

SEARCH & BOOK

FORBES TRAVELER 400 HOTELS THROUGH KIWI COLLECTION

GET INSIDE: SLIDESHOWS, FULL DETAILS, RATES, SERVICES AND MORE

CHOOSE A DESTINATION Select a region...

INSPIRATIONS
DESTINATIONS
ACCOMMODATIONS
VACATIONS
RESERVATIONS

HOME > INSPIRATIONS > THE GOOD LIFE

15 TOP DUDE RANCHES

Kathleen McKenna

May 6, 2009



LAUNCH SLIDESHOW ©Sorrel River Ranch Resort & Spa

Where city slickers become cowpokes

The ranch vacation has long had a wholesome, almost therapeutic, connotation. For decades, tired city slickers have gone west to unwind, see the Great Outdoors and spend hours a day in the saddle, on horses with names like Trigger or Zeke. According to Gene Kilgore, founder of the virtual encyclopedia of dude ranches ranchweb.com: "Ranches allow people to disarm, to remove their cell phones and Blackberries, and find out what sage smells like, what a crystal-clear blue stream looks like."

See our slideshow of 15 Top Dude Ranches.

For pampered travelers though, dude ranches are more likely to evoke thoughts of kitchen bells and campfires than fine dining and luxe accommodations. **The Resort at Paws Up**, a ranch in Greenough, Mont., challenges that perception. The property's 3,248 square foot Wilderness Estates, unveiled in summer '08, are more akin to private villas: Each comes with three large master suites, bathrooms with spa tubs and slate showers, a cook's kitchen, surround-sound entertainment systems, 42" flat-screen TVs, a private deck and hot tub and even an electric car.

Décor is Western-chic, featuring cowhide lampshades and rugs and lots of brown leather, the cuisine an upscale take on traditional cowboy fare (dishes include grilled elk loin served with pumpernickel-gruyere spaetzle). More serious foodies, though, might prefer **Triple Creek**, an adults-only ranch in Darby, Mont.,

TRAVEL TOOLS

- BOOK A FLIGHT**
- FORBESTRAVELER 400** 2008
- DESTINATION EXPERTS**
- LUXURY TRAVEL BESTS**
- TRAVEL TOOLS**

IDEAS & ALERTS

SIGN UP FOR OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

SIGN UP

NEED TO UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT? CLICK HERE

ARTICLE CONTROLS

- EMAIL**
- PRINT**
- FEEDBACK**
- RSS**
- Yahoo! Buzz**
- SHARE**

Travel Deals

Published by [ShermansTravel.com*](#)

- \$279/nt+:** Antigua all-inclusive **luxury** spa resort Saint James Club
- \$1349+:** **Luxury** Azamara Europe cruises w/credit Expedia
- \$525+:** **Luxury** Florida spa resort package for two Acqualina Resort & Spa
- \$1995+:** **Luxury** Peru tour w/Cusco & Machu Picchu Amazing Voyages
- \$89/nt+:** **Luxury** Las Vegas suite stay w/4pm checkout Trump Hotel Las Vegas

*Taxes and other fees are additional. [Learn More](#)

SPONSORED LINKS

ADVERTISEMENTS

1 Flat Stomach Rule: Obey

RSS FEED

WIDGETS

Forbes **Attaché**

Personalize Now!

LAS VEGAS DELUXE GUIDE

10 SEXIEST REVUES

AND MORE >>

CEO Attaché

Are you a C-Suite Executive? Activate your attaché in one click.

Activate Now!

Forbes **Attaché**

Personalize Your Own!

Weather	Select Your City	
Sports	Select Your Teams	
Watch List	Select Companies	XYZ +6.87
Industry News	Choose Industry	
Authors	Choose Favorites	

ALREADY SIGNED UP FOR A FORBES.COM ATTACHÉ?

CLICK HERE FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO ENABLE 3RD PARTY COOKIES SO THAT YOU CAN SEE IT ON [FORBESTRAVELER.COM](#)

[→](#)

whose wine cellar boasts about 3,000 bottles, or **The Home Ranch** in Clark, Colo.—both belong to Relais & Chateaux, a luxury hotel/restaurant association whose members are known for their outstanding cuisine.

The above properties belong to a growing number of dude ranches catering to a slightly sleeker breed of city slickers. “Dude ranches, in terms of luxury, are clearly catching up with their brothers and sisters in the hotel industry”, claims Kilgore. Likewise, the luxury travel movement is catching on to the dude-ranch bandwagon, as numerous high-end tour operators like Abercrombie & Kent and Off the Beaten Path now offer bespoke Western trips.

After consulting with Kilgore and several other experts in the field, Forbes Traveler rounded up North America’s top high-end dude ranches. Like horses, each has its own unique temperament. **Vista Verde** in Steamboat Springs offers a slew of healthy, kid-friendly activities, including hay wagon rides and teepee campouts, while adults-only Triple Creek is best for those seeking romance. Some conflict with standard home-on-the-range images of ranches. At **Clayoquot Wilderness Resort**, a collection of twenty eco-friendly tents set on a Vancouver Island biosphere reserve, guests can participate in conservation activities like bear mapping as well as go horseback riding. In the same vein, the rooms at **Keyah Grande**, a resort in the Colorado Rockies owned by two worldly travelers, ditch log beams and are instead decorated according to various countries (rooms include England, Spain, France, China, etc.).

 [See our slideshow of 15 Top Dude Ranches.](#)

Others properties, though, strive for a more bona fide Old West experience. When Houston businessman John Poindexter purchased **Cibolo Creek Ranch** in 1990, his goal was to preserve the Texas property’s 19th-century aesthetic, down to the very last detail. To that end, he brought in adobe specialists to re-create the original exterior, concealed any electrical conduits (he had antique lamp models electrified) and removed all anachronistic features like TVs or phones.

Still, with calfskin rugs, king-size beds draped with velvet and gourmet cuisine, Cibolo is more posh than rustic and the property has attracted its fair share of celebrity guests. Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall even liked this place so much they once tried to purchase its La Cienega Lodge. Said Poindexter comments: “Yes, I turned Mick and Jerry down. She was more interested than he.”

Guy groups looking for more of a John Wayne gallop than a relaxed canter will also find some matches. The “So You Wanna be a Cowboy” package at **Lajitas Resort & Spa** offers training with all sorts of guns, like single-action pistols, side-by-side shotguns and lever-action rifles, as well as horseback riding. For golfing getaways, the resort also has an Ultimate Unlimited Golf package where guests have unrestricted access to the 19-hole course (there’s an optional hole by the Rio Grande).

But enough with the all alliterative alfalfa. In the wise words of Kilgore, “It’s not about gimmicks. Ranches are the real thing—they’re real nature served up in very exciting ways. In today’s ultra-busy, paranoid world, the West is truly the best medicine out there.”

 [See our slideshow of 15 Top Dude Ranches.](#)

I Cut Down 4 lbs of Belly Fat Every Week by Obeying this 1 Simple Rule

Lindas-Diet.com/Secret

[New Laser Back Surgery](#)

The Latest Minimally Invasive Laser Technique-Start Living Pain Free

www.LaserSpineInstitute.com

[New York Culinary Tours](#)

Delicious food tastings and a guided bus and walking tour of New York!

TheBrooklynTour.com

[Buy a link here](#)



Find [Airline Tickets](#) on Yahoo Travel»

SPONSORED LINKS

ADVERTISEMENTS





SEARCH & BOOK

FORBES TRAVELER 400 HOTELS THROUGH KIWI COLLECTION

GET INSIDE: SLIDESHOWS, FULL DETAILS, RATES, SERVICES AND MORE

SEARCH +

CHOOSE A DESTINATION + Select a region...

INSPIRATIONS
DESTINATIONS
ACCOMMODATIONS
VACATIONS
RESERVATIONS

HOME > INSPIRATIONS > THE GOOD LIFE

15 TOP DUDE RANCHES

PREV
II PAUSE
NEXT
» READ FULL STORY



Triple Creek Ranch, Darby, Mont.

© Triple Creek Ranch

This adults-only Relais & Chateaux property is perfect for those seeking a little romance, Western style. Executive Chef Jacob Leatherman serves Western cuisine with a decisively upscale twist—think antelope meets truffle. You may not want to leave your cabin, as private in-room dining is also available and each comes equipped with a fully-stocked bar.

From \$650/night.

For more information: [Triple Creek Ranch](#)

SPONSORED LINKS

ADVERTISEMENTS

Win a VIP Trip to London
Thinking about vacation? Enter to Win a 5-Day London Trip for two
www.visitlondon.com

1 Cure For Yellow Teeth
As seen on Rachael Ray. Rachael Ray ranked this Teeth Whitener #1!
www.best-teeth-whitening.com


Lose Weight With Acai
21 Day Free* Trial. Nothing to lose but the excess pounds you hate!
www.GNS-Online.com/Acai

Buy a link here


MORE SLIDESHOWS

New
Popular
All Time


SCROLL ▼ ▲



1 Fantastic Classic Car Rentals



2 America's Best Hotel



3 Asia's Most-Visited Tourist Sites

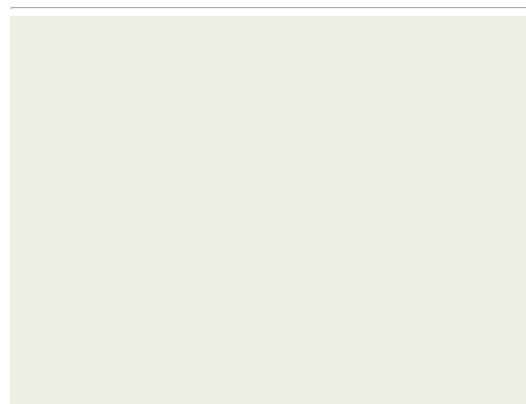
SCROLL ▼ ▲

ARTICLE CONTROLS

EMAIL
 FEEDBACK

PRINT
 Yahoo! Buzz

RSS
 SHARE



100 FORBESTRAVELER 400 2008

DESTINATION EXPERTS

LUXURY TRAVEL BESTS

TRAVEL TOOLS

IDEAS & ALERTS

SIGN UP FOR OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

SIGN UP +



NEED TO UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT?

CLICK HERE +

Travel Deals Published by [ShermansTravel.com*](#)

\$525+: [Luxury Florida spa resort package for two](#)
Acqualina Resort & Spa

\$1349+: [Luxury Azamara Europe cruises w/credit](#)
Expedia


\$408+: [Luxury Turks & Caicos Spa Villas – 65% off](#)
BookIt.com

\$1995+: [Luxury Peru tour w/Cusco & Machu Picchu](#)
Amazing Voyages


\$279/nt+: [Luxury Antigua all-inclusive resort](#)
Elite Island Resorts

*Taxes and other fees are additional. [Learn More](#)

INSPIRATIONS



RESORTS & HOTELS
Classic Hotels Reborn



FOOD & DRINK

ACCOMMODATIONS



Alvear Palace
Buenos Aires, Argentina



Singita

SPONSORED LINKS

2009 Credit Score
A Good Credit Score is 700 or Above. See Yours in Just 2