

London Report Jan 2007

Pret-a-Pet

In January in London posters appear everywhere with the message that “A Pet is not just for Christmas, it’s for life”. But more accurate would be a sign that says, “A Pet is not just for Christmas, it’s for lifestyle.” While the former is a warning to all the people who might get bored of their “present” and abandon them shortly after the holidays, the second slogan reveals a second thankfully stronger trend – a pet as a must-have fashion accessory.

It has long been recognised and exploited by businesses that a pet takes on the role of an ersatz child, a man’s best friend, a way to get fit, or is a scientifically proven way to beat depression and loneliness. What is more recent is the phenomena and potential for a pet as a valuable fashion accessory – and this is an expanding and exciting market in London. Pet London (www.petlondon.com) has for example a range of products that you would expect to find in any human home – things for the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and naturally a highly fashionable seasonal wardrobe. From special CDs with relaxing music for dogs, to a year round outfits (the list of available apparel reads like in a normal clothing store: raincoats, hats, t-shirts, sweaters etc).

A recent survey by the Daily Mail found that spending on such things is not only increasing but amongst many people has reached bizarre proportions even among lower wage earners who would rather spend their money on their pets than on themselves. Bella Devlin who works on a fruit and vegetable stall in the Portobello market, spent a total of 10.000€ on her three-year-old Pug dog last year. This included an own perfume, regular visits to the Pet Pavillion in Notting Hill Gate for a wash and blow dry, and to have her nails painted pink. The dog’s wardrobe that is worth over 1.500 €, boasts sheepskin jackets and even a party frock with a frill. This was nothing compared to Lola, whose owner spent 90.000€ on everything from hand made feeding bowls to regular massages and a specially designed four-poster dog bed. These are the kind of animals to be found being pampered and looked after by the All Dog company which offers premium day care and a smart dog hotel service for when the owners are away. They even have an own bakery which makes gourmet healthy biscuits for pets, and these can be found not just in pet shops but nestling alongside human food on the shelves of many fashionable delicatessens in West London.

Just how valuable these pets are to their owners, can also be seen in the trend in London for kidnapping dogs. Said to be London's fastest growing crime, the kidnappers typically steal the dogs from outside supermarkets, and when the owners put up lost/reward signs, the thieves ring and offer the beloved one back for a large fee that could be anything up to 1000€ or more. However one smart entrepreneur has come up with a quick, easy and effective way to prevent dog theft. Seeing a gap in the market, Yarah David developed Petloc (www.petloc.com) a lead and collar that offers a unique two combination lock system that not only has fashion and design conscious owners in mind, but also protects from opportunistic attempts at dog-napping.

www.petloc.com

www.alldogbakery.com/

www.petlondon.com