



LEGAL HIGHS

# Crumbs and Whiskers cat café in Los Angeles review

Emma Freud | Saturday December 04 2021, 12.01am, The Times

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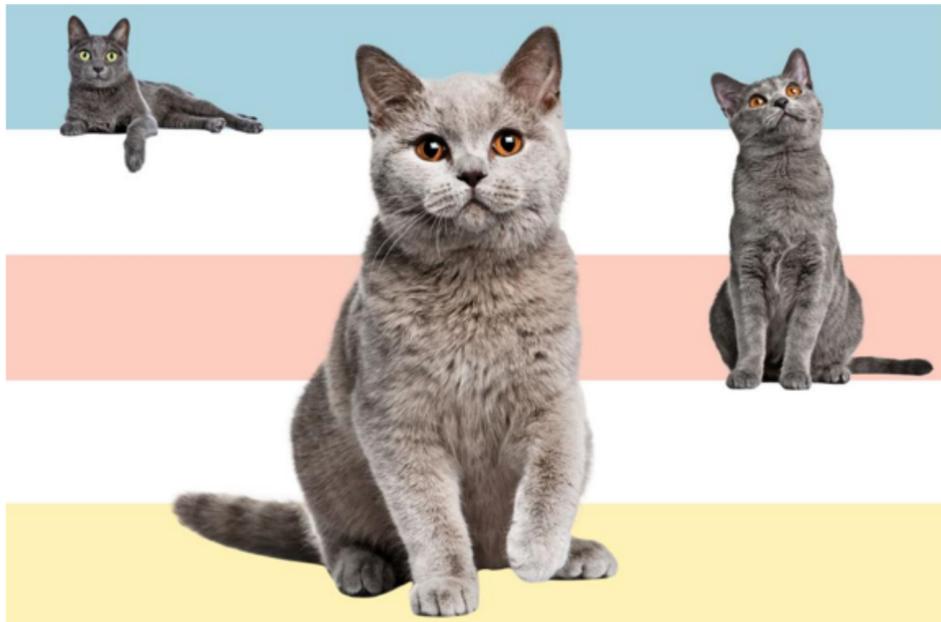
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I've been writing this column for three thrilling years now. In the pursuit of legal highs, I've explored laughter yoga, goat yoga, tantric-sex workshops and terror-escape rooms, been beaten with birch sticks in a Russian spa, taken part in cryotherapy, mass karaoke, ecstatic-dance rituals, virtual-reality horror games and a seance at Selfridges. But when I found myself in an abandoned car park in south London [with a dozen zombies baying for my blood](#), I realised I was beginning to scrape the bottom of the dopamine barrel. It was time to look to pastures new . . . so I packed up the boyfriend and some children, and moved to Los Angeles.

Here in the land of legal weed and eternal sunshine the vibe is more chilled, and my first mission on your behalf was a morning at a cat café. These outlets started in Taiwan in 1998, mixing coffee drinking and kitty patting for stressed urbanites who weren't allowed pets in their apartments.

Pets profoundly change the biochemistry of our brains, which is why cat owners are about 30 per cent less likely to have a heart attack. Not only do pets lower our cortisol levels and blood pressure, but they raise our levels of oxytocin, beta endorphins and serotonin. And they combat loneliness, which is why there are now 140 cat cafés in Japan and 20 in the UK.



GETTY IMAGES

But Crumbs and Whiskers in Los Angeles is different from the others. It was started by Kauchen Singh, 24, and crowdfunded via a Kickstarter campaign. The design is like a sleepover in an American teenage bedroom - all fake fur and pink cushions, with a highly Instagrammable fluffy sofa beneath a fuchsia neon logo. And, because this is America, the retail centre of the world, all of the kittens can be bought. It was set up in collaboration with an animal rescue charity, which so far has saved 3,716 cats from euthanasia.

The 27 kittens I played with there were immaculate creatures who snuggled and frolicked as we drank catachinos. I can't quite communicate the utterly joyful high that I got.

I booked for 90 minutes, expecting to check it out and be gone in 20. But when the manager found me on my back, with Neil, Patsy, Tilly and Ace sleeping on my front, and informed me that I had already overstayed my welcome, I found myself actually weeping with disappointment. As legal highs go, it's stratospheric.

[crumbsandwhiskers.com](https://www.crumbsandwhiskers.com)