

USA – A visit to the Lonesome Spur Ranch in Montana

A visit to Lonesome Spur Ranch – a camping adventure in the Pryor Mountains

I arrive at Lonesome Spur Ranch right on time at 9 am and am greeted straight away by Elaine, who shows me round the ranch. There's the cookhouse, where everyone eats together, then a building with a few rooms (each with its own small bathroom) and a lounge. A few cabins stand separately. There's also an outdoor hot tub and various seating areas – ranch life takes place largely outdoors here. Then there's the tack room, the riding arena, a small 'trail course' and vast pastures where the horses live.

Following the tour, we head straight out again, as today is the weekly excursion to the Pryor Mountains (approaching from the north). If the guests wish and the weather is really warm, this offers a change of scenery and a bit of refreshment during the trip to the mountains. The horses are loaded into the trailer and off we go into the mountains. The journey takes about 1½ hours and includes a stop at a historical site – a sort of museum dedicated to the Native American history of this region. Once we arrive at the ranch in the mountains (after a few miles along a gravel track through incredible scenery), we enjoy our saddlebag picnic before swinging into the saddle – I'm riding the beautiful Quarter Horse Paint called Paily.



The ride takes us into utterly unspoilt expanses – Montana is incredible in this respect – we ride over a hilltop, through woodland, cross little streams and across numerous open

prairie plains. We don't have anything like this in Europe. On one of these plains, anyone who wants to can gallop – what a feeling of freedom!

After about 3 hours, we're back at camp and the larger tents have already been pitched. A refreshing snack and some cool drinks await us. The horses rest in the pasture and the cheerful group – this week, a family from America with friends – strikes up a conversation.

In the early evening, anyone who fancies it can go on a shorter ride (about 1½ hours) with the ranch hosts, on whose land we're camping. I'm not going to miss this, so this time I saddle up Ben, a horse that strides forward eagerly. This ride, too, in the wonderful evening atmosphere, is incredibly captivating: nothing but open space as far as the eye can see! Add to that hills and scattered trees – simply beautiful.

The horses are looked after and we have dinner, followed by a short drive to spot bears. Black bears are the main species here, with some grizzly bears too. But unfortunately, all we ever spot in the distance are cattle! The cows and their calves are grazing to their hearts' content on the green pastures.

The evening draws to a close around the campfire. There, we also 'whilst away the time' making our dessert. I try proper 's'mores' for the first time. First, you stick marshmallows on a stick and roast them over the fire, then place them in a sort of honey-flavoured crispbread on which a bit of chocolate has already been spread – and there you have it, the 'sweet sandwich' – delicious.

Showers and toilets are available for us to use. So I can have a warm shower before going to bed.

The next morning begins with breakfast before the group sets off again on a ride (a day's ride with a picnic from the saddlebags). I, on the other hand, head off to the next ranch – it's a shame, as I would have loved to have stayed the whole week!

A travel report by Julia Wies | Pegasus Reiterreisen Further
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