



November 29, 2022

To the Town of Ghent, NY:

Art Omi will be changing our dog policy starting January 1, 2023, and wanted to share with the Town of Ghent this news and the reasoning for the change.

The new policy is as follows:

Update to Art Omi's Dog Policy

Effective January 1, 2023

Though we love our dog friends, we need to turn our attention to the care of our art, our flora and fauna, and our human visitors. With everyone's safety foremost in our minds, **Art Omi is updating our dog policy effective January 1, 2023. Dogs may accompany your visit to the Sculpture & Architecture Park daily before 8:30 AM only - after that time dogs and other pets will not be permitted on site, with the exception of registered service dogs.** We hope this change will allow Art Omi to welcome more visitors to the park, and improve our stewardship of the land as well as our sculpture and architecture installations. We thank you for your understanding and support!

Though we pride ourselves on being open and accessible to all, unfortunately the reality is that as we've grown in attendance, we've also seen the number of dog related incidents grow as well.

We thought it might be useful to share the background behind our decision to restrict dog access:

Art Omi has become known through social media as a place to walk dogs and let them run off leash; there are sites that list places to take dogs and Art Omi is now appearing on these, pulling in many new visitors with dogs that are not local as well as those that are from the area.

Between April and October we had nearly 60 incidents reported about dogs - some involving injuries, aggressive animals and owners, one incident requiring police involvement, many complaints about the proliferation of dog poop in the park, of dogs off leash rushing people and other dogs, and dogs running through the parking lot in front of cars.

Our audience tends to skew older, with kids as another major constituent, and we've had significant feedback from those groups that they do not feel safe at Art Omi. We've been hearing from people who no longer come to Art Omi due to the disruption by dogs.

We simply do not have the resources to monitor and enforce the dog owners in the park and feel it's becoming unsafe for our staff who have to deal with uncooperative visitors with dogs.

We didn't want to close down access entirely, and chose to serve the locals with dogs as a compromise. We met with the core group of local dog walkers who come in the morning to share the news and answer questions and they graciously offered to help in various ways including acting as stewards of Art Omi when they are in the park, which was a heartening response.

We know people have formed new friendships here with other dog owners and we are so proud to provide the space for that to happen for the local community.

We will continue to welcome visitors to enjoy the art and nature that Art Omi offers, free to the public.

Please send any questions to Ruth or Jeremy via phone or email, contact information provided below.

Thank you and best wishes for the coming holiday season,

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