

# { BEST PLACES TO }

## DUDE RANCH AND GLAMP

words by JENNIFER WALTON

**Horses. Mountains. Ranches. Wranglers. Cabins. Campfires.** Are you an equestrian or a horse enthusiast? Do you prefer resort fine dining or ranch-style cooking? Want to try your hand penning or use your pen to sign up for fly fishing, yoga, or a day at the spa? Ranches in the West offer a wide variety of activities during a typical week-long stay; however, to ensure your dude ranch experience is a once-in-a-lifetime sort, take into consideration your riding ability (if you're a beginner, no worries—there are programs at every ranch that will match you to your horse), your riding style (most ranches offer Western-style only), your daily itinerary (would you like to ride in the morning and take the afternoon off?), your location (topography often dictates the type and pace of the ride), and THE HORSES!

### 1 THE BITTERROOT RANCH

DUBOIS, WYOMING

You could say that the Fox family was born in the saddle. Owners Bayard and Mel Fox, their son, Richard, and daughter-in-law, Hadley, have combined equestrian experience in the hundreds of years and not just in Wyoming. When Mel was living in East Africa, she began leading horse rides in the early '70s in the shadow of Mt. Kilimanjaro. At this 47-year-old guest and working cattle ranch where many of the ranch's 170 horses are bred, you can ride each day through alpine meadows, aspen groves, high desert plains, towering forests, and a meandering river with views of the surrounding Wind River Mountains. Located in the Absaroka Mountains, the ranch borders the Shoshone National Forest and is just two hours from Jackson Hole or 30 minutes from Dubois by car. Refine your seat with twice-weekly riding lessons or do more than trail ride by enjoying the afternoon on the cross-country jumping

course. There are annual Cattle Round-ups and Centered Riding® Clinics plus a week of combined yoga and riding with the creator of the *Yoga Journal* DVD, Stephanie Snyder. This family is so devoted to your experience that one of them personally leads a ride nearly every day. Their love of horses and global travel is only one reason to experience Bitterroot. While you feast on local rainbow trout and straight-from-the-ranch garden vegetables, plan your next riding trip with a member of the Fox family because in addition to Bitterroot Ranch, they own Equitours Worldwide Horseback Riding Vacations. Anyone up for a gallop on the Skeleton Coast in Namibia?

[bitterrootranch.com](http://bitterrootranch.com)

### 2 C LAZY U RANCH

GRANBY, COLORADO

Ask a repeat guest about their experiences at C Lazy U, and they're apt to reply, "On the last day, I'm already dreaming of next year so I confirm my reservation right then and there!" Since 1919, C Lazy U has been the kind of guest ranch that inspires families and friends to coordinate their summer plans because this 8,500-acre all-inclusive Rocky Mountain luxury dude ranch connects its guests with a multitude of adventures for adults and kids (from ages 3-17). At the beginning of the seven-night minimum stay, kids are divided into three groups, Cowpokes (3-5)\*, Mustangs (6-12), and Teens (13-17), and they are given their own horse to bond with for the week. The magical part begins for kids when, after the family breakfast, they spend the day with their peers, counselors, and horse until after dinner when they meet up again with family to relive the day's activities, which could include zip lining, whitewater rafting, or visiting a local rodeo. It's like kids get their own camp and adults get their own too, filled with hours spent riding, hiking, biking, fishing, or relaxing (soak in a therapeutic copper tub or get a massage suspended over the stream at the Lazy You Spa). This summer, applaud your own private 4<sup>th</sup> of

July parade and fireworks or visit during Singer/Songwriter Week with Monty Powell and Anna Wilson. Although there is an outdoor lover's menu of fun, there's plenty of time to spend with the fam amid the fine dining and list of wines suggested by the on-site sommelier, which earned the ranch its 2017 *Wine Spectator* Award of Excellence. Giddy up! [clazyu.com](http://clazyu.com)

\*Cowpokes are led on ponies and enjoy donkey carriage rides.

### 3 COLLECTIVE VAIL

A RETREAT AT 4 EAGLE RANCH  
WOLCOTT, COLORADO

"Explore extraordinary destinations without sacrificing any luxuries," states Collective Retreats. One of their premier locations is only 15 miles from Beaver Creek and 25 miles from Vail Village, so when it's time to get your glamp on, set aside the summer hustle of a mountain town for a simple and beautifully appointed tent in the midst of Colorado ranchland that will inspire more than a horseback ride. With over a thousand acres to explore at 4 Eagle Ranch, you can begin the day on the Lodge's porch with breakfast (included), then head out for a cattle roundup, Jeep tour, or an afternoon fly fishing with impressive views of the Sawatch Range before returning to the king-size bed, electricity, wood-burning stove, full bathroom (kitted out with L'Occitane products), and private deck with rocking chairs. Before dinner, visit the on-site Vines at Vail Winery to receive a complimentary tasting and then head back to the ranch-chic accommodations with a purchase of Born Free To Be Wild (Bordeaux-style blend) or Vail Ink (50% Syrah/50% Petite Sirah). Happily prepare for a night dining under the stars with a "grill your own" tasty "BBQ in a Box" (choose between three meats) or have the chef prepare a hyper-local dinner (they deliver and clean up!) before cozying up for an evening of galaxy gazing and their signature "S'mores in a Box." Welcome to Glamping, Collective Retreats-style. [collectiveretreats.com](http://collectiveretreats.com)











7



5



4



5



6



## { BEST PLACES TO } DUDE RANCH AND GLAMP

### 4 THE HOME RANCH CLARK, COLORADO

Twenty miles south of Steamboat Springs lies the only Relais & Châteaux in Colorado. There's a reason why. It epitomizes the American West. Situated on 500 acres with only 14 rooms and cabins for 50 guests, the secluded ranch in the Elk River Valley feels like home the moment it comes into view. Horses idly graze, aspen trees glitter, and views of evergreen forests politely command attention. The setting is unspoiled, the food is haute mountain cuisine, and as you rise each morning to experience rides in the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest (over one million acres), you may feel as though an equestrian dream has come true. The all-inclusive vacation includes twice-daily rides (and full-day excursions for those who crave long days in the saddle) with the wranglers. If fishing is your thing, there are over two miles of Elk River for your rod and reel; there's a reason this is an Orvis-endorsed lodge. And, with team penning, hay rides, and cattle drives, it serves as an authentic and foolproof location for a wedding, reunion, or summer family tradition. The six stand-alone cabins dressed in Native American rugs, regional art, and antiques all have their own hot tub on the porch for views of the Mt. Zirkel Wilderness. By week's end you'll have formed a deep connection to your steed, indulged in delicious farm-fresh offerings at the nightly communal dinner table, and conversed with like-minded guests who swear they've found paradise.

[homeranch.com](#)

### 5 MAGEE HOMESTEAD BRUSH CREEK RANCH SARATOGA, WYOMING

Pure and boundless luxury for a mere 27 guests with access to 30,000 acres in the North Platte River Valley, the Magee Homestead leads with one intoxicating suggestion, "The Romance of the West is calling." This is adult-centric escapism with adventure and wellness options fit for anyone in your herd. (Note: With a full buy-out, the kids are more than welcome.) The

Magee Homestead is an addition to the award-laden Brush Creek Ranch Collection and every detail is perfect, including the striking modern Western interior design by Simeone Deary Design Group, the pasture-to-plate cuisine, The Grand Pavilion with its spa, pool, saloon, grill, and library, the phenomenal 75 miles of private trails on the ranch for riding, biking, and running, in addition to the 20 miles of private river for fishing. Whether you canter the vast landscapes of this former cow camp and hay-producing ranch or bask in the full-service spa where "tranquility is definitely on the range," with products from Tata Harper and signature treatments like the Silver Spur. Confirm seven nights with the Saddle Up and Ride Boutique Ranch Vacation offer and receive a \$500 travel credit. Time to pony up.

[mageehomestead.com](#)

### 6 THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK PHILIPSBURG, MONTANA

This 6,600-acre ranch located between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks is the world's only *Forbes Travel Guide* Five-Star guest ranch and the United States' only founding member of the National Geographic Society's Unique Lodges of the World. With 29 distinct accommodations (choose between gorgeous Granite Lodge rooms, bucolic Historic Barn suites, to-die-for Luxury Canvas Cabins, or picturesque Private Homes), all include omnipresent views of the unforgettable Rock Creek Valley and personal cruisers or mountain bikes for on-ranch transport. Montana, the Treasure State, is known as "The Last Best Place on Earth," and this ranch, ideally situated near Missoula, Butte, and Helena, could give you reason to believe Rock Creek's motto that "the best souvenir is a great story." With expert guides and 75+ amazing horses, stocked ponds and casting lessons, target sports and ropes courses, bowling and billiards, mountain biking and geocaching, RC has what you want to do when you think of being outdoors under the big sky. The Saddle Sore Soak (spa treatment), the Rodeo BBQ on the Buckle

Barn Lawn (eat mouth-watering Flat-head cherries), and the Canteen Social Hour (bring boots and practice your line dancing!) are must-dos at this legendary Montana outpost.

[theranchatrockcreek.com](#)

### 7 ZAPATA RANCH MOSCA, COLORADO

Back in 1999, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) did something very special. It chose to conserve this 103,000-acre preserve in south-central Colorado near the Great Sand Dunes National Park where the buffalo (bison) literally roam. Their reason was two-fold: "To protect their significant natural values and to demonstrate how cattle and bison operations can co-exist with conservation efforts." Thank you. Now, aside from being one of the most "scenic and ecologically diverse landscapes in the U.S.," the Zapata Ranch, located in the San Luis Valley, is the real-deal, no-holds-barred working ranch vacation. TNC partnered with Colorado-based Ranchlands, a ranch management company whose mission is to preserve "ecosystems and our ranching heritage," so if the goal is to learn about ranching, bison, cattle, and horses, this is the place for hands-on experience in a rancher's daily work. (No worries, there are nature hikes, yoga, and massages available too!) Ride a ranch horse or bring your own. Take an overnight pack trip into the Sangre de Cristo Mountains or get educated on grass-fed cattle and bison production. The experience here is to explore America's oldest tradition close to the earth and in the wild. Extraordinary and exceptional, Zapata is the future of ranching and you can take part in it. [zranch.org](#) 