

AS SEEN IN THE
JULY/AUG 2011 ISSUE OF

COWGIRL™
MAGAZINE

A photograph of a young woman with blonde hair, wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a white long-sleeved shirt, smiling warmly as she hugs a brown horse. The horse has a white blaze on its forehead. The background is a blurred indoor setting, likely a stable or barn.

Cowgirl Up!

TEST-RIDE YOUR COWGIRL SIDE AT THESE 8 GREAT DUDE RANCHES!
By Christy Nielson



Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort in Santa Ynez, California.

Dude and guest ranch vacations, where lodging, meals and activities are all included in the cost of your trip, have always been fun for families and couples. Nowadays, when girls just want to have fun, there are plenty of options as well. Ranches across the West have discovered the demand for ladies-only getaways developed specifically for women wranglers and wanna-be Cowgirls.

Sharon Hosea from Houston, Texas, just returned from her fourth “Wild West Women Adventure” at Mountain Sky Guest Ranch in Montana. Three years ago when she and a friend went to the ranch “by accident” (they found it online), they met three other women with whom they immediately clicked. “We get along like clams at high tide,” exclaims Sharon. The eclectic group has had a standing date for a women’s week at the ranch every year since. This experienced Cowgirl has some advice for anyone considering a girls-only, guest ranch vacation. “Go for it!” says Sharon, without hesitation. “You only have so many heartbeats. It’s never a bad idea for women to do something for themselves.”

Whether you’re an experienced rider or will be mounting a horse for the very first time, gather your gal pals and lasso up for an authentic western adventure at one of these ranches. You will learn to ride, rope, wrangle cattle, and, as COWGIRL discovered, so much more.

1 WILDERNESS TRAILS RANCH Durango, Colorado

Family-owned and operated since 1970, Wilderness Trails Ranch is tucked into the beautiful Upper Pine River Valley in southwest Colorado, bordering the Piedra Wilderness Area in the San Juan National Forest of the Rocky Mountains. Horseback riding is central to the Wilderness Trails experience, but there is a plethora of additional adventures to complete your escape at this gorgeous location. Hiking, mountain biking, fishing the on-site ponds, and waterskiing, tubing, fishing or sail boating at nearby Vallecito Lake are all on your agenda—if you choose. Evening campfire sing-alongs, live cowboy music, dancing, and rejuvenating spa services are all available at Wilderness Trails Ranch.

“Cowgirl Camp,” now in its fifth year, offers a unique, in-depth and extremely fun approach to the horse-rider relationship and is available to 15 cowgirls with varying levels of experience. Focusing on individual, personalized attention to each rider, Cowgirl Camp features Natural Horsemanship and cattle working lessons, in addition to memorable trail rides through pristine wild lands. One of the premiere experiences at Wilderness Trails Ranch is a full-day ride up to “Fiesta Grande” (a.k.a. “The Top of the World”). On the way back to the ranch, Cowgirls put their newly learned cattle working skills to the test as they move a herd from one pasture to another!

Other real-world ranch experiences include grooming and saddling horses, feeding the herd, roping lessons, and an introduction to draft horses and driving a wagon-team. It’s not all “work” and no play at Wilderness Trails Ranch, however! There are also plenty of ways to sprinkle in some well-earned indulgence, including decadent gourmet dinners, wine pairings, dancing, and optional massage or spa treatments.

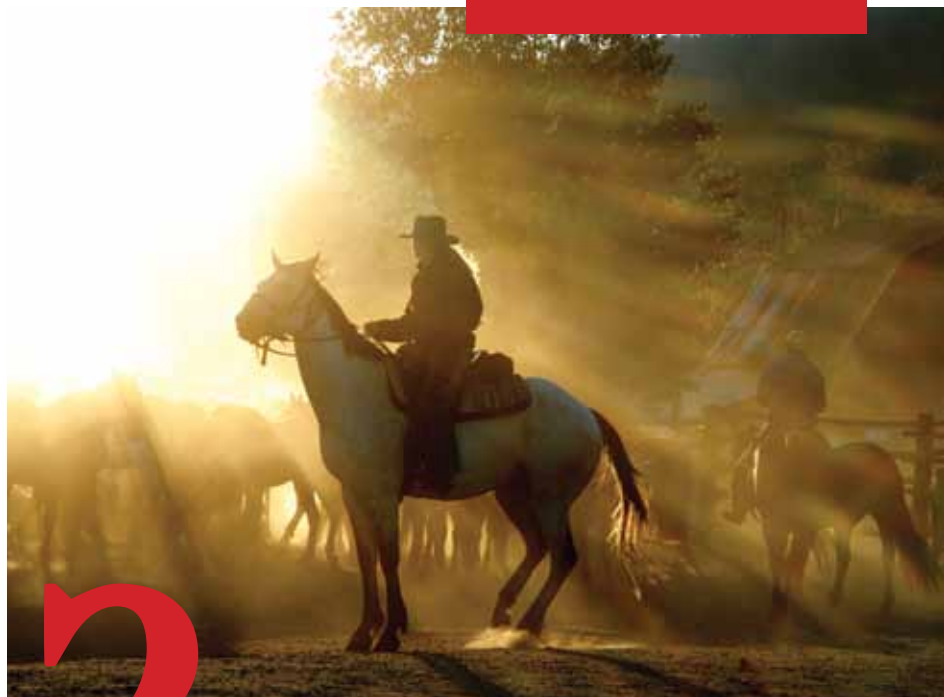
Wilderness Trails Ranch offers comfortable, country-style accommodations with private rooms located within one of the nine, two-bedroom or three-bedroom cabins. Nestled among the fragrant and peaceful Colorado pine, fir, spruce and aspen trees, the cabins feature cozy fireplaces and decks perfect for wishing on a shooting star. For modern comfort and convenience, the well-stocked cabins are equipped with coffee makers and refrigerators, and include daily maid service.

COWGIRL CAMP
August 28 - September 3, 2011
Starting at \$2,195, gratuity included
800-527-2624 | www.wildernesstrails.com

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THE HOME RANCH Clark, Colorado

An indulgent, luxurious guest ranch, The Home Ranch is located in Clark, Colorado, about half an hour north of Steamboat Springs. The Elk River, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and Mt. Zirkel Wilderness Area provide a take-your-breath-away backdrop for a cowgirl adventure at this boutique Relais and Chateaux guest ranch. Famous for its horseback experiences, which traverse a million acres of Rocky Mountain wilderness, The Home Ranch also offers year-round fly-fishing and extraordinary cross-country skiing in the winter.

The ranch's focus turns to Natural Horsemanship and yoga when the ranch hosts its all-inclusive "Horse Yoga Retreat Week." This for-women-only program is limited to 12 cowgirls, providing an intimate and personalized experience. Private lodging in a cabin or lodge room is included, as well as a horse to call your own for rides through the exceptional Elk River Valley and Routt National Forest. Tammy Pate, an expert in Natural Horsemanship, shares her insight and experience with participants, coaching cowgirls on enhancing mental and physical balance, improving riding ability, and increasing one's bond and communication with horses.

Twice a day, participants get off their horses and into downward dog and other poses designed to help work out the kinks. The yoga practice, including a mixture of Vinyasa, Hatha and Ashtanga, are guided by equestrian yoga expert Janice Baxter. A 55-minute massage, haute mountain cuisine, enlightened wine pairings, a margarita cocktail hour on the back deck, and a night of music are also part of The Home Ranch's "Horse Yoga Retreat Week."



HORSE YOGA RETREAT WEEK

Starting at \$3,150, gratuity included

October 1 - 7, 2011

800-688-2982 | www.homeranch.com



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MOUNTAIN SKY GUEST RANCH Emigrant, Montana

Situated in southwest Montana, the Mountain Sky Guest Ranch is another upscale retreat with the vast and pristine Gallatin National Forest right in its backyard. Magnificent Yellowstone National Park is a nearby neighbor, just a 30-minute drive from the ranch. Mountain Sky prides itself on treating guests like family and wraps them in comfortable elegance and warm western hospitality at every turn.

There are 30 guest cabins on the property, which encompasses more than 8,000 acres of secluded, spectacular scenery. The one, two- and three-bedroom cabins have been elegantly refurbished to offer expected modern-day comforts, but still retain an Old West character. Each cabin is wonderfully unique. Some have cozy fireplaces, others feature large picture windows framing the grand Montana scenery, still others offer large alfresco porches, perfect for an evening cocktail or morning coffee, cowgirl style. All cabins include coffee and tea service, a small refrigerator and daily fresh fruit deliveries.

In addition to the requisite horseback rides through the varied and wild terrain on and around the ranch, there is simply something for everyone at Mountain Sky Guest Ranch. Hiking, fishing, golf, tennis, sing-alongs, western dancing, hayrides, daily yoga classes, and a heated pool and hot tub are all part of the experience.

For seven years now, Mountain Sky has also hosted their "Wild West Women Adventure," one of the first and best ladies-only "dude" ranch retreats. This five-night vacation gives women the chance to trade in their Louboutins for cowboy boots, learn to groom and tack horses, fly-fish on the ranch's private trout pond, take a guided ride through Yellowstone and two-step the night away to the beat of local musicians. In addition, Cowgirls enjoy optional daily horseback rides, hiking and yoga. The package includes all meals (not to be missed gourmet affairs), ranch activities, ground transportation from the Bozeman airport, and a Yellowstone National Park van tour. Priceless.

WILD WEST WOMEN ADVENTURE

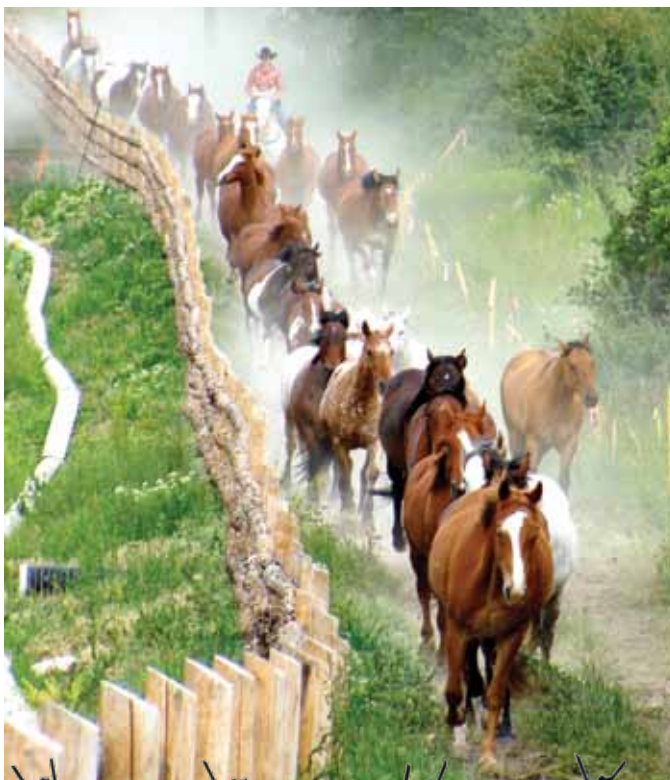
Starting at \$1,700, gratuity included
 May 4 - 9, 2012; May 15 - 20, 2012; May 23 - 28, 2012
 800-548-3392 | www.mtnsky.com

4 SMITH FORK RANCH

Crawford, Colorado

Intimate and luxurious, Smith Fork Ranch on Colorado's western mountain slope is perched "as the crow flies" between Aspen and Telluride, surrounded by the gorgeous Gunnison National Forest and the untamed West Elk Wilderness. Needle Rock, a geologic outcropping, is a signature feature of the area that stands guard over the valley floor and graces the entrance of the ranch. An iconic Rocky Mountain respite, Smith Fork Ranch boasts three private miles of riverfront along the Smith Fork of the Gunnison River. Six private trout ponds make Smith Fork Ranch an unparalleled angler's paradise.

Capitalizing on this niche, the ranch offers a "Reel Women's Retreat," a four-night package catering to the novice fly-fisherwoman. The package includes a fly-casting clinic, an aquatic entomology class, a fly-tying workshop, yoga specifically designed to prepare women to use the different muscles needed for casting and wading, and a supportive, instructive environment in which to learn the art of fly-fishing. Fishing on the ranch is included, along with an all-day float trip on the famed Gunnison River. Smith Fork Ranch provides the high-end gear, including Sage rods and reels, as well as Simms waders, fishing vests and boots. For those who want to trade in their rod for reins, a half-day horseback ride into the surrounding forest and wilderness area is offered at no extra charge.



When the smell of horses and the creak of saddle leather is the primary goal, The Smith Fork Ranch offers a friendly and comprehensive "Cowgirl Retreat" that focuses on horsemanship for riders of all abilities. In addition to picturesque trail rides into the remote areas surrounding the ranch, Cowgirl Retreat offers professional riding instruction in their 300-foot equestrian arena and an elaborate "trail course" that simulates obstacles commonly encountered out on the range. Cattle work, complete with the fun-for-all "steer soccer" where ladies use their riding skills to maneuver steers into a "goal," is also on the program. Yoga, both in and out of the saddle, as well as equine massage is also included. Head wrangler, Ciara Pares, is expert at driving teams of horses and teaches participants the Old West skill of handling a team of horses pulling a wagon. Yeehaw!

Both the angling and riding packages are all-inclusive, and feature a welcome basket chock-full of local goodies from Colorado's western slope and a welcome cocktail. Deluxe accommodations, gourmet farm-to-table meals featuring food grown on the Smith Fork farmstead, and ranch activities/amenities are all included. Optional add-ons include a cowgirl massage or facial, a tour of local vineyards and/or art galleries, and hiking at the beautiful Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

COWGIRL RETREAT

Starting at \$1,395

REEL WOMEN'S RETREAT

Starting at \$1,845

July 20 - 24, 2011 & July 27 - 31, 2011

970-921-3454 | www.smithforkranch.com

Cowgirl Up!

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BAR W GUEST RANCH Whitefish, Montana

The big skies are on full display at Bar W Guest Ranch, situated in the northern Rockies on Spencer Lake at the base of Spencer Mountain, Montana. Offering the best of both worlds—seclusion and civilization—Bar W Guest Ranch is only about three miles away from the charming town of Whitefish, Montana, with its bustling shopping, dining, theatre and nightlife scene. A little slice of cowgirl heaven on earth, Bar W Guest Ranch has close to a million acres to explore on horseback. Other activities include hiking, mountain biking, swimming, archery and clay shooting.

“Cowgirl Up,” the extremely popular, all-inclusive girls’ getaway, is in its fourth season and was expanded in 2011 to include five days and six nights in May, September and October. The adventure begins with a “Saddle Up” horsemanship orientation clinic where participants (anyone from novice to expert is welcome here) choose the horse they will ride for the week. Trail rides are not the only horsing around on the agenda. Cowgirls also learn to work cattle and learn the skill of team sorting and penning, a surprisingly fun activity that gives even the most high-maintenance city slicker at tantalizing taste of the West’s allure. For more experienced riders, barrel racing and roping are also on the menu.

Out of the saddle, guests enjoy a two-hour spa experience featuring the indulgent Honey & Hot Cream Rock Foot Massage, cocktail receptions, vintner presentations, skeet shooting, archery, fly-casting lessons, hot tub soaks, and country western dance lessons. Montana-style comfort food is the featured fare, perfect for refueling after an exhilarating day on the trail (or a relaxing day at the spa!).

COWGIRL UP WEEK

Starting at \$1,645

September 25 - October 1, 2011

October 9 -15, 2011

406-863-9099 | www.thebarw.com



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6 WHITE STALLION RANCH Tucson, Arizona

If sombreros and Saguaro cacti reaching their prickly arms into the cloudless desert sky are your fantasy of the Old West, travel to White Stallion Ranch in the deliciously dry Sonoran Desert. At the foot of the Tucson Mountains, this charming, informal dude ranch is adjacent to the spectacular Saguaro National Park. Boasting 3,000 acres, this working cattle ranch features rides that wander through magnificent Saguaro cactus stands and rugged mountain terrain where wild Harris Hawks, clever coyotes and other wildlife roam.

For those who don't want to spend all their time riding, there are plenty of other ways to fill the days at White Stallion Ranch. Hiking, tennis, an on-site movie theatre, massage treatments, a heated pool, hot tub, sauna, fitness center, and a library stocked with books are just a few options! Evening activities include bonfires, line dancing (complete with lessons for those with two left feet!), cowboy poetry and simply drinking in the endless desert stars.

White Stallion Ranch expertly blends the service and quality of a fine resort with the personal touches that guest ranches are known for. White Stallion Ranch's 41 guest rooms, each featuring a private patio, are tastefully decorated in the regional southwestern style. The Hacienda, boasting four bedrooms and three bathrooms, is a private home perfect for larger groups.

For a girls-only getaway, White Stallion Ranch's women's retreat is appropriately dubbed "Cactus Cowgirls." This week-long getaway is limited to 24 ladies and is offered in January and February, providing a perfect escape from winter's frozen grip on much of the country. Cactus Cowgirl participants are welcomed with a margarita welcome party, and offered daily riding lessons, Natural Horsemanship classes, a wine tasting ride, guided hikes and nature walks, special stretching classes focused on the needs of equestrians, a one-hour massage, a hayride, cookout, country dance lessons and as much (or as little) time on horseback as desired.

For ultimate girl-bonding and fun on horseback, the January Cactus Cowgirls are taught a quadrille maneuver—an equine drill team maneuver which they

perform on horseback at the Saturday Ranch Rodeo! February guests take a trip to Tucson for the traditional La Fiesta de los Vaqueros Rodeo. Also on the schedule: an impressive "At Liberty" presentation, where horses are put through their paces sans any halters, ropes, bridles or saddles by Margit Deerman, a licensed Parelli Natural Horsemanship Instructor, and her exquisitely trained horses Pandero and Mini Cooper.

For women who just want to dip a toe in the cowgirl



experience, the "Cowgirl's Saddle Up Camp" is just the ticket. This long ladies-only weekend is perfect for mother-daughter getaways, sister acts or a change of pace with your BFF. Included are meals and lodging, as well as horseback rides and lessons, team penning, barrel racing, Natural Horsemanship classes, and all of the ranch activities you can squeeze in between your rides!

CACTUS COWGIRLS

January 22 - 29, 2012

Starting at \$1,850, gratuity included

February 22 - 26, 2012

Starting at \$1,295, gratuity included

COWGIRL'S SADDLE UP CAMP

February 16 - 19, 2012

Starting at \$715, gratuity included

888-977-2624 | www.whitestallion.com

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ALISAL GUEST RANCH & RESORT Santa Ynez, California

Charming, elegantly casual and loads of fun only begin to describe the unsurpassed guest ranch experience perfected by the Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort in Santa Ynez, California. This lovely oak-studded valley is frequented by celebrities and steeped in the old "Californio" Vaquero traditions. The ranch itself boasts a gorgeous "Montecito-style" pool area, an alfresco dining pavilion on the river, two golf courses and a fitness center & spa.

The Alisal's "Cowgirl Bootcamp" is a four day package that includes breakfast, lunch and dinner, complete with fine wines and a winemaker's presentation. (This region of California is renowned for its wineries; the movie *Sideways* was filmed close by). Cowgirls can feel comfortable bringing equine newbies as the week starts with a "Saddle Up" class taught by female wranglers. Horsemanship instruction continues throughout the week, although experienced riders can elect to forgo the basics and sign up for barrel racing lessons or cattle working skills in the open air arena. An invigorating breakfast ride to the historic Old Adobe offers the chance to soak up some iconic California atmosphere and indulge in a gourmet breakfast. After an active day in the saddle, the Alisal's lush manicured lawns, nightly cocktail reception and live entertainment ensure this girlfriend's getaway hits every mark.

COWGIRL BOOTCAMP

May 6 - 9, 2012

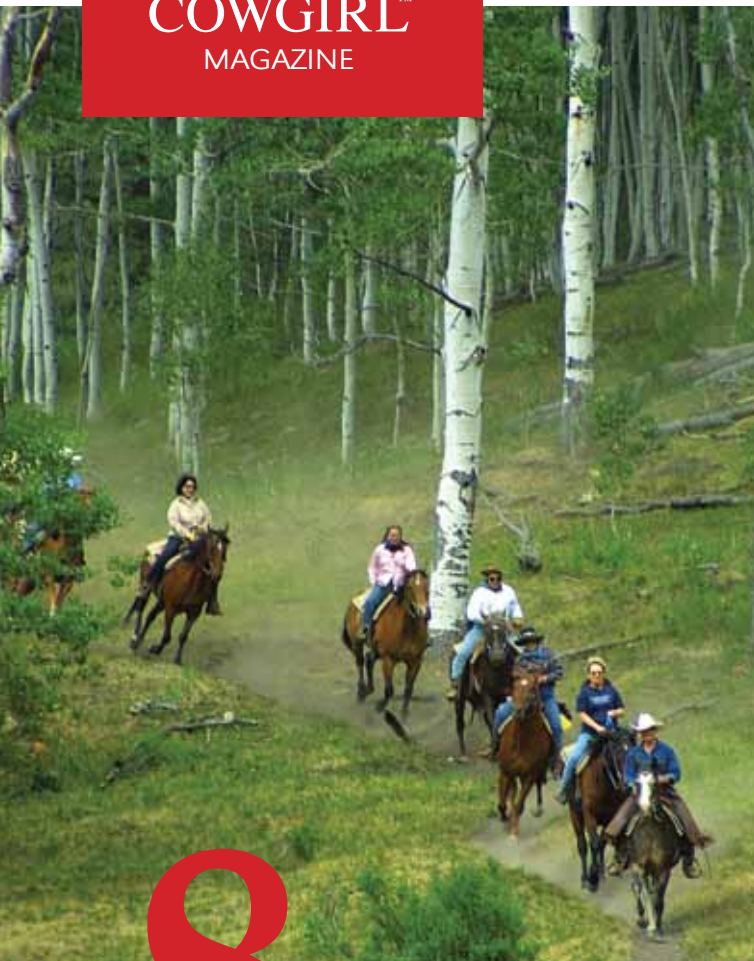
\$2,250, based on double occupancy

800-4-ALISAL | www.alisal.com

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MAJESTIC DUDE RANCH Mancos, Colorado

Majestic Dude Ranch, formerly known as Lake Mancos Ranch, has been providing authentic “cowboy” experiences since 1956, and they have fun down to a science! Although the accommodations and amenities have been thoroughly updated—the ranch has wireless internet and cell phone reception—a long established culture of friendliness and service remains. Majestic is a classic dude ranch and horses are the main attraction. Both experienced cowgirls and city slickers are assigned their own horse upon arrival (as well as an “alternate:” a full-suspension mountain bike!) Guided trail rides in the Colorado National Forest, roping lessons, cattle working, barrel racing, team penning and “Broomstick” polo are all on the riding menu; brand new or seasoned cowgirls can even compete in the guest rodeo! Accommodations at Majestic Dude Ranch are stylish and upscale, yet rustic and refreshingly unpretentious—perfect for those who prefer casual elegance to formal appointments. At Majestic, your minibar is stocked prior to your arrival with your personal favorite foods and drinks—and there is no key or scorecard keeping track of

your midnight snacks! Try not to let the bottomless cookie jar ruin your appetite for the hearty fare provided by the ranch’s two chefs—often at an outdoor cookout. Grab your gal pals and stay in a two or three-bedroom cabin for the ultimate cowgirl slumber party. Or get some precious downtime and prepare for another outrageously fun day in one of the completely redecorated “ranch house rooms.” If you ever get off your horse, try your hand at fly-fishing, baseball, basketball, volleyball, gold panning, kayaking or archery—all on site! Tuckered gals may want to recuperate with some retail therapy in charming, nearby Durango, see the spectacular archeological site of Mesa Verde, or even attend a local rodeo—it’s all included in your package price. Yeehaw!

SIX NIGHT PACKAGES

\$1,950 (3 & 4 day packages are also available)
800-325-9462 | www.majesticduderranch.com