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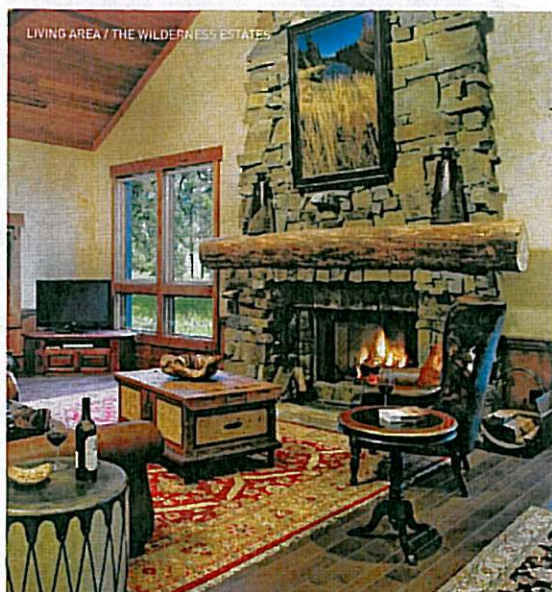
TOP SUITES

BEST GUEST RANCH SUITES OF THE AMERICAN WEST

While America's West might not be the wild final frontier it once was, these standout luxury ranches (and their top digs) recapture the rugged, earthy magic of the region's heyday without skimping on modern-day comfort and care.

BY LARRY OLMSTED

THE WILDERNESS ESTATES / THE RESORT AT PAWS UP



This luxury resort in Montana is situated on a sprawling 37,000-acre working cattle ranch. The appeal of Paws Up is twofold: The resort gives its guests an intimate, unfiltered connection with the natural beauty of Montana, yet does this while providing the most luxurious comfort possible. This includes first-class, personalized service, spacious and private accommodations (28 individual vacation homes and 30 "glamping" permanent safari-style tents), top-shelf cuisine, a long list of wilderness adventures and a myriad of amenities.

MONTANA

THE RESORT AT PAWS UP THE WILDERNESS ESTATES

Key selling points | These are the largest of the ranch's private homes and each is discreetly secluded on four private acres.

All have panoramic vistas, high vaulted ceilings and three master bedroom suites, as well as a large living room and lofted game room.

Standout service | One family really wanted to view elk, so when a staff member spotted the animals five miles away on his drive home, he let the ranch know, and the guests were driven out to view them.

Style | Western chic, by co-owner Nadine Lipson, 2008

Special amenities | Chef's kitchen, six-person outdoor hot tub, jetted spa bathtubs, slate showers, EO bath amenities, five flat-screen LCD

TVs, Wii, vehicle for guest use

Square footage | 3,248

Number of rooms in suite | Six

Number of bathrooms | Three and one half-bath

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 30 tented accommodations and 28 homes

Who's slept here? | Renowned musicians and movie stars

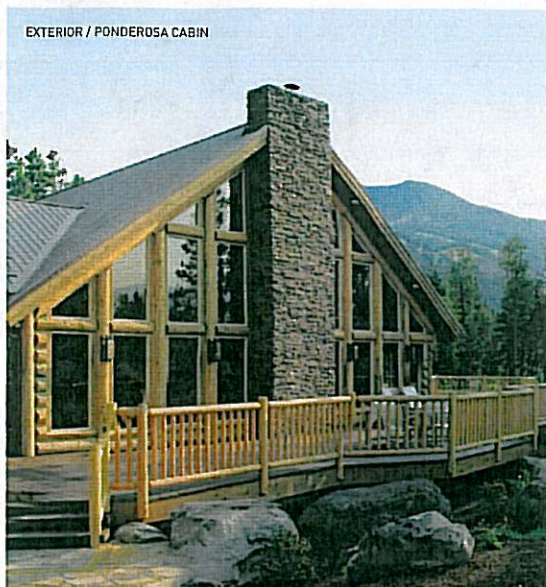
Nightly rate | \$2,130 (inclusive)

Location | 40060 Paws Up Road, Greenough, Montana

Contact | CEO Stephen Beaumont, (800) 473-0601; sbeaumont@pawsup.com; www.pawsup.com



EXTERIOR / PONDEROSA CABIN



It's the combination of stunning natural beauty, cowboy culture, elegant accommodations, fine dining, attentive service and devoted staff that keeps loyal guests returning to Triple Creek Ranch. A gourmet champagne picnic, reached by horseback and served at the foot of the rugged Bitterroot Mountains, under Montana's "Big Sky," while watching herds of buffalo and elk is a typical lunch break here. Year-round activities range from participating in actual cattle drives to dog sledding, hiking and clay shooting.

TRIPLE CREEK RANCH PONDEROSA CABIN

Key selling points | The three-bedroom Ponderosa is both huge and secluded, a stone and post and beam structure with every amenity from a full commercial kitchen to a three-level deck with gorgeous views onto a stocked trout pond. Vaulted ceilings, vast windows and original Western artwork throughout enhance the sense of place.

Standout service | During a full-moon horseback ride, a couple celebrating their anniversary was surprised by a stargazing telescope setup at the top of a mountain ridge, complete with champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries.

Style | Rustic Western elegance, by owners Barbara and Craig Barrett, 2006

Special amenities | Large great

room, Sub-Zero and Wolf stainless steel appliances, 50-inch flat screen built into a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace, king-size log post beds, 650-thread-count Pima cotton sheets, oversized walk-in showers

Square footage | 3,600, plus 4,171 of outdoor space

Number of rooms in suite | Six

Number of bathrooms | Three

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 23 cabins

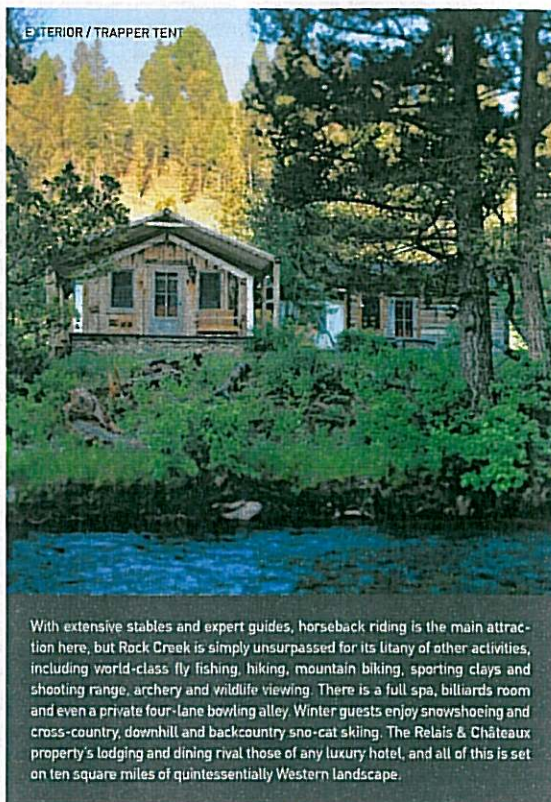
Who's slept here? | Pro athletes, leading CEOs

Nightly rate | \$2,650 (for first couple, \$450 for each additional person)

Location | 5551 West Fork Road, Darby, Montana

Contact | General Managers Bill and Leslie McConnell, (406) 821-4600; bill@triplecreekranch.com and leslie@triplecreekranch.com; www.triplecreekranch.com

TOP SUITES



EXTERIOR / TRAPPER TENT

With extensive stables and expert guides, horseback riding is the main attraction here, but Rock Creek is simply unsurpassed for its litany of other activities, including world-class fly fishing, hiking, mountain biking, sporting clays and shooting range, archery and wildlife viewing. There is a full spa, billiards room and even a private four-lane bowling alley. Winter guests enjoy snowshoeing and cross-country, downhill and backcountry snow-cat skiing. The Relais & Châteaux property's lodging and dining rival those of any luxury hotel, and all of this is set on ten square miles of quintessentially Western landscape.

THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK TRAPPER TENT

Key selling points | This unique half-cabin, half-tent accommodation is the most private on the property, secluded and situated directly on the bank of namesake Rock Creek for an authentic "trapper" experience. Upholstery and furnishings are American classics from the likes of Pendleton and Ralph Lauren, with rich leathers and hides throughout, plus museum-quality, collector pieces of Western art.

Standout service | For a family reunion of 30, staff created a City Slicker Olympics with myriad events for all ages, complete with gold, silver and bronze spray-painted horseshoes as mementos.

Style | Authentic Western, by Jet Zarkadas of Los Griegos Studio, LLC, 2010

Special amenities | Woodburning fireplace, kitchen, Frette linens and bedding, locally produced organic sage and cedar bath/body products, iPod docks, Wi-Fi, wine fridge, outdoor soaking tub

Square footage | 600, plus 250 of outdoor space

Number of rooms in suite | Two

Number of bathrooms | One

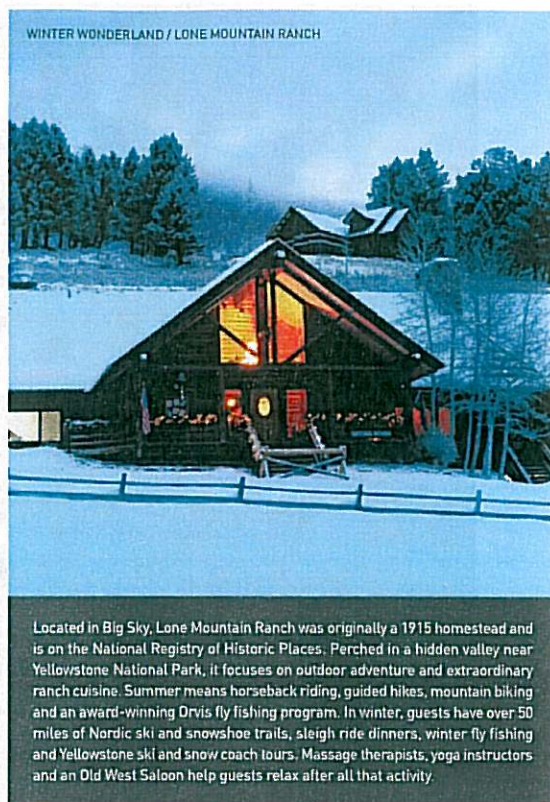
Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 27, including 18 tents, homes and cabins

Who's slept here? | LeAnn Rimes, country music star Vince Gill, *American Idol* founder Simon Fuller

Nightly rate | \$2,500 (inclusive)

Location | 79 Carriage House Lane, Philipsburg, Montana

Contact | General Manager Maja Kilgore, (406) 859-6027; kilgore@theranchatrockcreek.com; www.theranchatrockcreek.com



WINTER WONDERLAND / LONE MOUNTAIN RANCH

Located in Big Sky, Lone Mountain Ranch was originally a 1915 homestead and is on the National Registry of Historic Places. Perched in a hidden valley near Yellowstone National Park, it focuses on outdoor adventure and extraordinary ranch cuisine. Summer means horseback riding, guided hikes, mountain biking and an award-winning Orvis fly fishing program. In winter, guests have over 50 miles of Nordic ski and snowshoe trails, sleigh ride dinners, winter fly fishing and Yellowstone ski and snow coach tours. Massage therapists, yoga instructors and an Old West Saloon help guests relax after all that activity.

LONE MOUNTAIN RANCH RIDGETOP LODGE

Key selling points | Overlooking the ranch and namesake Lone Peak (11,190 feet), this spacious six-bedroom lodge has 12-foot-high picture windows showcasing mountain views. The bedrooms, sitting area and two great rooms each boast a rock fireplace and stunning vistas.

Standout service | The sleigh ride dinner outing was too late for one guest to bring his children along, so staff arranged an earlier private trip for the whole family.

Style | Montana log cabin, by in-house team and Biggerstaff Construction, 1993

Special amenities | Down comforters and featherbeds in all bedrooms, twin hand-built rock fireplaces, pool table, private outdoor hot tub, kitchen, wet bar

Square footage | 4,500

Number of rooms in suite | Eight

Number of bathrooms | Eight

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 30, including 24 cabins

Who's slept here? | Executives looking to really get away

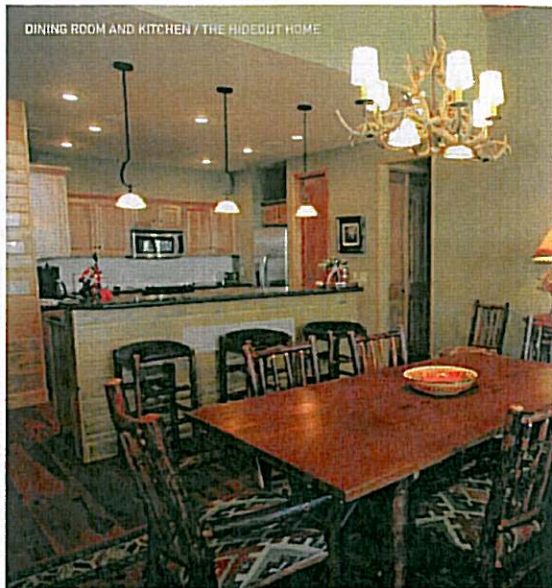
Nightly rate | From \$2,142 (inclusive for six)

Location | 750 Lone Mountain Ranch Road, Big Sky, Montana

Contact | General Manager Bob Foster, (406) 995-4644; bfoster@lonemountainranch.com; www.lonemountainranch.com



TOP SUITES



DINING ROOM AND KITCHEN / THE HIDEOUT HOME

An upscale, 100-year-old working cattle, riding and horsemanship guest ranch, The Hideout is huge, one of the nation's 100 largest landowners with 300,000 acres, just east of Yellowstone National Park. Yet it is limited to just 25 visitors. This is a rare combination: A high-end guest experience and one of the largest operational cattle ranches in the US. Both operations are managed hands-on on a daily basis by the family owners, with whom guests interact on rides and at meals for a truly immersive ranch experience.

WYOMING

THE HIDEOUT LODGE & GUEST RANCH

THE HIDEOUT HOME

Key selling points | This luxurious three-bedroom home boasts twin master bedrooms featuring master baths with walk-in tile showers, plus private terraces, a fire pit, fully equipped kitchen and fine furniture and materials throughout. Views take in the Big Horn Mountains and grazing horses.

Standout service | For a guest who incidentally mentioned her husband's love of big vintage chrome American cars, staff located a nearly new 1976 Lincoln Continental town car to pick the couple up jet-side, then gave the guests the car to enjoy during their stay.

Style | Historical Western luxury, by Paula Flitner and Gene Rockman of Rockman Associates LLC, 2009

Special amenities | Fresh homemade pastries and cakes, plus wine, fruit and flowers on arrival, fixtures by Renovation Hardware, oversized soaking tubs, deck with fire pit, stone fireplace, large flat-screen TVs in every room

Square footage | 2,400, plus 400 of outdoor space

Number of rooms in suite | Six

Number of bathrooms | Three

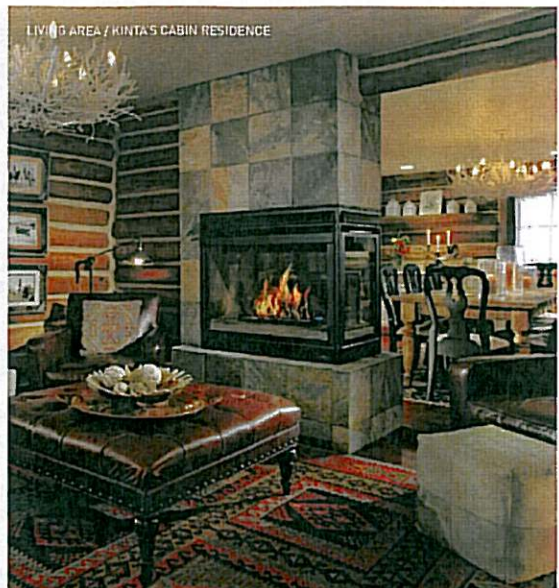
Number of rooms and suites in hotel | Nine, including five cabins

Who's slept here? | Film and reality TV stars, royal families

Nightly rate | From \$625 (four-night minimum)

Location | 3170 Road 40 1/2, Shell, Wyoming

Contact | General Manager Peter De Cabooter, (307) 765-2080; office@thehideout.com; www.thehideout.com



LIVING AREA / KINTA'S CABIN RESIDENCE

This all-inclusive vacation getaway in the heart of Wyoming's Platte River Valley occupies a gorgeous 15,000-acre historic working cattle ranch surrounded by more than one million acres of unspoiled wild lands, with every activity imaginable on offer. In winter, ice skate, ice fish, tube and sled, and go exploring on snowmobile, cross-country skis or horseback. Summer brings Orvis-endorsed fly fishing, hiking, mountain biking and hunting. Impeccable service, a luxury spa, understated elegance throughout and an extremely private setting round out the refined Western experience at Brush Creek Ranch.

LODGE & SPA AT BRUSH CREEK RANCH

KINTA'S CABIN RESIDENCE

Key selling points | Originally the ranch owner's home dating to the land's homestead days, the three-bedroom Kinta's Cabin has been completely and authentically restored and is the largest and most luxurious of the original cabins at Brush Creek Ranch. Rawhide chairs, real hides and real fur throws evoke a true rugged-meets-refined vibe.

Standout service | For a wedding proposal, staff decked a rock cliff overlooking the ranch in candles and brought the couple to the romantic setting by horse-drawn carriage.

Style | Western luxury, by Simeone Deary, 2009

Special amenities | Full kitchen,

two fireplaces, Thymes by Gilchrist & Soames bath amenities, 400-thread-count sheets, Egyptian cotton towels, Western works of art, grocery stocking service

Square footage | 1,536

Number of rooms in suite | Six

Number of bathrooms | Three

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 40, including ten cabin residences, nine cabin suites and one bunkhouse

Who's slept here? | Reba McEntire, Kelly Clarkson

Nightly rate | \$4,500 (inclusive for six)

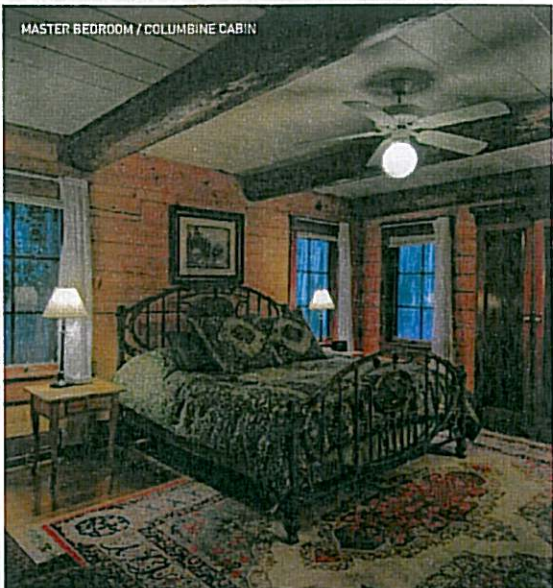
Location | 66 Brush Creek Ranch Road, Saratoga, Wyoming

Contact | COO Mike Williams, (307) 327-5284;

mwilliams@brushcreekranch.com; www.brushcreekranch.com

TOP SUITES

MASTER BEDROOM / COLUMBINE CABIN



Located just outside the archetypal Western ski town of Steamboat Springs, this is the only Relais & Châteaux dude ranch in Colorado. It is also an Orvis-endorsed fly fishing lodge and was showcased in "1,000 Places To See Before You Die." In summer it offers all-inclusive dude ranch and horseback riding vacations par excellence. Winter focuses on an all-inclusive Nordic and backcountry skiing vacation. Year-round, guests indulge in the celebrated cuisine of chef Clyde Nelson. Since 1980, The Home Ranch has been renowned for the quality of its horsemanship program, and its outstanding gourmet food and service.

COLORADO

THE HOME RANCH COLUMBINE CABIN

Key selling points | The largest and most luxurious cabin on property is also called "Home on the Ranch," and is a two-story house, not a cabin. It comfortably accommodates three couples or a family of six to eight, with a spacious living room, stone fireplace, steam shower, outdoor Jacuzzi and a big wraparound porch.

Standout service | When a guest loved the coffee—a proprietary blend not sold anywhere—and asked where he could buy it, he was presented with a five-pound bag to take home.

Style | Sophisticated Western, by founder and owner Ann Stranahan, 1992

Special amenities | Arts & Crafts school tiles and paneling, Frette

sheets, Pendleton bedspreads, custom soaps and lotions from Mountain Soap Factory, authentic Navajo rugs, fresh flowers, bottomless jar of homemade chocolate chip cookies

Square footage | 2,100, plus 400 of outdoor space

Number of rooms in suite | Four

Number of bathrooms | Three

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 14, including eight cabins

Who's slept here? | Top models, Grammy-winning songwriters

Nightly rate | \$2,979 for up to six (inclusive, seven-night minimum); \$3,125 for eight

Location | 54880 County Road 129, Clark, Colorado

Contact | Assistant Ranch Manager Selina Heintz, (970) 879-1780; selina@homeranch.com; www.homeranch.com

DINING ROOM / MIDNIGHT TRAIL LODGE



Surrounded by Rocky Mountain National Park and Arapahoe National Forest, C Lazy U is a true four-season guest ranch. There's always riding and the usual offerings like fly fishing, but in winter, guests enjoy the unique luxury of private sno-cat skiing. The ranch features gourmet cuisine and a full spa where a moonlit "Cowboy Soak" in deep, creek-side copper tubs is heaven. Families return for the highly acclaimed children's program that revolves around horseback riding, but throws in all sorts of fun extras, like archery, scavenger hunts and even white water rafting and rodeo day trips for teens.

C LAZY U RANCH MIDNIGHT TRAIL LODGE

Key selling points | This ultra-private villa sleeps up to 11 people in complete luxury, with a state-of-the-art sound system, full gourmet kitchen and a private golf cart for guests to use around the ranch.

The custom iron, woodwork and cabinetry really sets the lodge apart.

Standout service | For a guest who wanted his son to have a genuine Colorado camping experience, staff collected mats, sleeping bags, a tent and a s'mores kit, then drove the father and son to a remote location on the ranch, helped them set up camp and built a fire.

Style | Rustic-chic Western, by Mark Hebbbring of Peak Craftsman and Rebecca Kaufman of Rebel Design, 2009

Special amenities | Molton Brown

bath amenities, 70-inch HD TV, wet bar, large copper soaking tub and steam shower in master bath, private outdoor hot tub, indoor fireplace, two outdoor fire pits (one gas and one wood)

Square footage | 3,500

Number of rooms in suites | Nine

Number of bathrooms | Three and one half-bath

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 38 cabins and one Midnight Trail Lodge

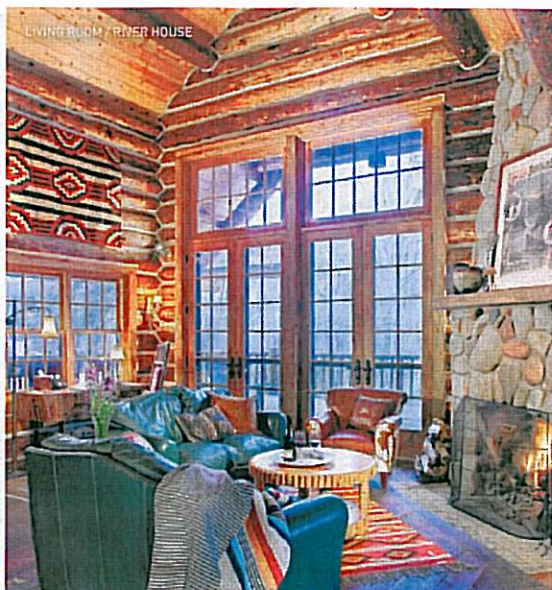
Who's slept here? | Cindy Crawford, Dave Matthews, Tim Tebow

Nightly rate | \$600 per person (up to 11)

Location | 3640 Colorado Highway 125, Granby, Colorado

Contact | Director of Sales and Marketing Brady Johnson, (970) 887-3344; bjohnson@clazyu.com; www.clazyu.com

TOP SUITES



This is an ideal luxury Western experience for those seeking a private enclave with friends or family in the Colorado Rockies; there are never more than 26 guests and many groups take the place exclusively. It is known for fine cuisine and wine, and because of the intimate nature of the experience, staff excels at customizing activities to each particular guest, often with unique extras, such as the company of a local bamboo fishing rod craftsman or a "horse whisperer" for avid equestrians. The focus here is always on personalization.

SMITH FORK RANCH RIVER HOUSE

Key selling points | This authentically elegant log house has three master bedrooms and overlooks the Smith Fork River on one side, and one of the ranch's six stocked fishing ponds on the other. A large wraparound deck touts a hot tub cantilevered over the river, as well as a screened-in sleeping porch.

Standout service | On a horse riding outing, a guest with a great sense of humor joked that he needed a "more colorful" horse, as his was white whereas his friends' horses were not. The next morning, wranglers rose early and painted his horse to look like the others.

Style | Elegant rustic, by Marley Hodgson of SFR in collaboration with Dean Mosher, 2006

Special amenities | Locally hand-

made soaps and lotions, daily fresh flowers from Smith Fork Ranch gardens, woodburning fireplace, American antiques, original Western and Native American art

Square footage | 2,060, plus 766 of outdoor space

Number of rooms in suite | Six

Number of bathrooms | Three

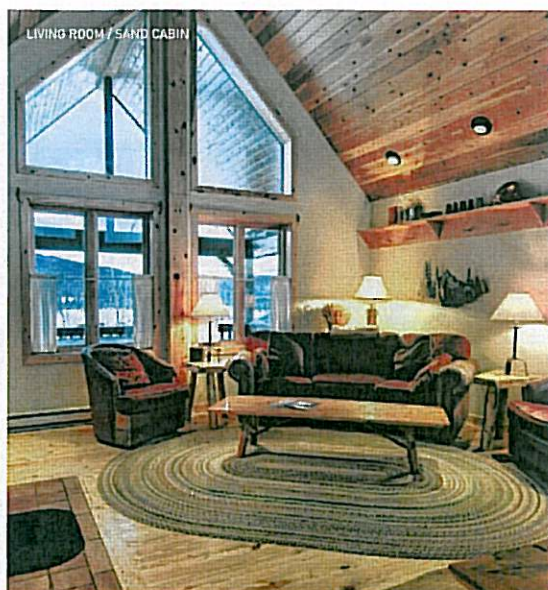
Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 13, including three cabins and one house

Who's slept here? | Singer Joe Cocker, Riedel North America CEO Maximilian Riedel

Nightly rate | From \$2,280 (three-night minimum)

Location | 45362 Needle Rock Road, Crawford, Colorado

Contact | General Manager Jim Nielsen, (970) 921-3454 ext. 260; jim@smithforkranch.com; www.smithforkranch.com



While Vista Verde has upscale accommodations and delicious food, its devotion to outdoor activities is what compels guests, especially for riding, with an on-site horse trainer hosting specialized clinics and extensive facilities including a heated indoor arena. There is also excellent mountain biking, fly fishing, hiking and rock climbing in summer, and backcountry and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in winter. Special culinary classes and wine tastings are on offer year-round, in addition to an annual photography workshop. The focus here is definitely on the active experience.

VISTA VERDE RANCH SAND CABIN

Key selling points | The view from both indoors and from the private hot tub on the deck is simply phenomenal, overlooking the horse pasture to the mountains beyond. This three-bedroom cabin is the largest on the property, and a stocked fridge and complimentary drinks make it feel like home.

Standout service | Staff hid a stuffed moose with a snack each night for a family's kids to find; the nightly treasure hunt was such a hit that the ranch now offers this fun turndown for all young guests.

Style | Western luxury, by Bill Backer, 2009

Special amenities | Felt d'Oro sheets, locally made Steamboat Soap bath amenities, woodburning stove, welcome snack basket, log

furnishings handmade on-site with wood collected on the property

Square footage | 1,340, plus 250 of outdoor space

Number of rooms in suite | Four

Number of bathrooms | Two

Number of rooms and suites in hotel | 13, including ten cabins

Who's slept here? | High-profile CEOs, TV personalities

Nightly rate | From \$930

Location | 58000 Cowboy Way, Clark, Colorado

Contact | Director of Hospitality Stephanie Wilson, (970) 879-3858; stephanie@vistaverde.com; www.vistaverde.com

