

USA – A visit to the Drowsy Water Ranch in Colorado

Visiting a guest ranch

I arrive at the Drowsy Water Ranch around midday, just in time for lunch. Sandwiches (made with various types of bread), accompanied by several types of cheese and cold meats, plus pasta salad, crisps, tomatoes, onions and ice cream for dessert. Wonderful in this lovely weather. Over lunch, I strike up a conversation straight away with several guests who've spent a brilliant week here. Whether you're a family or travelling alone, you're given a warm welcome and quickly made to feel at home.



The ranch is idyllically situated, away from any roads, nestled amongst the mountains by a small stream, and offers everything you could want for a comfortable holiday: an outdoor pool, a hot tub, a main house (with Wi-Fi) featuring a dining room and a lounge – which is the original ranch house – and, of course, the entire vast estate is designed in a Western style.

Accommodation consists of individual cabins or rooms in a larger house. Family rooms are also available (two bedrooms with a bathroom in the middle, accessible from both sides).

The ranch also features a volleyball court, meadows, plenty of seating areas, terraces, a small lake and, of course, the riding arena and open stables are right next door.

Horse riding is the main activity throughout the week, but various other activities are also on offer: ziplining, rafting, hiking, etc. In the evenings, there are campfire evenings or dance evenings (Western dances such as square dancing) or, occasionally, a small 'show' put on by the staff. Children have their own programme separate from the adults, as well as their own supervised rides and activities. On the first day, following an introductory ride, the adults are divided into different levels and can then choose whether they would like to go on a full-day ride, take part in cattle driving, or go on two rides (one around 9 am and one around 2 pm). The groups are deliberately kept small to make the whole experience more individual and personal. Beginners stick to shorter, gentler rides, whilst the more advanced riders have a free choice and can even gallop from time to time ('looping' in Western jargon).

I get to enjoy the afternoon ride and am given a black horse of about 17 years old called Montana. He leads me confidently through small streams and up narrower paths through the forest to a beautiful trail with a view.

From here, there's a fantastic view of the surrounding mountains and the river in the valley.

We also think we hear some 'bear noises', though the shy black bears quickly disappear and remain hidden from our searching eyes.

After about 1½–2 hours, we're back at the ranch, where there's still a little time to relax or have a soak in the hot tub before the barbecue evening begins. Freshly grilled fish and meat, accompanied by plenty of vegetables and salad, and for dessert, carrot cake with a kind of vanilla sauce – delicious!

Afterwards, to round off the week, there's a short show recapping the week's events and featuring some amusing riding scenes. This is followed by a few drinks to bring the last evening of the week to a cosy close. Then I sink into my very comfortable 'Western-style' bed.



The day begins with a hearty breakfast (there are fresh waffles with strawberries, cream, chocolate and blueberries – everyone can top them however they like), before we set off on another ride at 9.30 am. Today I'm riding Splash, a Paint Quarter Horse, and get to join the 'Loop' group, which means we'll be cantering. We ride away from the ranch in a different direction and follow a track that winds its way up a hill before leading slightly downhill onto a wider one. This is perfect for a gallop, before we cross meadows and return to a track leading up a sort of ridge, from where there's a fantastic view. A water crossing, a final farewell gallop, and the 1.5 hours have flown by.

I say goodbye to Splash, who gave me such a brilliant ride, and bid farewell to everyone. It's hard to say goodbye, even though I wasn't there for very long, but the warmth and hospitality are overwhelming. I'd love to come back!

A travel report by Julia Wies | Pegasus Reiterreisen Further information here: <http://www.reiterreisen.com/grco01.htm>