



A general view of the recently-opened Shanghai Planetarium.



People visit the recently-opened Shanghai Planetarium in Shanghai.



A visitor uses an interactive touch screen. —AFP photos

## Post-pandemic separation from owners is a dog's life

Adopted en masse during the pandemic and spoiled for attention during remote working, many dogs (and their owners) have to adjust to a new lifestyle—and it's not always easy. Mona, a one-year-old mutt, will soon have to spend one or two days a week home alone, waiting for her owners Hannah and Richard to come back. Adopted last March, the pooch has never had to endure so much separation. But Hannah Peterzell isn't worried.

"We have left her home for a long time, and she's been totally fine with it," says the 26-year-old, standing in her Greenpoint, Brooklyn apartment. "Obviously, she's probably bored and whatever, but she can handle being alone." Peterzell doesn't envision spending more time away from Mona, who was born in Texas last year. And if her employer requires her to return to the office full-time, "I would definitely find a new job." Tinto, a Basset Hound from Manhattan's Upper West Side, was not adopted during the pandemic, but he grew accustomed to a busy apartment over the months, with three kids back home and the parents constantly around. "Every day is Saturday for the dog," says Rosaria Baldwin, the mom of the family.

So much so, Rosaria recalls, that the first weekend Tinto found himself with only the family's two daughters, he was "depressed, miserable." With the children ready to go back out on their own, and her husband required to travel frequently for work, Rosaria isn't taking any chances. She's adopting a second Basset Hound.



Volunteers work at the Animal Care Center of New York. —AFP

### Training the owners

For others, particularly animals who have only known pandemic life, the transition isn't always smooth. Many owners have not put their dogs through training programs. "Some people get puppies and they assume that they're going to be like their childhood dog or they're going to be able to just use whatever knowledge they have," says Hannah Richter, a trainer at Andrea Arden Dog Training. And then a year later, Richter says, they find they're encountering behavioral issues when the puppy grows up. "And now we have to focus on training adult dogs, which is a little bit more difficult than training the puppies," Richter says.

Demand for training sessions is so high that appointments are made four weeks in advance, compared with before the pandemic when owners could book a trainer within days. Training is a long-term process, and owners of dogs that have grown up without find it can take months and cost several thousand dollars to get their pet up to speed, Richter explains. The owners-or "parents," as some prefer to call themselves-have to do their part of the work. "It's fairly easy for me to train the dog," Richter says, smiling. "But getting the client to train the dog is a lot harder, for sure."

### 'Perfect time to adopt'

While some "parents" are figuring out the new normal, the 110th Street Shelter is looking for new owners. After last year's wave of adoptions, the pendulum is swinging the other way. There is much less demand now, says Katy Hansen, the communications director for Animal Care Centers (ACC). Even worse, many families are bringing their dogs to the center-not out of post-pandemic fatigue, she says, but for lack of means after a difficult financial year. "They're really struggling there or have lost their housing, and they're moving into a house that already has a pet, or they're moving into a house that won't allow a big dog who barks," Hansen says, noting that New York landlords have a reputation of being pet-unfriendly.

To reduce the flow of pet returns, the ACC helps out cash-strapped owners with pet food or veterinary costs. The ACC also offers temporary foster homes—"a short-term solution for families that are in crisis," explains Hansen with the goal being for the family to reclaim their pet later. Last year, ACC shelters were down to an average of 100 dogs, cats and rabbits combined. Today, there are 500. "People are now going outside; they're vaccinated; they feel more comfortable," says Hansen. "They're so excited to get around, which is actually the perfect time to adopt a pet, especially a dog." —AFP

# China's space propaganda blitz endures at slick new planetarium

China has opened the doors on what it bills as the world's largest planetarium, a slick new Shanghai facility showcasing the nation's recent extra-terrestrial exploits while notably downplaying those of space pioneers like the United States. Beijing has spent much of this year bombarding the public with news of the country's rising space prowess, part of a larger propaganda blitz highlighting Chinese achievements under the ruling Communists to mark the party's 100th anniversary. In recent months, China has landed a spacecraft on Mars, set

loose a rover to explore it, and sent the first astronauts to a Chinese space station.

Scale-model replicas of spaceships from these and other missions figure prominently at the new Shanghai Planetarium, along with paeons to China's rapid scientific advancement, and clips of President Xi Jinping addressing the nation's taikonauts. "This year we had several astronauts go to space, which is a source of pride for China," said a woman surnamed Zhou, who brought her young daughter. "I wanted my child to have some

knowledge about space from a young age."

By contrast, the pioneering space-travel efforts of the then-Soviet Union and China's geopolitical rival the United States get only passing mention, if at all. The 1969 US landing on the moon is referenced only briefly in a small, dryly-worded display, and a section entitled "Space Heroes" lists only two Russian cosmonauts along with Yang Liwei, the first person sent into space by the Chinese space program.

The planetarium features working telescopes and a range of interactive

exhibits on the origins of the universe and history of astronomy, including Chinese-speaking versions of Copernicus and other luminaries explaining their theoretical breakthroughs. The building was designed by New York's Ennead Architects and resembles a union of swirling galaxies. It covers 38,000 square meters, (420,000-square feet) of floor space—roughly equal to five football fields—and cost 600 million yuan (\$93 million), according to Chinese media. —AFP



People look at a model of the sun while visiting the recently-opened Shanghai Planetarium.



A depiction of our planet Earth is seen as people visit the recently-opened Shanghai Planetarium.



People look at a model of the sun while visiting the recently-opened Shanghai Planetarium.



A youth (second left, background) jumps in a lunar simulator beside the replica of a Chinese probe while visiting the recently-opened Shanghai Planetarium.