



# COWBOY FOR A DAY

**NATALIE COMPAGNO AND GREG FREITAS** TAKE US TO THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK IN MONTANA

**T**he lure of the American West has never been stronger. City slickers from Manhattan to Manhattan Beach, California flock to the idea of big skies and starry nights in an idyllic setting, far from stress. Dude ranches have gone deluxe, but no one does high-end glamping quite like The Ranch at Rock Creek. They curate the entire cowboy experience from soup to nuts, assuring both a visit that's rustic and luxurious, and that guests don't miss a single opportunity for fun.

The accolades are widespread, and

deserved. The Philipsburg, Montana Relais & Chateau property is the only Forbes Five-Star ranch in the world, and the only domestic property listed on National Geographic's charter Unique Lodges of the World list. The all-inclusive experience provides best in class food, drink, and lodging options combined with an exhilarating breadth of things to do. Other than the Spa (which many ranches don't have), guests don't sign for food, drinks, activities, or even to check in. The result is a communal, stress-free, adrenaline-charged memory to last a lifetime.

As General Manager Steve Shotsberger points out, the ranch is a labor of love for East Coast-based owner Jim Manley. "For over 20 years, he searched the American West for the perfect ranch property. He finally found it in Southwest Montana, home to a Blue Ribbon trout stream, Rock Creek, in a pristine natural habitat, with diverse mountain terrain." The property had been a working cattle ranch since the late 1800s, and many of the original 19th century structures have been converted into accommodations.

Upon arrival guests are immediately



struck by the wit and whimsy of the design. It's ranch chic but tongue-in-cheek, informed by 100 years of Hollywood's fascination with Western style. Each of the 29 different dwellings is completely unique. The "project of a lifetime" for Santa Fe-based designer Jet Zarkadas culminates in sumptuous lodge rooms, glamping cabins, and a converted barn enhanced just so, with a dizzying assortment of antiques, tapestries, and leatherwork.

The staff also delights, bringing energy and robust personalities, and providing a memorable component to the visit. Guides can accompany guests on virtually any adventure, and their expertise is breathtaking. For example, the archery guide speaks with authority on hunting, butchering, and preserving the meat from a single elk all by himself, which would last him "more than a year, unless friends come over."

When hunger calls, the menu exceeds expectations. Chuck wagon fare this is not. Executive Chef Josh Drage is as committed to the farm-to-table tradition of locally sourcing his ingredients as his big city peers, and has the advantage of proximity to a cornucopia of farms. The seasonal Montana bounty provides ever-changing, multi-course tasting menus, and pairing menus with Montana microbrews and ciders.

So the decor is delectable, the food

top-notch, and the beverages top-shelf. But what makes The Ranch at Rock Creek different? Quite simply, it is a place to play--different activities, all day every day, from sunrise to sunset. Fly fishing is the prestige activity in Montana, but guests can also swim, bike, shoot a vast array of weapons, go geocaching, attack the ropes course, search for sapphires on nearby Gem Mountain, ski, skate, and hike. High end clients can customize at will, even flying by helicopter to a remote mountain for secluded fishing, a private picnic, or a romantic dinner by candlelight.

What about horses? Of course! "Montana is made for horses and The Ranch at Rock Creek is made for riders," says Barn Manager Kari Reasoner. "Our wranglers are passionate about customizing the equestrian experience for each guest, from greenhorns to competitive riders." The Ranch is home to a herd of 80 beautiful horses that can traverse pasture, forest, and mountain terrain. In addition to riding, they offer roping instruction, Wells Fargo Stagecoach rides, sleigh rides in winter, summer rodeos, and barn dances.

The Silver Dollar Saloon adds a wealth of indoor options, including bowling, ping pong, billiards, and karaoke, even a private screening room. The bartenders are exuberant about





providing tastes and explanations of the local brews and spirits. Service is so attentive one has the impression that if a guest expressed the desire to ride a mechanical bull, the machine would materialize instantly. Yee haw!

Weddings, corporate retreats, weeks of fun for families of all ages--from young 'uns at the Little Grizzlies Kids Club to old timers who want to play cards by a raging fire while sipping whiskey from the local craft distillery? Yes to all of that. The best part of being Cowboy For A Day in the modern world is the cows don't need milking, and them dogies can wait. It's strictly choose your own adventure at The Ranch at Rock Creek. 🇺🇸

# FREQUENT FLYER DESTINATIONS

**WOMEN CHEFS IN THE  
CARIBBEAN**

**LEARN TO PACK LIKE A BOSS**

**COWBOY FOR A DAY**

**THE CITY THAT ROSE FROM  
ASHES - WARSAW, POLAND**

# NEW ZEALAND

**IT'S SPRING!**

FREQUENTFLYERMAGAZINE.COM

FALL 2017

 AIRGUIDE