

# 417

FOR THE OZARKS

## LIVE YOUR BEST FALL LIFE

Your guide to pumpkin patches, small-town  
festivals, vivid autumn color and more







GETAWAY

## Giddyap!

*FULFILL YOUR COWBOY DREAMS ON A DUDE RANCH THIS FALL. DUDE RANCHES CHECK ALL THE TOP TRAVEL TRENDS' PROVERBIAL BOXES: COWBOY CORE, SLOW TRAVEL, REMOTE ESCAPES AND ADVENTURE.*

BY TARYN SHORR-MCKEE



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ALL IT COWBOY CORE, frontier travel or just a breath of fresh air—whatever the term, traditional

dude ranches are having a major moment. Fueled largely by pop culture's renewed fascination with the American West (thank you, *Yellowstone* and *Land Man*), and travelers' ever-growing desire to slow down, actually unplug and

spread out, dude ranch vacations are more popular and relevant than ever. And in 2025, these aren't just retreats centered around horseback riding. They're immersive, leisurely getaways designed to help you reconnect with nature, yourself and your inner wrangler—the antidote to our hyper-connected, over-scheduled lives.

### Ranch Life

Without trying to be anything other than what they are, dude ranches offer a refreshing break from the noise, digital and otherwise. Whether you're trading Slack notifications for time in the saddle or roasting s'mores instead of doom-scrolling, these getaways deliver something increasingly rare: presence. On the ranch, you'll find the kind of

*Find a close-to-home dude ranch in the Ozarks or plan a trip across the country.*

## The Long Way

simplicity that's extraordinarily difficult to find in modern daily life.

And if your idea of a dude ranch involves dusty bunkhouses and all-day trail rides? Well, it's time to reframe your thinking. Today's best ranches deliver all those aforementioned unplugged perks, as well as blend rustic charm with high-end entertainment and comfort: archery ranges and climbing walls, yoga decks with mountain views, kids' camps, spa treatments, even chef-led tasting menus. Lodging might mean a private cabin with a soaking tub and stone fireplace or a stylish glamping tent. It's a reimagined Western experience—adventure, yes, but with plenty of creature comforts.

### Who should take a dude ranch vacation?

This kind of retreat appeals to anyone looking to unplug and reconnect. Families especially, and perhaps multi-generational families even more so, are a natural fit, but ranch stays also appeal to couples, solo travelers, wellness seekers, foodies and anyone craving fresh air, wide-open spaces and good old-fashioned adventure. For parents—heck, for everyone—a dude ranch presents an opportunity to give kids a wholly free-range, screen-free experience, one they won't think is totally lame. A chance to do more with less, prioritizing connection and clarity.

Along those lines, ranch stays also tap into a growing interest in “rural upskilling,” learning practical, hands-on skills. Guests can try their hands at roping, archery, woodworking or outdoor survival skills, gaining not just new experiences but confidence.

It's part of a larger shift toward intentional travel. According to Tripaneer, interest in U.S.-based ranch stays jumped 42% in the past year, with trail-riding a staggering 94%. As travelers grow more wary of overcrowded destinations, ranches—often tucked into remote, scenic corners of the country—offer something quieter, restorative and sustainable.



*Release your inner cowboy and get the dude ranch experience at Brush Creek Ranch (top), Circle Bar Ranch (right) or C Lazy U Ranch (below).*



### Best for a Close-to-Home Taste of Ranch Life

#### **Mountain Creek Ranch**

Aurora, Missouri; [mountaincreekranch-mo.com](http://mountaincreekranch-mo.com)

You don't have to head west to channel your inner cowboy. Mountain Creek Ranch in Aurora offers the chance to dip your boots into ranch life right here in

417-land. The family-owned property isn't traditional in the classic Western dude ranch sense, but it's packed with rustic charm and activities including horseback rides, chuckwagon dinners and cattle drives. Whether you visit for a day or stay overnight in one of the cozy cabins, it's an easy, approachable way to get your cowboy fix.





PHOTOS COURTESY BRUSH CREEK RANCH, C LAZY U RANCH, CIRCLE BAR RANCH

### Best for Families

#### ***C Lazy U Ranch***

*Granby, Colorado; clazyu.co*

85 miles from Denver but far more remote feeling, this high-altitude hideaway marries “Colorado fancy” and legacy on 8,500 acres. The nearly century-old working ranch offers Rocky Mountain views and upscale Western accommodations, from cozy cabins to spacious homes. Ride alongside 200 horses, participate in cattle pushing or horsemanship clinics, or simply watch the daily “Jingle,” when wranglers round up the horses at dawn and dusk. Year-round activities span fly-fishing, hiking and wagon rides in summer to winter snowshoeing, sleigh rides and ice hockey. Families are especially well served, thanks to robust kids’ programming, while adults can unwind with wine pairing dinners or spa treatments.

### Best for a Warm Weather Getaway

#### ***White Stallion Ranch***

*Tucson, Arizona; whitestallion.com*

A “true” family affair since 1965, White Stallion Ranch sits just outside Tucson and adjacent to Saguaro National Park West, where several members of the True family run the operation. It comes as no surprise several old Westerns chose White Stallion as a filming location—guest rooms are chic Santa Fe-style casitas scattered among towering Saguaro cacti. Explore the Sonoran Desert on horseback or via a guided off-road or e-bike tour, soak up the famous Arizona sunshine by the pool and catch the beloved ranch rodeo every Wednesday.

### Best for an Authentic Wild West Experience

#### ***Circle Bar Ranch***

*Hobson Montana; circlebarranch.com*

For a taste of untamed Big Sky Country, Circle Bar delivers in spades. Nestled at the foot of the Little Belt Mountains in remote central Montana’s Judith River Valley, this ranch is like stepping into a Western film. Fitting, since it’s part of the True Ranch Collection, the same owners behind White Stallion Ranch (though the vibe here is wilder). Days revolve around classic ranch pursuits: trail rides across open plains, guided hikes into Lewis and Clark territory and fly-fishing the creek that runs through the property. There’s no spa or curated tasting menu, just genuine Western hospitality and pure Montana magic.

### Best Splurge-Worthy Ranch

#### ***Brush Creek Ranch***

*Saratoga, Wyoming;*

*brushcreekranch.com*

Western heritage meets five-star indulgence in rural southern Wyoming. Set on 30,000 acres flanked by the Sierra Madre Mountains and spectacular Medicine Bow National Forest, this luxe all-inclusive retreat delivers rustic elegance in every detail. In between riding and learning to barrel race, sign up for

cooking classes, forest bathing, goat yoga or a High Mountain Moisture Drench Therapy spa treatment. Stay in a Western lodge room or one of 25 private cabins, and if you have kiddos in tow, don’t miss the Li’l Wranglers program for kids 4 to 9.

### PLAN IT

## *What to expect at a dude ranch*

**Plan well in advance.** Most, if not all, dude ranches have minimum stay requirements ranging from four days to a full week. It’s also common for guests to return year after year, reserving next year’s dates before checkout. This is not a last-minute getaway.

**Dress the part.** Jeans, boots (break them in before you pack!), pearl snap shirts and a cowboy hat serve you far better than heels or anything designer. Feel free to pack a nice shirt or jewelry for dinner, but leave the nice formal wear at home.

**Understand what you’re signing up for.** Dude ranches are not theme parks or five-star resorts (in most cases, anyway)—and that’s their precise charm. You’ll find fresh air, open space, beautiful scenery and hearty meals, but probably also a little dust and some critters. Come with an open mind and embrace ranch life.

**Expect a mix of downtime and group activities.** Days typically follow a flexible routine, with horseback rides, meals and scheduled outings with other guests. For many, this social aspect is a highlight, but if you’re craving total seclusion, it might not be the right fit.

**Check the fine print.** Many ranches build everything into their rates, while others offer à la carte pricing or themed activity packages for an extra fee. Be sure you understand exactly what’s included before committing.