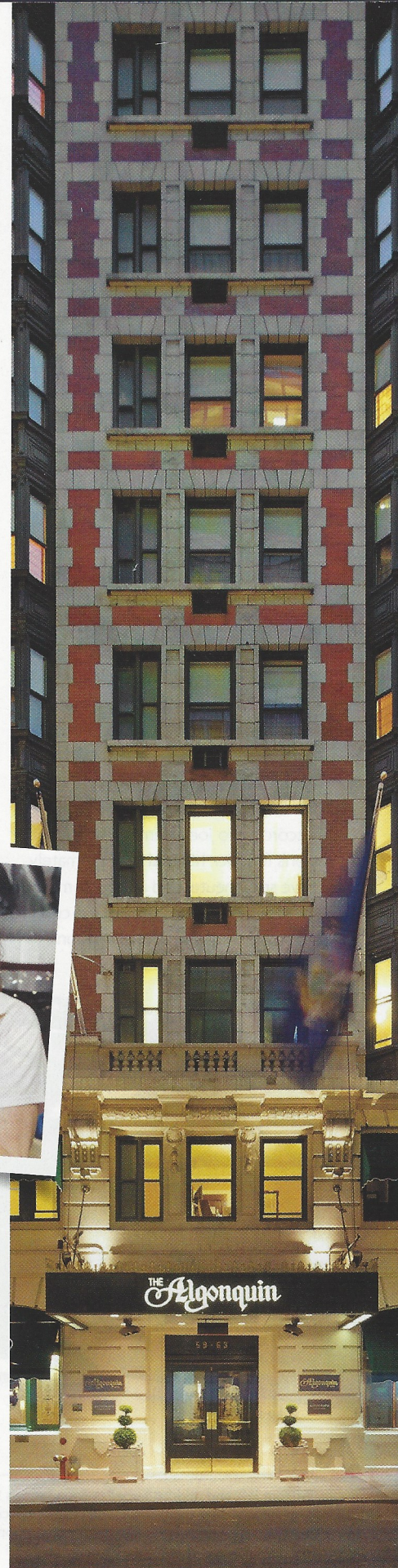
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

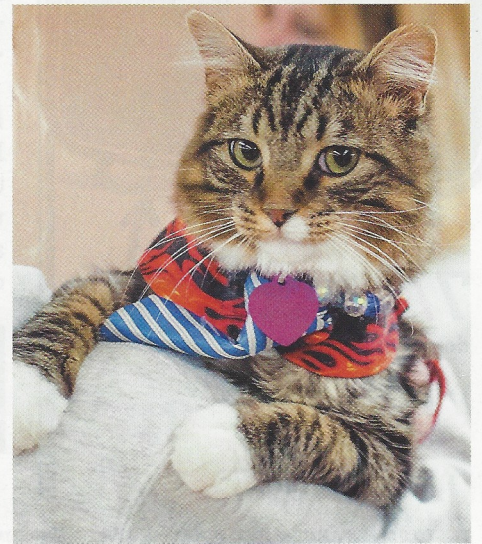
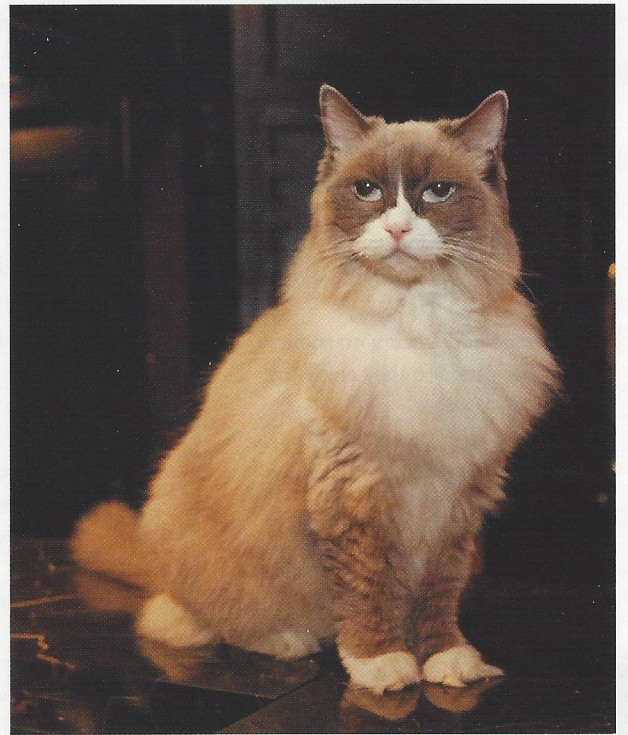
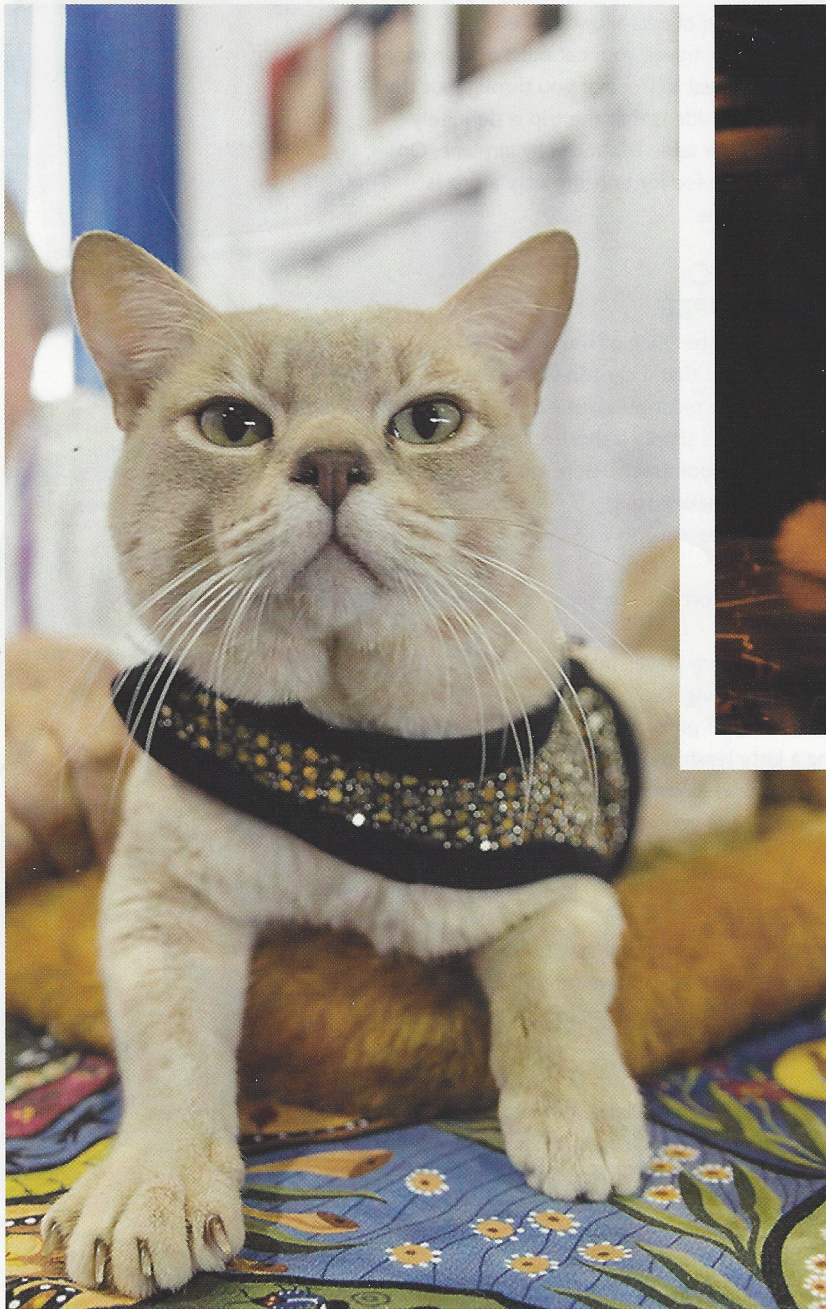
There are numerous reasons to call New York cat friendly. First, there's Matilda, the resident feline at the Algonquin Hotel (algonquinhotel.com), the oldest operating hotel in the city and home to a resident cat since the 1920s. She offers guests to the city her special Matilda Accommodation Package, which includes great gifts such as a plush toy in her likeness. Matilda's signature cocktail is the drink of choice for many visitors to the Big Apple. It's almost as famous as the Manhattan. (Contact Matilda at matildaalgonquincat@algonquinhotel.com.)

Every year, on the first Wednesday in August, she hosts a charity event that showcases the most famous feline catwalk in America with “mewdels” strutting their stuff and showing off fabulous design creations. The event benefits the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, an umbrella organization for more than 150 rescue groups in the city.

American Kennel Club's Meet the Breeds joins with The International Cat Association for a fabulous feline event that coincides with The Westminster Dog Show held in the city every February. This event is a wonderful opportunity to meet more than 60 cat breeds and learn about them from experts. (akc.org and tica.org)

The city hosted the first Cat Camp event in 2017 (created by Meow Parlour's co-founder Christina Ha) bringing cat-centric vendors and cat lovers together to shop, shop, shop! Celebrity cats like Lil BUB attend for special meet-and-greet sessions along with various experts holding workshops promoting responsible cat ownership (catcampnyc.com).





LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

People from around the country flock to the City of Angels for CatCon (catconworldwide.com), the cat-centric event that celebrates everything feline. This year, it takes place in August (see page 6). It has been described as Comic-Con for cat people and a great place to dress up and exhibit your inner meow.

Pussy and Pooch, the upscale pet boutique with branches in Beverly Hills on Santa Monica Boulevard, another on Main Street in downtown LA and one in nearby Long Beach, has a cat restaurant called the Pawbar with a menu of delights to serve your favorite feline. (pussyandpooch.com)

The city is making a determined effort to control the cat population in part due to the free spay-and-neuter clinics held around the city by the Lucy Pet Foundation (lucypetfoundation.org). According to Joey Herrick, the foundation's founder, his goal is to ultimately have spay/neuter and adoption mobile clinics in every major city in the country and make America a no-kill nation.



Bottom left and middle: Lucy Pet Foundation's Spay and Neuter mobile clinics out and about in Los Angeles. | Middle right: The Pawbar at the upscale pet boutique Pussy and Pooch. | Two CatCon attendees dress for feline fun at last year's convention.

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

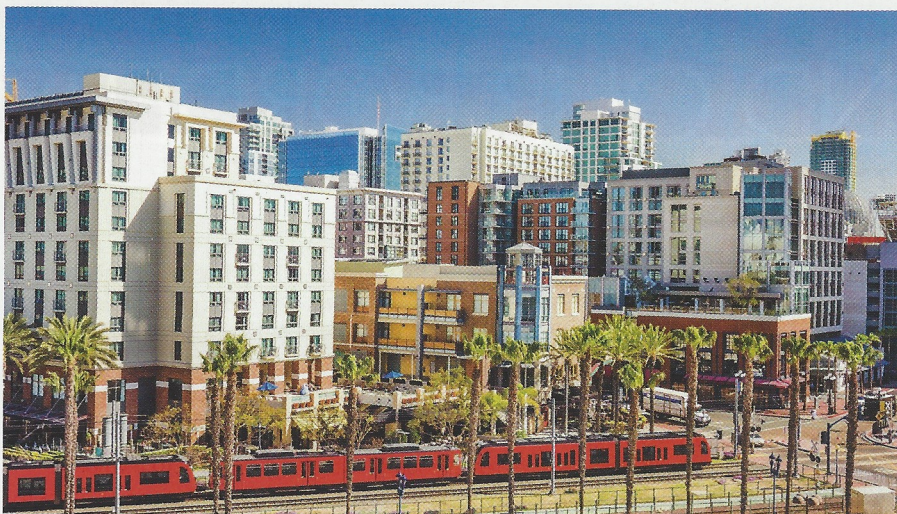
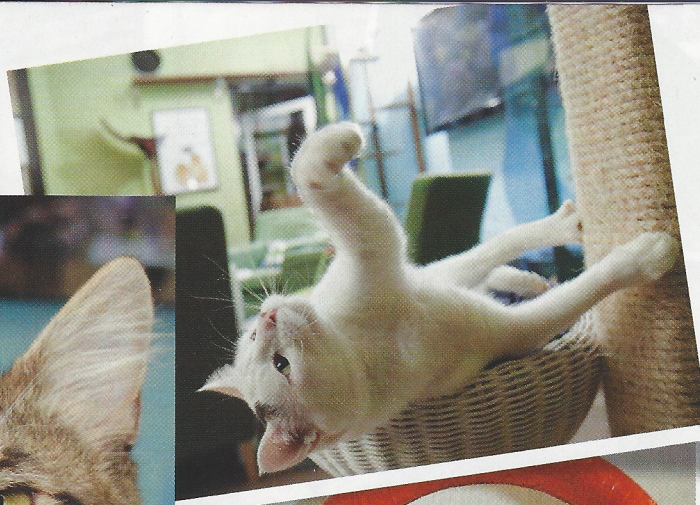
Besides its breathtaking coastal beauty, San Diego's strong welfare community puts it right on our list. The world's first kitten nursery and neonatal clinic is located at the San Diego campus of the San Diego Humane Society (sdhumane.org). Opened in 2009, it has saved the lives of more than 10,000 orphaned and abandoned kittens, finding them forever homes. The kitten nursery is so well-known in San Diego that cat lovers and good Samaritans know to bring kittens in need directly there.

San Diego Humane Society also has a Pet-Assisted Therapy program, which brings animals to visit patients at convalescent homes, hospitals and children's centers. A volunteer cat named Benjamin Button is very popular when he does the rounds.

Just outside of San Diego in El Cajon, Friends of Cats is a sanctuary for felines with special facilities for aging cats that are Feline Immunodeficiency Virus positive (FIV+) or have behavioral issues that make them unadoptable, allowing them to live out their lives there in comfort and love. (friendsofcats.org)

There are lots of cat-friendly groups that regularly get together in the city, such as Fur Real Fun Cat Lovers (meetup.com/fur-real-fun-cat-lovers). Some of the fun this group of cat lovers likes to take on are dancing and listening to live bands, checking out happy hours, festivals and sporting events plus going for waterfront walks and doing bonfires on the beach together.

The city is also home to the San Diego Cat Fanciers' Food and Water Bowl cat show (sandiegocat.org). Cat agility is very popular at this show. It also includes a large adoption event incorporating a variety of rescues and shelters in the area. And, of course, it's a popular place to shop, too!

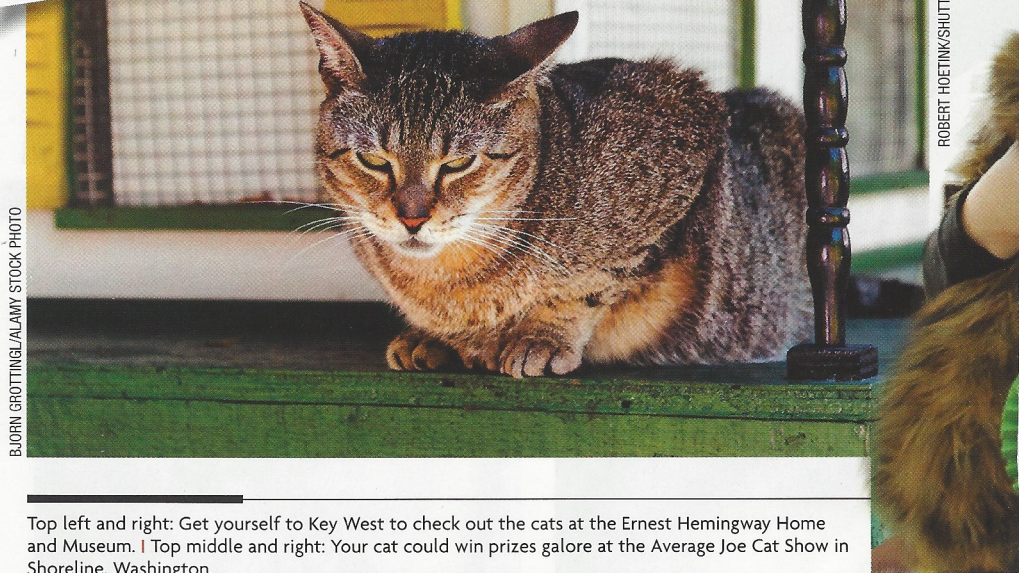
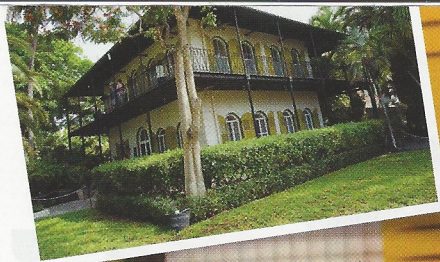


Top left and right: Inside the Cat Habitat at the San Diego Humane Society campus. | Check out cats in the agility ring at the San Diego Cat Fanciers' Food and Water Bowl annual event. Next year's event is January 27-28, 2018./Courtesy SDCF

RUNNERS UP

KEY WEST, FLORIDA: If you're heading to south Florida, make a point of visiting Key West and checking out the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum (hemingwayhome.com), the one-time residence of the great American novelist, who was equally famous for his love of polydactyl cats. It's open 365 days a year.

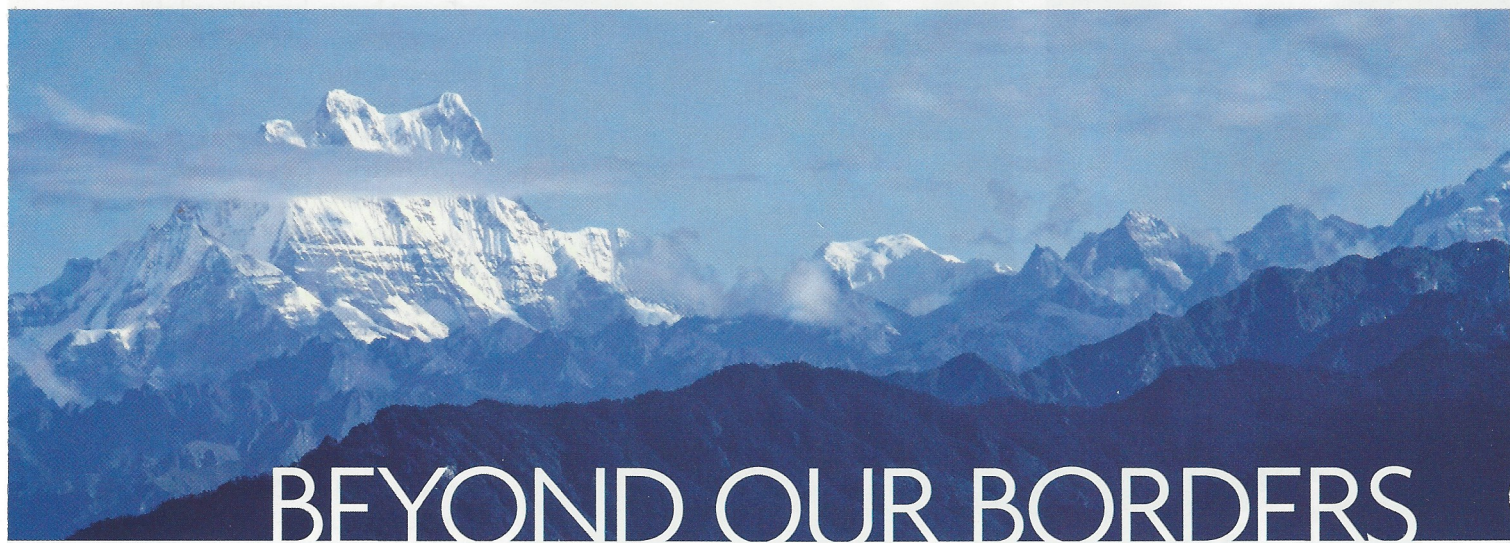
This beautiful property is currently home to around 45 felines, who all trace their bloodline back to Snow White, the white six-toed feline who was given to Hemingway as a gift by a ship's captain friend. They all carry the extra-toe gene in their DNA, and currently about half the cats of all colors are polydactyls.



BJORN GROTTING/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

ROBERT HOETINK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Top left and right: Get yourself to Key West to check out the cats at the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum. | Top middle and right: Your cat could win prizes galore at the Average Joe Cat Show in Shoreline, Washington.



BEYOND OUR BORDERS

Seen every cat scene in the U.S.? Try these wild escapes outside our country.

BY MELISSA L. KAUFFMAN

1. Bhutan

Looking for a hot summer time in a cool place? Try Jigme Singye Wangchuck Centennial National Park in Bhutan, located on the southern slopes of the Eastern part of the Himalayas. This don't-miss park for adventure touring lovers is home

to some of the coolest wild cats: the Royal Bengal Tiger, the snow leopard and common leopard, plus there have been sightings of the Pallas cat. (Did you know Bhutan is considered a hot spot for felids?) You'll find plenty of glaciers and permanent snow-

covered mountains, so bring your parka!

2. Morocco

For cat lovers, it's not the beauty of Morocco that stays with them long after they visit, but the sweet street cats of Morocco. The cities of Morocco — like Casablanca, Marrakesh

and Chefchaouen (or Chaouen) — are brimming with street cats more friendly than feral. (Why so many street cats? It's a different country with different cultural views.) Australian photographer Jesse Hunter called Morocco "cat heaven" when Catster.com

interviewed him about his photo book *All the Cats in the World*. Even *Condé Nast Traveler* did a video on these tender kittens. You'll have to travel to the northwestern tip of Africa to get to Morocco. It's got beaches, mountains and deserts, plus I hear they love tourists.

BLICKWINN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



COURTESY PURRFECT PALS



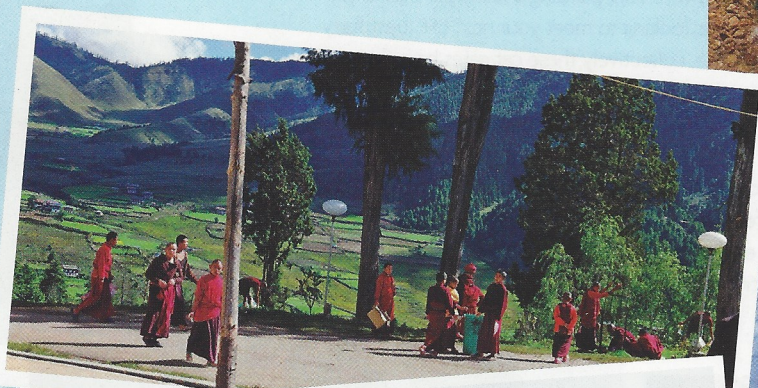
SHORELINE, WASHINGTON: Head out to the great Northwest to check out the Average Joe Cat Show. Hosted by Arlington, Washington's no-kill shelter, Purrfect Pals (purrfectpals.org), this fun, family-friendly event put the Shoreline area on the cat map.

Dozens of cats gather at the Shoreline Spartan Recreation Center every year to compete in silly cat show categories, such as Most Impressive Ear Hair and Loudest Purr. The event is one big party to celebrate cats and their quirks! The photographic competition is also popular, with categories like Best Cat in a Box and Grumpiest Looking Cat.

There are always kitties from 10 Puget Sound shelters and rescue groups for adoption. You can find food trucks with a variety of gourmet delights and a vendor fair designed with cat lovers in mind. Don't miss out on the silent auction to support Purrfect Pals.



Ziggy and Tory "work" as feline muses for **Sandy Robins**, an award-winning multimedia pet lifestyle expert, author and pet industry personality. They like to disrupt the workflow by playing fetch with wand toys and directing food operations in the kitchen. Learn more about Sandy at SandyRobinsOnline.com



NATALIA KASJIAN/SHUTTERSTOCK PAUL STREET/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO ANOTINIO SASTRE/SHUTTERSTOCK

3. Belgium

If you're a cat lover that also likes chocolate and beer, Belgium may be the country for you, particularly the city of Ypres. Every year on the second Sunday of May, Ypres hosts the Cat's Parade. Impressively, this May will be the 44th. There are bands, dancing groups, floats and lots of cat history, legends and activities.



Left and top middle: A once-in-a-lifetime trip, the Buddhist country Bhutan is a hot spot for felids, plus it's located on the Eastern edge of the Himalayas. Can't beat those views! Bottom left: The city of Ypres celebrates kitties every year with its annual cat parade. Bottom right: For cat lovers, street felines are the No. 1 sight to see in Morocco.