



# *The Denver Post* **SUMMER GETAWAYS**

**Easy  
pedaling  
around  
Grand  
Junction**

**Lakeside  
camping**

**A long  
weekend  
in Crested  
Butte**

**Plus: Arts events,  
dude ranches,  
hot springs  
and a literary  
tour of Colorado**



# Saddle up at these guest ranches around the state



By **Kim Fuller** *Special to The Denver Post*

**About an hour from C Lazy U Ranch, we turned on the country music. It wasn't a long drive from Vail — less than two hours, long enough that the sun had time to slowly dip away from the spacious sky. Every mile toward Granby seemed to erase another piece of what had been a hectic week, one I could now leave behind to the tune of "Wide Open Spaces."**

I felt a little giddy as we drew closer to the ranch, happily wearing the cowboy hat that usually just collects dust on a shelf in my closet. The dirt road welcomed us first, followed by trees draped with twinkle lights and a warm greeting from ranch hand supervisor Susanna Graybill, who goes by Suz, as soon as we pulled up to the main lodge.

My boyfriend, Bobby, and I checked in and headed to our quaint cabin, which was named Cresta, lit a fire and poured some wine. Because of our late arrival, the staff had packaged up a delectable dinner of

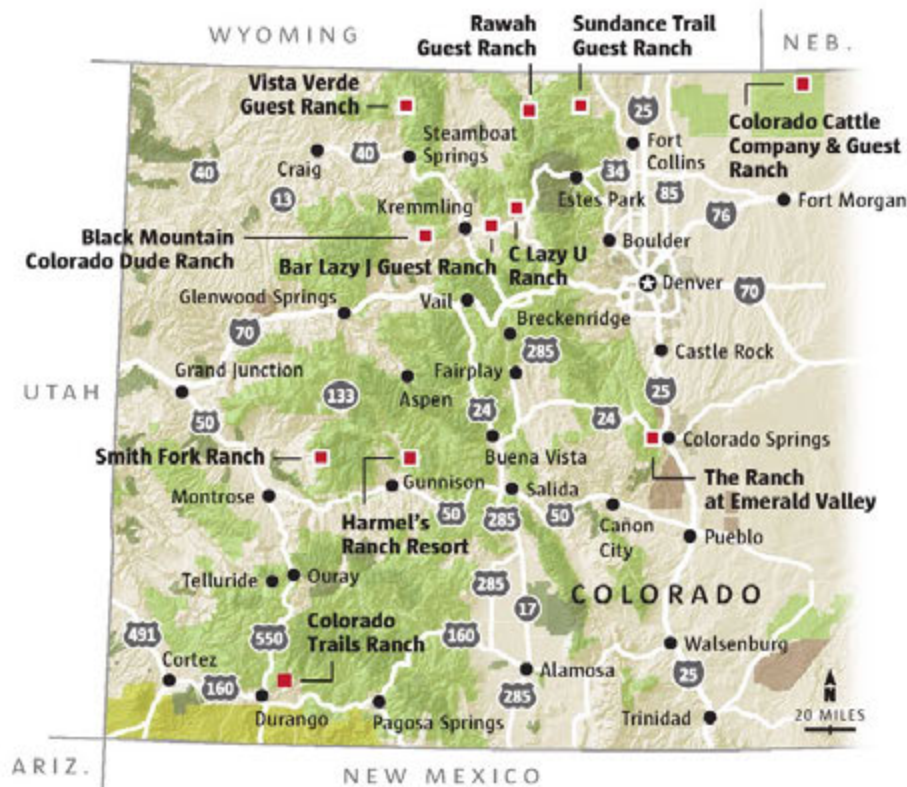
salad and surf and turf, with strawberry shortcake for dessert. We ate and then cozied up for the night, lulled to sleep by the crackling flames.

I had never been to a dude ranch, and it had been quite a few years since I'd ridden a horse. After a homestyle breakfast of eggs, sausage and toast, paired with some friendly conversation with fellow guests at our communal table, Bobby and I headed to the barn to get ready to ride.

Many families come to ranches such as this one for a full week, making a summer camp out of the stay: Children often have

Leo the horse takes in the view of the Willow Creek Reservoir traveling the Wilson Trail with a group of guests from C Lazy U Ranch just West of Granby. The ranch has been tending to guest since 1946. *Denver Post file*





counselors that lead activities for the day, and adults can choose to ride horses or fly fish. Memories of the camps of my childhood echoed loudly here. Riding my horse, Beau, felt familiar, just like riding had at summer camp growing up.

Depending on the ranch, hiking, white-water rafting and mountain biking might be available as well, with a guide or on your own.

In just one visit, it's not hard to take in the fresh Colorado air and the tickle of nostalgia in the campfire chats and laughter. It's no wonder families do this generation after generation, returning to venues that feel timeless through their annual visits. At C Lazy U, Bobby and I met Denver resident Charlie Rhoades, who came to C Lazy U as a kid. He and his wife shared a couple of meals with us, and he told us this place had seared fond memories into his mind. Naturally he started bringing his wife here, to share the place with a loved one.

There are plenty of these destination dude and guest ranches across the state of Colorado, each unique, each aiming to welcome people to come experience how life was out West — and for some, how it still is. Here's a roundup.

### What to Pack

- Casual pants, shorts and shirts
  - Dinner attire
  - Cowboy hat
  - Sunglasses
  - Swimwear
  - Ball cap
  - Riding jeans
  - Western wear
  - Riding gloves and boots (guests can often borrow boots and gloves at the ranches)
  - Rain jacket
  - Light down jacket
  - Cozy fleece layer
  - Gym clothes, footwear and gear for activities like yoga and tennis
  - Hiking boots and/or trail running shoes
  - Backpack
  - Fishing gear: waders, rod and vest
  - Water bottle
  - Sunscreen
  - Insect repellent
  - Comfy slippers for your cabin
  - Lounge clothes
  - Leatherman multi-tool
  - Book and/or journal
  - Headlamp
- Kim Fuller



The Rawah Guest Ranch, located just south of the Colorado-Wyoming border, is a family escape sitting at 8,400 feet in the Laramie River Valley. Tyler Hill, provided by Rawah Lodge,





Arena Games at Sundance Trail Ranch, one of the smallest of the Colorado dude ranches. *Provided by Sundance Trail*



Early morning light hits head wrangler Bill Fisher from the horse barn at the C Lazy U Ranch. *Denver Post file*

Guests at the Bar  
Lazy J Guest  
Ranch Angela and  
Martin Reilly  
nearby visit the  
Hot Sulphur  
Springs Resort  
and Spa after a 3-  
hour horseback  
ride. *Joe Amon,  
Denver Post file*



**C Lazy U Ranch**

This all-inclusive guest ranch in Granby has high-class amenities alongside an authentic country atmosphere. Come as a family or a couple and enjoy cozy cabins, hearty meals, daily trail rides, and an array of outdoor activities throughout the year.  
3640 Colorado 125, Granby, 970-887-3344, [www.clazyu.com](http://www.clazyu.com)

**Rawah Guest Ranch**

Located just south of the Colorado-Wyoming border, this family escape sits at 8,400 feet in the pristine Laramie River Valley. Activities such as horseback riding, hiking, fly fishing and a full children’s program with counselors are available keep guests of all ages entertained during their stay at Rawah.  
11447 County Road 103, Jelm, 800-510-7071, [rawahranch.com](http://rawahranch.com)

**Vista Verde Ranch**

While the atmosphere of Vista Verde highlights Colorado’s rustic aesthetic, accommodations and cuisine at this ranch are on the luxurious side. For those seeking adventure, the ranch launched fat biking as part of its winter activity line-up, and has new top-of-the-line mountain bikes for summer riding.  
58000 Cowboy Way, Clark, 970-879-3858, [www.vistaverde.com](http://www.vistaverde.com)

**Colorado Cattle Company and Guest Ranch**

Boasting the largest herd of riding horses in Colorado, Colorado Cattle Company is for those looking to live out their cowboy dreams. Guests can participate in Cowboy School and take lessons on skills like roping.  
70008 Weld County Road 132, Raymer, 970-437-5345, [coloradocattlecompany.com](http://coloradocattlecompany.com)



### Sundance Trail Guest Ranch

Rocky Mountain views surround this property, which is one of the smallest of the Colorado dude ranches. Sundance Trail is pet friendly and offers guests a variety of daily activities as well as special events like murder-mystery weekends.

17931 W. County Road 74e, Red Feather Lakes, 970-224-1222, [sundancetrail.com](http://sundancetrail.com)

### Black Mountain Colorado Dude Ranch

While activities like rafting and camping are offered at Black Mountain Ranch, the experience is focused on horseback riding, along with activities like lassoing and cattle driving. This ranch also offers adult-only weeks throughout the summer.

4000 Conger Mesa Road, McCoy, 970-653-4226, [blackmtnranch.com](http://blackmtnranch.com)

### Colorado Trails Ranch

At this ranch outside of Durango, kids and teens have a lot of activity options, like "power tubing" on Vallecito Reservoir. For those looking to explore their inner artist, a painting workshop is offered here in the summer.

12161 County Road 240, Durango, 800-323-3833, [coloradotrails.com](http://coloradotrails.com)

### Harmel's Ranch Resort

Nestled in the Gunnison National Forest, Harmel's has approximately 1.6 million acres of accessible forest around the ranch. With 37 cabins on site, the ranch can accommodate a large number of people and is one of the more affordable dude ranch options in the state.

6748 County Road 742, Almont, 970-641-1740, [www.harmels.com](http://www.harmels.com)

### Bar Lazy J Guest Ranch

Guests can fall asleep to the sound of the Colorado River at Bar Lazy J. This is an all-inclusive ranch for the whole family (the weekly schedule notes that you'll meet your horse the evening after your arrival), but ranch also offers off-site activities, including hot air ballooning, hiking and golf.

436 County Road 3, Parshall, 970-725-3437, [barlazyj.com](http://barlazyj.com)

### Smith Fork Ranch

Those looking for luxury can check into Smith Fork Ranch. This property prides itself on seclusion, comfort, hospitality and five-star farm-to-table cuisine, all paired with the Western experience.

45362 Needle Rock Road, Crawford, 970-921-3454, [smithforkranch.com](http://smithforkranch.com)

### The Broadmoor's Ranch at Emerald Valley

Those who know The Broadmoor can rightfully assume that this property is going to carry all the same classic comforts. Choose from 13 one-, two- or three-bedroom cabins, and then settle in with activities like horseback riding and fly fishing, or simply soaking in an outdoor hot tub or reading a good book.

1 Lake Ave., Colorado Springs, 866-334-3693, [broadmoor.com/the-wilderness-experiences/the-ranch-at-emerald-valley/](http://broadmoor.com/the-wilderness-experiences/the-ranch-at-emerald-valley/)



Local cowboys showed off riding and roping skills to the guest of the Smith Fork Ranch during a cowgirl weekend. *Denver Post file,*



The common room at the Rawah Lodge, named for the rugged and majestic snow-capped mountains that rise above the ranch. *Tyler Hill, provided by Rawah Lodge*

A herd of horses run down the entrance road during the morning jingle.

The ranchers were transporting the horses to the barn after spending the night in a field at the C Lazy U Ranch.

*Denver Post file*

