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9 Reasons To Make This Dude Ranch Your Family's Next Summer Vacation



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Travel

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Black Mountain Ranch offers plenty of activities, including daily rides. NICOLA CORNWELL

Black Mountain Ranch located in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado is an all-inclusive dude ranch and includes plenty of activities for families looking for a one-stop-shop vacation. There's unlimited horseback riding, whitewater

rafting, overnight pack trips, cattle drives, roping, rodeo, riding lessons, leatherworking, wine glass etching, line dancing, fishing, shooting and archery. Plus, three yummy meals per day and plenty of snacks. The property is intentionally unplugged (there is WiFi at the main lodge, but most of the cabins have a weak signal, forcing people to get off their devices and be mindfully present).

Here are some of the reasons Black Mountain Ranch is one of the top-rated dude ranches in the world.

1. The Wranglers



The wranglers not only lead the rides, but also teach guests a variety of skills including roping. NICOLA CORNWELL

Every dude ranch does things differently. Some break groups into skill levels (beginners, intermediate, advanced); some break into interest levels (long vs. short rides); some create children-only and adult groups. At Black Mountain Ranch, each family gets their own personal wrangler for the week. What's really nice about this is that the family not only creates a strong bond with the wrangler, but the wrangler gets to know your family. The wrangler

can see that your youngest is having a hard time getting the horse to trot. Or that your spouse needs help controlling the reins; or that your daughter loves to gallop. The family, too, really spends a lot of time together, since all the rides are generally with your core group. However, they are flexible. So if the family does want to split (some want to do a longer ride; some want to go faster), you can do that, too.

2. The Spa



After a day of trail riding, a massage is the perfect treat. NICOLA CORNWELL

Pat, the massage therapist, is really wonderful. She truly is an asset to the ranch. After being on a horse all day, for either newbies or regular riders, she knows exactly what to do to knead all those knots away. She offers a variety of massages—hot stone, deep tissue, CBD—and caters each massage to that person. It's a great treat after several days of riding. Be sure to book the 90-minute treatment, even that will seem too short in Pat's capable hands. She really is that gifted of a masseuse.

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3. The Food



Whether your child is a picky eater, or if your spouse is a foodie, there are plenty of culinary ... [+]
NICOLA CORNWELL

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What's so nice about the food is the variety. There's salmon, prime rib, pork loin and steak for those foodies who appreciate good cuisine. For kids, there are always plenty of options—chicken nuggets, fries, pasta, chips, Nutella sandwiches and of course super yummy cookies available all day. They also really cater to those with allergies and special dietary requirements. Some nights they do a buffet, sometimes it's plated, sometimes it's fancier cuisine, sometimes it's comfort food. But it's always fresh, hot and delicious.

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4. Pack Night



Even first-time riders will be surprised at how quickly they pick up the skills they need to ride a ... [+] NICOLA CORNWELL

Each week has plenty of activities to keep guests from getting bored. One of the highlights is pack night, where guests ride up to an overnight camp. The staff cooks an amazing meal outdoors and everyone sits around a campfire to eat and drink under the stars. Sleeping in tents at night is also a nice tough for people to get a touch of camping (you sleep on cots in sleeping bags, so it's more glamping). Even the loo with a view is a memorable experience. The best part is that all the families stay up late talking over a campfire while the kids play together.

5. Rafting, Rodeo and Cattle Drive





There are plenty of options at Black Mountain Ranch including taking out a canoe. NICOLA CORNWELL

The nice thing about a seven-day dude ranch vacation is that guests can do so much during that week. There are a variety of options during the week including rafting down the Colorado River. Whether it's in duckies or rafts, running the rapids is a great way to spend the day on the water. Friday night is rodeo night and it's fun to go into the town of Steamboat and explore this Western tradition. The last day on the ranch is the rodeo drive which is a great way to show off all the skills riders have learned during the week.

6. Family-Owned and Run



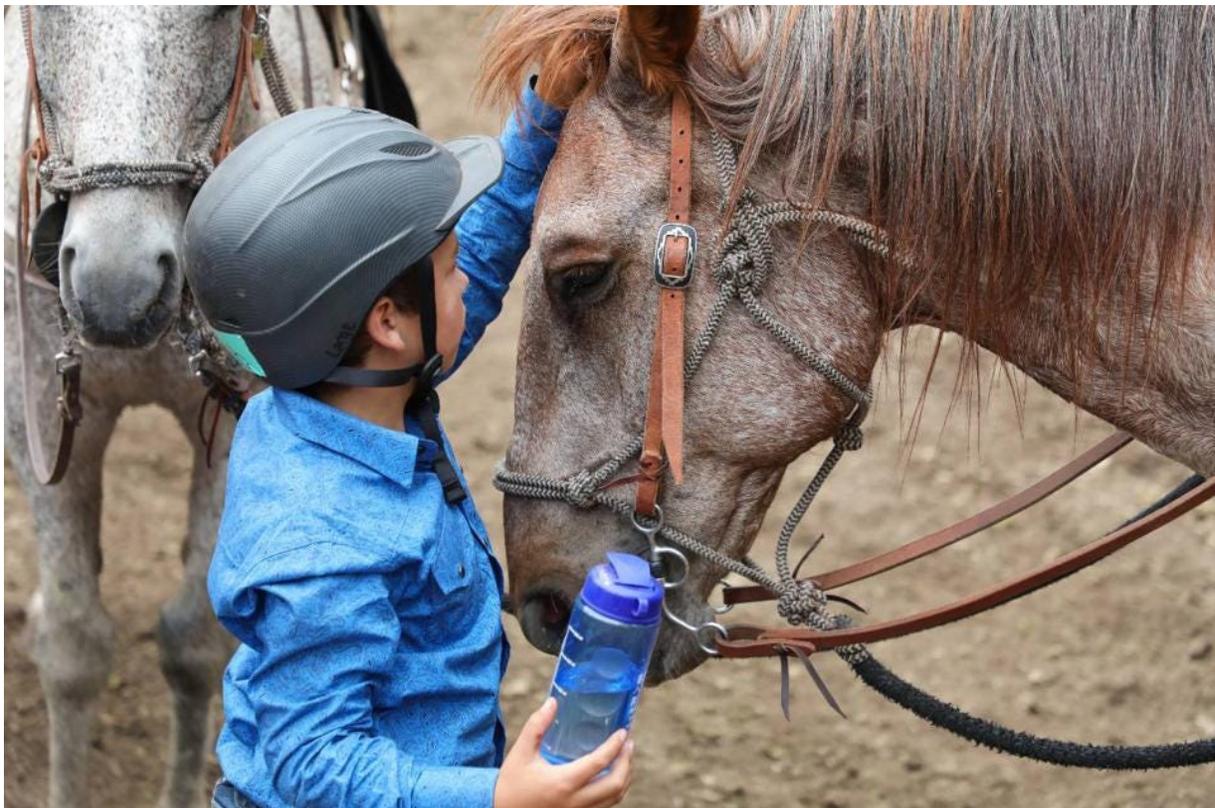


Black Mountain Ranch is family-owned and run and that feeling of hospitality can be seen in every ...

[+] NICOLA CORNWELL

The ranch has been family-owned and run since 1993. The owners and their families are everywhere at the ranch—eating their meals with the guests, line-dancing with them in the evening, showing them how to rope cattle. The dude ranch starts to feel like one big family with staff and guests all mingled together. It creates a very warm, comforting atmosphere.

7. Kids Detox



The kids become very attached to not only the other children, but also to their horse. NICOLA CORNWELL

One of the reasons the dude ranch has so many visitors is because it's such a great digital detox for kids. Everyone complains about their kids being on their devices too much, but it's admittedly hard to get the kids to put their electronics down. Black Mountain Ranch solves this by having WiFi only accessible in the main lodge. But the next step, after putting down the electronics, is really what is so magical. The kids find each other and become

instant best friends. They play ping-pong and foosball in the saloon; they run and collect eggs from the chicken in the morning; they brush down the horses and donkeys; they play old-school games like hide and go seek, freeze tag and running bases. Often the kids create their own kids' tables during the meals and they become close friends.

8. Comradery of Families

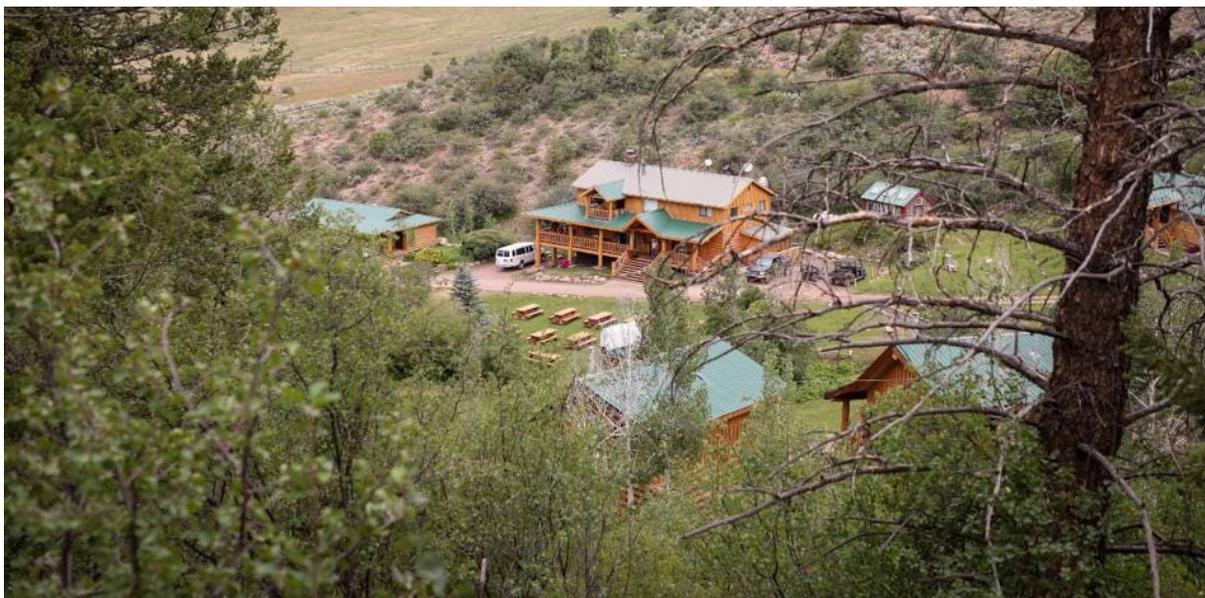


Parents can great a drink at the saloon in the evenings while the kids play ping pong and other ... [+] NICOLA CORNWELL

And just like the kids get together, so do the adults. The bond between the families is so good in part because it's rare to spend so much time (seven days) with the same people on vacation. In fact, many families book the next summer the same week with other families they've met because the dynamics are so strong. Some families have been coming each summer for two decades. The repeat visitor rate is quite high and it's easy to see why.

9. Cabins and Amenities





Black Mountain Ranch has 12 lodging options. NICOLA CORNWELL

The accommodations are nice. Rustic, but lovely. Cabins differ in size (how many bedrooms, bathrooms), but they also have a porch with a view. There are 12 lodging spots in total—eight cabins and four standard studios. The occupancy is 40 guests maximum and that makes for a great size for socializing and getting to know each other. The ranch also has washers and dryers on-premise which is a wonderful way to pack light, knowing you have the option to wash the clothes. Getting dirty and dusty during the day is part of the fun, and being able to wash all that grime off and wear the same clothes is ideal. There's also a saloon where the parents can have an evening drink, while the kids play ping pong or cards.





A dude ranch vacation is a great way for the whole family to digitally detox, be active, and have a ...

[+] NICOLA CORNWELL

If you've never done a dude ranch vacation, you'll be pleasantly surprised at just how much your family will enjoy it. And you may very well be one of those repeat visitors booking it year after year.

Check out my [website](#).



Judy Koutsky

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