

## Are You a Cat Whisperer?

**CAT FANCY Consumer Marketing Manager and cat lover Suzanne Stowe blogs about her special connection with felines.**

*By Suzanne Stowe*

Posted: Feb. 10, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

Suzanne Stowe had no trouble meeting cats on her trip to Italy, including this black cat on the Isle of Capri. Many years ago, people started calling me a cat whisperer. I seemed to have a way with cats. They were attracted to me and I was attracted to them. Even very shy kitties would come up to me and let me pet them. I grew up like this so I thought it was normal.

As I grew older, a few things happened that made me realize the relationship I had with cats was something special and one not shared by most people. The first occurred when I was around 20. I worked in a warehouse environment and a kitty was found in the warehouse. With the help of a couple of people, we caught the kitty and I took it home with me. I didn't know feral kitties weren't usually able to be turned into pets and neither did the kitty, even though she was already more than 6 months old. She turned out to be a very sweet, loving pet.

In my 30s, I took a trip to Europe on business. I was sitting in a restaurant in Brussels, Belgium, when I felt a familiar sensation on my lap. A cat had decided to jump up and sit on me. Everywhere I went, I spotted kitties who would come up to me with a little encouragement and let me pet them.

A few years later I returned to Europe, this time Switzerland and Italy. I was advised before my trip that I would see a lot of cats at sites like the Roman Coliseum, but I would not be able to get near the cats. Well, they were wrong. Every place I went in Italy, the cats came up to me and I was able to pet them and hold them. I never had to give them food or treats — they just seemed to feel comfortable with me. I have great pictures of me in front of museums and monuments holding these wonderful Italian cats.

Arusha, a cheetah at the San Diego Zoo, seemed to have an affinity for Suzanne during a walkabout. My special relationship really hit home when I went to the San Diego Zoo. A cheetah named Arusha was scheduled to do a walkabout, in which the cat would come out and be introduced to a crowd of people who stood behind a fence. My friends and I couldn't wait for this event and lined up with about 150 other people. The cheetah was brought out and walked right up to me. He then started licking my hands (both sides) and purred like crazy. I was able to interact with Arusha for about 20 minutes and felt really blessed. Even his handler seemed impressed about how Arusha took to me.

Now that I do pet sitting, this skill has proven extremely useful. Many times I have been told that the client's kitties are shy and I probably won't see them. Most often, however, after spending a little time and talking to the cats, they come out and over to me for some loving. If I stay overnight, they sleep with me. My clients are often amazed at their cats' reaction.

I think the cats sense the love I have for them and feel safe around me. I wear the designation of cat whisperer with pride. I bet many of you share this trait and are also considered cat whisperers. Let me know your experiences.