



# Canine capers!

Meet Sue Corfield who organises unusual activity breaks for dogs and their owners – including doggy murder mystery nights

By Angela Court

With more of us than ever wanting to holiday with our four-legged friends, it's little wonder that dog-friendly breaks are becoming so popular.

But while it's no longer so difficult to book a get-away for you and your pooch, anyone attending one of Sue Corfield's Barking Mad breaks can expect something a little different. Because for Sue's holidays everything revolves around and focuses on the dogs, who not only take centre stage throughout, but also participate in a varied range of activities including Canine Murder Mystery evenings!

Dog-lover Sue (53), who lives with husband Mike, and their ten-year-old border collie, Herbie, set up Barking Mad in 2007. She had the idea after going along to a horse camp, where the animals had their own itinerary.

Seven years later, Sue's breaks – which take place near her home in Shropshire, and have between

ten and 15 owners and their dogs on each one – are so popular there is often a waiting list. And when it comes to the whodunnit doggy evenings, Sue says it is difficult to tell who is having the best time – the owners, or the dogs!

"The Canine Murder Mystery evenings are great fun," says Sue. "My dog Herbie plays dead, and we try to guess which of the other dogs is the culprit. The owners each play a character and have to answer questions about where their dog was on the night that Herbie was killed."

"Fortunately, Herbie enjoys laying down, so he is very good at playing dead. The hardest part is working out which dog looks guilty! At the end of the evening all of the dogs get a treat – including the 'murderer.'"

To enjoy one of Sue's breaks, where the activities can also include fly ball, dog massage and agility, you don't even have to own a dog. Sue has introduced a Borrow A Dog scheme, where



Are you ready for your close-up Herbie?



Now, let me consider my motivation... maybe there'll be a doggy chew or two!



Whodunnit? Herbie plays dead while the guests solve the crime!

'My dog Herbie plays dead and we try to guess which one of the other dogs has done it'

participants are provided with a dog – from a local animal charity – to accompany them during their break, meaning that no-one has to miss out on the fun. "Lots of dog lovers don't own dogs because they might work full time, or live in a building that bans pets," says Sue. "Borrow A Dog means that these people can still enjoy one of our breaks,

and it's lovely to watch them bonding with the dogs.

"One of the best parts of the breaks is seeing all of the dogs running along together when we go out for a walk. It makes me very emotional to see them wagging their tails and interacting. Friendships are formed between the owners, who keep returning, and one

lady sent me an email saying that her dog was behaving better since mixing with other dogs on a break. We might all be barking mad, but who cares? At the end of the day it's all about the dogs!"

**B** A Murder Mystery evening will take place during a Barking Mad Break from July 21-25. To find out more call 01588 673441 or visit [www.barkingmadweekend.com](http://www.barkingmadweekend.com)