

[FAMILY FUN](#)

Hello Kitties! Cat Cafés Offer Fuzzy Feline Fun for Families

This born-in-Asia trend has officially hit Seattle

By Gemma Alexander



Seattle Meowtropolitan cat lounge. Photo courtesy of Seattle Meowtropolitan

For many of us, cats are always in style. But with the advent of cat cafés, it's easier than ever for kitty-crazy families to enjoy the company of cats (and perhaps even bring one home).

For those unfamiliar with the concept, the cat café is just what it sounds like: a café where customers sip coffee in the company of cats. The idea originated in Asia, where many families live in small apartments with restrictions on pets and work long hours away from home; Japan reportedly has some 150 cat cafés to date.

In part because of U.S. regulations on mixing animals and food in the same establishment, the trend has been slower to catch on, but that's changing with two cat cafés now open in greater Seattle and another on the way. For the cafés that are open, you're welcome to pet and play with the cats but can't pick them up or offer them food.





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Seattle Meowtropolitan cat lounge. Photo courtesy of Seattle Meowtropolitan

All the cool cats: Seattle Meowtropolitan

The first café to pull it off was **Seattle Meowtropolitan**. Located kitty-corner from Archie McPhee's in the Wallingford neighborhood of Seattle, Meowtropolitan (1225 N. 45th St.) serves Herkimer coffee and fancy, cat-themed treats in its café, which is separated by plate glass and double doors from the large, industrial-looking cat lounge. The cat lounge is home to six resident cats and up to a dozen adoptable cats from **Regional Animal Services of King County**.

Customers can sit in the café and watch the cats through the glass, or order their treats to-go and spend an hour in the cat lounge. Drop-ins are permitted at the cat lounge, but it's better to **book in advance** as weekends and afternoons can fill up. The minimum age to enter the cat lounge is 8 years old, and no more than two children per adult are allowed. Regardless of age, entry to the cat lounge requires a waiver and costs \$10 per person (one drink included in the price).

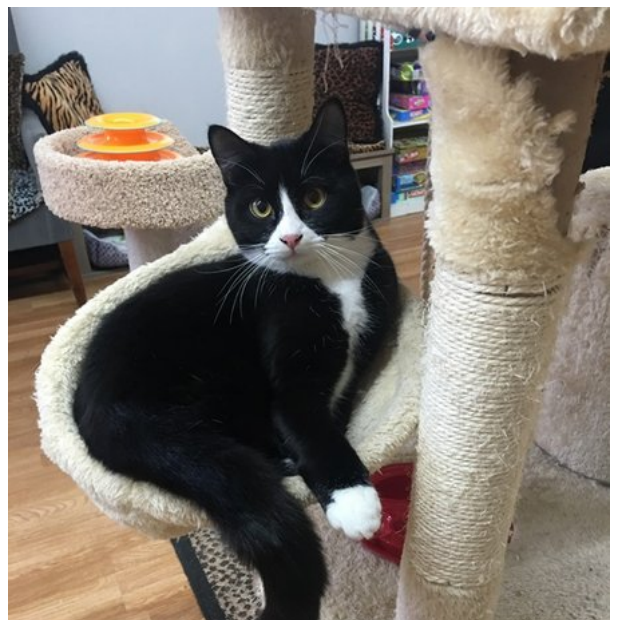
Inside the lounge, the cats go about their business (as cats do) while the humans try desperately to get their attention. Cat beds and toys are scattered around the room, with café tables running along two walls. An attendant times the visit and when necessary enforces the rules, which are mostly a matter of good manners and common sense (although it can be a challenge to not want to cuddle the cats). Despite their enforcer duties, the attendants are friendly and happy to answer questions about each cat's personality and history.

Younger kitty-crazy kids welcome

Families with children under age 8 or those looking for a more relaxed experience can head to the recently opened **Kitty Catfe** in Edmonds (9697 Firdale Ave.). They have no age restrictions or limitations on the number of children an adult can bring (common sense encourage). Customers are welcome to stay as long as they want.

Reservations are not required, but it's worth checking Kitty Catfe's website before going, as it often closes for private parties. Admission is \$5 and includes a drink, although the emphasis here is on the cats, not the coffee — there is no espresso machine, and snacks are pre-packaged. Here the cats have full run of the space, even climbing over the cash register and hiding behind the bar when they've had enough socializing.

The Kitty Catfe is newer than Meowtropolitan, and is still working



to balance its cat population. It started with nearly 20 cats, but on the day my family visited, only their four permanent resident kitties were on site; the rest had been adopted. A new delivery of adoptable cats from their partner agency, **Whisker City**, was expected later in the day. One thing that both cafés have in common — super-friendly staff who are happy to tell you about their cats and help you make friends with them.



Just lounging. Photo courtesy of Kitty Catfe

New cat on the block

Soon to join the fray is **Emerald City Kitty Harbor Adoption Center** (3422 Harbor S.W., near the foot of the West Seattle bridge). This café, located in the former shelter known as Kitty Harbor, is operated by **Emerald City Pet Rescue**. The grand opening has been delayed — first for building improvements, and then a second time for a postponed kennel delivery — but Kitty Harbor hopes to be up and running on March 1. Operational details of the café are still in the works, but the Kitty Harbor team hopes to have a full café and plenty of adoptable kitties on-site.

Seeking shelter

Many people love cats but can't have one of their own — lease restrictions and allergic family members are two of the biggest reasons. In such situations, a cat café can be a good but expensive substitute.

If your child wants more continuous contact with animals, consider the **Seattle Humane Society's kids' programs**. In summer, preschoolers can attend weekly sessions (\$10) to learn about animal care, while kids ages 5–10 can spend 20 minutes reading to shelter cats any weekday afternoon for free.

For those who are serious about adopting a cat but who find kennel visits depressing, consider **PAWS Cat City** (5200 Roosevelt Way N.E., Seattle). Cat City doesn't have a café, but does have three colony rooms filled with adoptable cats. Visitors fill out a questionnaire that helps volunteers identify compatible cats. Adopters can then spend as much time as they want in the cat colonies, even returning for multiple visits if they don't make a kitty connection the first time. A separate room is available for one-on-one visits with cats-of-interest.

And if you're still not finding the cat of your dreams, don't worry! There's still hope. Keep an eye out for another neighborhood cat café; the **Japanese-inspired Neko** is currently looking for a good home somewhere on Capitol Hill.

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