

These NoVA Cat Cafes Aren't Just Adorable—They're Saving Cats' Lives



Nestled in Northern Virginia are some of the cutest cats around. NoVA is home to three different cat cafes and lounges, and DC has one, if you're looking to make the trip to the nation's capital. Each location offers reservations to spend time with their cats—all of which are adoptable. While walk-ins are allowed, a time slot is highly recommended to ensure that you get to see the friendly felines. After paying an admissions fee, you can spend an allotted time playing and cuddling with the furry friends.

Some lounges also take the “cafe” part of cat cafe to heart, and offer coffee and snacks in addition to playing with the cats. Plenty of the cats at the various cafes come from outdoor spaces and have been strays, and each cafe prides itself in being a destination that saves cats from euthanasia. No matter which cat cafe you decide to visit, you are sure to have a delightful time and help animals while doing so.

Patriot Pawsabilities

As the first cat cafe to come to Northern Virginia, having opened in March 2019, Patriot Pawsabilities has seen nearly 500 cats adopted. The lounge works with Homeless Animals Rescue Team and The Cats at Longstreet. Aside from the regularly scheduled programming of cat visits, Patriot Pawsabilities hosts fun and not so run-of-the-mill events — like cat yoga, with more sessions for children and adults coming soon.

It's the perfect place for stressed out college students to go, as it's located right across from George Mason University's campus in University Mall.

“We knew that we'd be in a good location for kids in school when they're stressed out,” owner Mo Ryan says. She says that parents have even called to pay for their college students to visit the cafe — one mom from New Jersey used to pay for her son and his girlfriend to visit the lounge four times a month, and even paid a visit herself when she came to see him at Mason.

Ryan says it's powerful to see what cats can do for people. She served in the military, and has had veterans who come in and are finally able to relax — and even sleep — thanks to the cats. The human interaction the cats receive is crucial for them, too.

“It's important for people to see how scared the cats are when they first come into the lounge, then a week later, the cat is sitting in the middle of the lounge being pet,” she says, whereas before, a cat might “not be adopted because it would be the cat that sits with their back in the corner and people wouldn't choose them.”

Patriot Pawsabilities will be celebrating its three year anniversary with a screening of the documentary *Cat Daddies*, held March 13 at University Mall Theatres. 10687 Braddock Road, Fairfax

Meows Corner

Meows Corner is the cat lounge here for your hour-long fix of cat time or to be the host of your next private event, from birthday parties to meetings. Weekend ticket prices are \$19 an hour, and children 7 and older are welcome. Open since July 2019, Meows Corner has 216 adoptions to date, working with 4Paws Rescue Team to give their cats a home.

Owner Dina Abdel-Hamid said that, initially, Meows Corner did partner with a nearby coffee shop to bring the “cafe” part of cat cafe to life, but said that it was a hassle to maintain. She decided to focus on the cats. Now, it's a lounge where people can play with cats and help save them from euthanasia while doing so.

“The idea of it is really attractive — to spend your time with cats, and then at the same time, do something that's meaningful,” she says.

While the pandemic came mere months after its opening, that hasn't stopped the lounge from providing a place where people can look for the next member of their family or simply relax after a long day.

“A lot of people, they can't have cats at their house, they have an allergy or a family member is allergic, or they just are not in a place where they can take care of an animal. So, it gives them a nice outlet for that playtime that they're craving with cats,” she says. “People definitely come in just for cat therapy. They'll say, ‘Oh, I've had a bad day’ — they'll pay for 15 minutes just to decompress a little bit.”

Abdel-Hamid says that Meows Corner is hoping to eventually kickstart a membership. While not completely in the works yet, the membership would be a monthly fee that allows guests to have unlimited access to the cafe during the week, one visit per weekend, and a friend discount. 21435 Epicerie Plaza, Suite 115, Sterling

Mount Purrnon, Alexandria

For animal and wine lovers, Mount Purrnon is the place to visit. With 320 adoptions to date through their services with Fancy Cats and Dogs Rescue Team after opening in August 2020, not only does this cat cafe offer fun times with felines, the menu is full of varying wines and food, from salads to grilled cheese.

Adam Patterson, one of the owners of Mount Purrnon, alongside Kristin Cowan, said that while maintaining both a cat floor and cafe is more work, it's worth it to provide the experience — especially the wine, since that's not something he's seen at other cat cafes before.

Patterson said that the cat cafes he's been to in Europe are mostly like a Starbucks with cats hanging around — but the U.S.-based lounges have embraced the idea of becoming places where cats are saved from kill shelters and eventually adopted.

He also says that Mount Purrnon does not take kittens, with the youngest of the cafe's cats typically being around 6 months old. Patterson noted that kittens typically have an easier time getting adopted than other cats.

“The big thing is, if a bunch of these cats are in kill shelters, the kittens are ... going to get adopted, they don't really need our help. But when we have a 13 year old cat in a kill shelter — that's gonna probably get euthanized because no one's gonna want it,” he says.

Patterson and Cowan have a couple cats of their own — including Mount Purrnon's mascot, the orange Maine Coon who dons a trifold hat in the website's photos. In addition to the general recreation time allotted with the cats, where people do everything from cuddle to hold laser pointers for the cats to chase, the cat cafes also host fun events, like wine tastings and Jeopardy.

You can also bring your younger children to Mount Purrnon, starting from 3 years old and on, so long as they are supervised by an adult. 109 South Alfred Street, Alexandria

Crumbs & Whiskers, DC

With a location in Los Angeles as well as their DC home, Crumbs & Whiskers is amongst the cat lounges worthy of being posted to your Instagram feed — and they'll send you home with a photo of you and your favorite felines after your visit.

The prices for Crumbs & Whiskers are more expensive than NoVA's cat cafe options — tickets for a one hour and 10 minute visit are \$40. Coffee and other drinks are available for purchase, and they offer some sweet treats, like cookies or a cinnamon bun, thanks to Dog Tag Bakery.

Just a quick drive across the bridge, Crumbs & Whiskers still has NoVA connections. It works with Homeward Trails Animal Rescue, based in Fairfax. The DC location has had more than 1,400 adoptions after being in business for nearly 7 years. David Koehler-Stanescu, the cat cafe's manager, said that rescues and shelters are both important for helping cats, but that sometimes a lack of space in shelters can result in the euthanasia of the animals. When people come to the cat cafe and adopt, it helps to save them from such practices.

“Unfortunately, if they don't end up with homes, they often will end up being euthanized. Every time you adopt an animal, it really — maybe not exactly that cat, but a different cat — does give them a second chance at life, every single time,” he says. “Just because every time a cat goes out of here, we're able to bring in another cat, and that's one fewer sitting in the shelter and then one more space that the shelter has.”

The fun doesn't end with the one-hour cat visits or even monthly memberships — Crumbs & Whiskers also hosts private events, as well as public ones where people can purchase tickets in advance. In May, they'll be hosting what Koehler-Stanescu calls “Kitten Parties.” He explained that cats are seasonal in their mating schedules and lots of kittens are born in March. By the time May rolls around, the kittens will be old enough to come to the cat cafe.

“In May, they'll be old enough that we can bring them in for a little bit of time. We'll be having special tickets that people can buy to come hang out. We'll be doing same-day adoptions, and we'll also be doing a donation drive for Homeward Trails while we're doing that,” Koehler-Stanescu says. 3109 M Street NW, Washington, DC