

HOME AND LIVING 2006 WESTLAKE

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O'HURLEY



IT'S A GUEST RANCH, DUDE!

BY LINDA LANG

Dude ranch vacations, which enjoyed a boost with the 1991 release of *City Slickers*, are great for those who want to take part in the actual working of the ranch and driving herds. For guests preferring a more genteel experience, there is the guest ranch which combines the best of cowboy life and untamed wilderness with upscale to sumptuous accommodations, hearty to refined cuisine, excellent wines and even spa treatments following a day on the trail. Some ranches offer a full week of supervised programs for youngsters, allowing them to share in activities with new friends while parents pursue their own diversions. Families often form lasting friendships and reunite at the same ranch year after year. Others cater more to adults with daily activities focusing on a broader selection of interests and more sophisticated creature comforts. Here are some examples:

C LAZY U: 90 MILES FROM DENVER

One measure of a good guest ranch is the quality of its horsemanship program. At C Lazy U in Granby, Colorado, head wrangler Bill Fisher and his staff interview every guest upon arrival to determine the level of his or her riding skills. Each adult and child is matched with a mount that becomes theirs for the entire week. The bond between horse and rider grows daily as does the relationship with fellow guests and ranch staff.

C Lazy U is the ideal cowboy environment for families. Youngsters, under the guidance of skilled counselors,

spend their days in the fresh outdoors riding, exploring, going on cookouts, campouts and learning western crafts. Adults have a choice of riding itineraries, fly fishing, trap shooting, hiking, tennis, sauna, massages and other interests. Each evening, families and new friends gather in the main lodge to share their day's discoveries over a game board or in front of a cozy fire.

On 8,000 acres of breathtaking rocky mountain scenery some 8,300 feet above sea level, C Lazy U offers upscale western-style accommodations and meals ranging from hearty to more refined fare. Families dine together at

breakfast and lunch. Evening meals for the kids free mom and dad to enjoy grown-up moments and more sophisticated dining. The ranch, which began welcoming guests in 1946, is recognized in the 2006 edition of *100 Best Family Resorts in North America* by Janet Tice and Jane Wilford. For thirty consecutive years, it received the coveted Mobil Travel Five Star Award. It is also rated as the second best ranch in the U.S. by the British edition of *Condé Nast Traveller*.

The main lodge is where guests congregate for meals, cocktails, games and camaraderie. A large living room with a stone fireplace and grand piano neigh-



Driving horses to and from the pasture each day is a big event at C Lazy U



A cozy bar with satellite TV welcomes guests at Keyah Grande.

bots the library, dining room, bar, card room and spacious front porch where guests can sit and enjoy spectacular mountain views. Across is the patio house which houses the spring-fed, heated swimming pool, enclosed whirlpool, sauna, fitness center and activity rooms. The only TVs are in the main lodge and patio house.

Executive chef Michael Schneider creates his own style of gourmet-western cuisine. Breakfasts are hearty, lunches generally light, and evening meals feature a more elegant fare. If you're a fan of the TV Food Network and Emeril Lagasse, you may recall seeing Chef Schneider and the *C. Lazy U* on *Emeril Live* in January.

Buck Brannaman, the cowboy who inspired the *New York Times* best-selling novel and movie, *The Horse Whisperer*, has hosted horsemanship clinics at C Lazy U for over 15 years. This year's event is scheduled August 27.

Rates, which include seven-night accommodations, all meals and most activities, average \$2525 per person, double occupancy. For details, phone (970) 887-3344 or visit www.clazyu.com.

KEYAH GRANDE: PAGOSA SPRINGS, COLORADO

In contrast to the western family environment, Keyah Grande has the ambience of an exclusive, private estate. Opened in early 2005, this luxury ranch resort, which supports a working elk farm, is set on 4,000 acres of spectacular wilderness in the San Juan Mountains at an altitude of 7,000 feet.

Sophisticated interiors and art work reflect owners Alan and Barbara Sackman's

passion for travel that has taken them to every continent. Elegant Spanish styling defines the architecture of the 18,000 square-foot guest house. Interiors are in warm, vibrant colors against backdrops of cool stone and tile. The travel theme is especially evident in the décor and names of the eight guest rooms: America, China, England, France, Japan, Santa Fe, South Pacific and Spain. Richly-textured carpeting, fabrics and furnishings showcase art and artifacts transported from their countries of origin. The rooms are also equipped with surround-sound, WiFi, satellite radio and television, wet bar, ice machine and mini-refrigerator.

Dining is quite sophisticated at Keyah Grande. Chefs Aki Kamoizawa and H. Alexander Talbot's five-course dinner cre-

ations may include *Three Pear Soup* (with chestnut and maple ravioli, sheep sorrel and white pepper sabayon); *Hot and Cold Alaskan Spot Prawns* (with sake-cured sea trout caviar and natural prawn jus); *Goose Egg Ravioli* (with fiddlehead ferns, sautéed ramp greens and *Piave Vitobio* cheese); or *Veal Oscar* (soft-shell crab and veal schnitzel with asparagus sauce). You may choose the grandeur of the main dining room or the intimate setting of the smaller dining salon. Versace china, Francis I and Chambrey silver, and hand-etched Queen Ann Lace crystal add to the elegance of both. A wine list with more than 300 carefully selected labels and 2,500 bottles includes fine vintages from South America, Italy and France.

In addition to horseback riding, summer activities include hiking, skeet, trap and sporting clay courses; archery; elk and deer hunting; river fishing and fly fishing in four stocked trout ponds, and a mineral hot spring. While hiking or picnicking, keep an eye out for deer, bear, bobcat, hawk, eagle, wild turkey and other critters. If you can't keep away from the links, the nearby Pagosa Springs Golf Club has a 27-hole championship course.

Keyah Grande's location at "four corners" where Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah meet makes it a great home base for day-trips. Pagosa Springs Mineral Baths, Chimney Rock archeological site, and Mesa Verde National Park with its famed cliff dwellings and petroglyphs are an easy drive. Also nearby are the Fred Harman Art Museum and galleries filled with the artist's

Accommodations at Spring Creek reflect the history of Jackson Hole and its majestic surroundings



Red Ryder and Little Beaver cartoons and his paintings of the west. And there's hot-air ballooning and white-water rafting for the more adventurous.

Accommodations, including all meals and beverages (except cellar selections and premium liquors), in-room bars, airport transfers and many activities range from \$895 to \$1,395 per night for two, plus tax and service. Call (970) 731-1160 or visit www.keyahgrande.com

SPRING CREEK: JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING

With the majestic 13,770 foot-high Teton mountain range as a backdrop, Spring Creek Ranch sits high atop a butte near Jackson Hole. One of the west's premier luxury resorts, it has earned the AAA four-diamond rating more than a dozen times since opening in 1983.

Its 1,000 acres are bordered by cattle ranches, National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park. Most inhabitants are wildlife from the neighboring wilderness areas that include more than 100 species of birds and 40 species of mammals. Frequent visitors include mule deer, eagles, coyote and elk.

Accommodations reflect the history of Jackson Hole and its majestic surroundings. You may select from guestrooms, multi-bedroom and executive houses, or luxury condominiums. All boast large windows and balconies with stunning views of the soaring Teton and surrounding countryside. The lodges are constructed of native rough-sawn timbers of fir, spruce and lodgepole pine. Handmade pine furniture and large stone fireplaces provide a warm, inviting interior. Nicely-appointed condominiums come in one-, two- or three-bedrooms and have full kitchens.

At Spring Creek, you are free to join the wranglers or opt for escorted horseback rides, swimming, tennis or hiking. For the adventurous, there are white-water rafting and fishing trips down the Snake River. More unusual pursuits include a Wolf Safari expedition and a Bighorn Sheep Rut trek into the backcountry. And if you must, golf is also nearby.

After a long day exploring the wilderness, Spring Creek's new Wilderness Adventure Spa provides hedonistic pampering. Inviting treatments include hot stone massages, warm mud body wraps, Acupressure and Acu-yoga. Have your camera handy for yoga on the Great Lawn overlooking the Teton.



Triple Creek has earned the AAA four-diamond rating more than a dozen times since opening in 1983.

Spring Creek's award-winning, Granary restaurant serves up hearty, regional American cuisine with such specialties as *Lavender Crusted Wapiti Short Loin* and *Portini Seared Rib Eye of Beef* complemented by an exceptional wine list. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer unmatched views of the Teton, and a large, outdoor deck opens for *al fresco* dining. Upstairs is a cozy lounge with large stone fireplace that provides the perfect, intimate setting to enjoy a drink or lighter fare.

Rates range from \$150-\$2,200 per night, excluding holiday periods. Call (800) 443-6139 or go to www.springcreekranch.com.

TRIPLE CREEK: DARBY, MONTANA

Set in the rugged splendor of Montana's famed *Big Sky Country*, Triple Creek Ranch is on 500 acres of wooded hillside at the base of the Bitterroot Mountains in the Rockies. This exclusive Relais et Châteaux property, just honored with the 2006 *Most Excellent Ranch in the USA* award from *Condé Nast Johnson's* luxury hotel guide, is the perfect retreat for discerning adults.

Accommodations are in 19 luxuriously-appointed log cabins, each with fireplace and most with an outdoor hot tub. An extensive western art collection is displayed throughout the property. After a day in the fresh air, you can relax in the rooftop lounge with its incredible view down the West Fork of the Bitterroot River. Dinner is usually in the cozy, candlelit dining room, also with fireplace – although you can have any meal delivered to your room.

The chef will also prepare a picnic lunch

for your day of exploration. Summer activities include cattle drives, fly-fishing, ATV (all terrain vehicles), horseback riding, and hiking. Tennis, swimming pool, fitness center and *en suite* massage treatments are also offered.

Under the creative direction of executive chef Jacob Leatherman, dining features northwest regional gourmet cuisine. On any given night, you may find pan-seared skate wing with a salsify purée, baby opal basil, and pineapple reduction as a starter; quail eggs, pheasant confit and field green, feta cheese, toasted hazelnuts, and pear-white truffle vinaigrette for the next course; and for the entrée – sautéed duck breast, foie gras risotto, caramelized sun chokes, black trumpet mushrooms and blood orange sauce. Special dietary requirements are also accommodated.

This adult retreat is not for youngsters. Guests should be at least 16 years of age. Rates, including all meals, snacks, wine, beverages (wet bar in cabin as well as lounge in the lodge), and some activities such as fly-casting lessons, range from \$510 to \$995 a night per couple. Pets under 20 pounds are also welcome. Call (406) 821-4600 or visit www.triplecreekranch.com.

One thing all these guest ranches have in common is their spectacular wilderness settings where you can experience nature's wonders without sacrificing your creature comforts. Many also offer a host of winter snow activities. Indulge and enjoy, dude! **WM**

All prices subject to change without notice.