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# COWGIRL UP

WED ON A RANCH AND RIDE OFF INTO THE SUNSET. BOOTS OPTIONAL.

by Christine Mahorney

There is a difference between a guest ranch and a dude ranch. Dude ranches bring to mind the 1990s comedy flick "City Slickers" in which Billy Crystal leads a cast of bumbling city folk playing cowboys. Guest ranches, on the contrary, are five-star resorts with lots of horses.

Despite their rustic ambiance, at most guest ranches there is little—if any—actual ranch work to be done by guests, and the dinner bells are only for show.

Incidentally, should you choose to ride a horse on a guest ranch, your mount will be presented to you ready to ride. Even inquiring about grooming your horse after returning to the stable will elicit awkward looks from the wranglers.

Instead, you simply hand over the reins, and return to your well-appointed cabin to shower (or perhaps get a massage in the spa) before enjoying a five-course dinner prepared by a renowned chef.

## ON-SITE WRANGLERS

One of the biggest challenges that brides stumble over is constructing an elaborate ceremony and celebration featuring services from dozens of vendors—and appointing themselves as the day-of contact. Day-of planners can relieve a significant amount of stress that comes with orchestrating multiple vendors, but their organizational skills come with a price. Most of the ranches we spoke with have complimentary on-site wedding coordinators to work with any off-site vendors to ensure everything runs smoothly.

"(Our planners) also ensure that, in addition to the bride and groom, all of their guests are able to make the most of their ranch getaway both pre- and post-ceremony," said Kecskés.

And speaking of getaways, time is seemingly absent on a guest ranch. Resorts may host multiple weddings on any given Saturday, leading to a sense of being herded up and down the mountain. Ranches not only make you feel like you're the only belle of the ball—you really are.

"What sets us apart is the flexibility and personalization that goes into each experience," said Stephanie Wilson from the Vista Verde. "And, unlike a resort, we're still just a ranch with down-to-earth people who treat you like family."

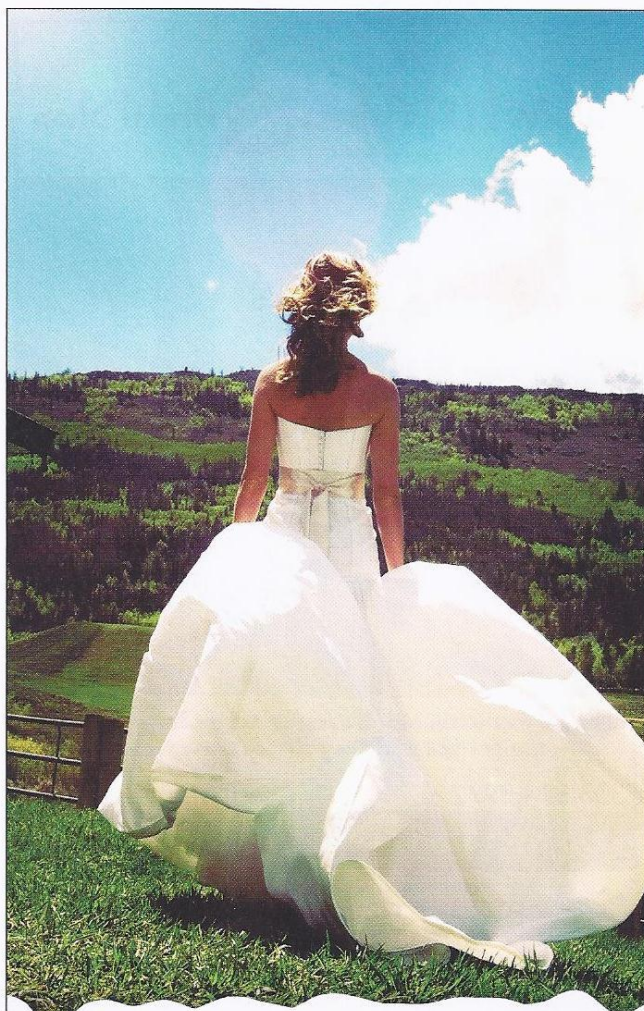
The places mentioned here are a mere sampling of the ranches in the Central Rockies that would welcome you and your guests. Just like selecting a more traditional venue, you'll want to narrow your search by cost, location, and amenities. Ranchweb.com is a great place to start.

## SPECIAL THANKS

C Lazy U Ranch  
clazyu.com | 970 887 3344

Wit's End Guest Ranch  
witsendranch.com | 800 236 9483

Vista Verde Ranch  
vistaverde.com | 970 879 3858



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