

Hidden Treasure

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Nestled among the miles of wildflowers, evergreen and aspen trees in northern Arizona, Hidden Meadow Ranch—located in the White Mountains just north of Greer—offers a welcome respite from the Valley's heat-drenched desert setting.



The 150-acre property of Hidden Meadow Ranch is true to its name in that it really is quite hidden from the outside world; to find it you must drive a few miles on unpaved county roads, which emphasizes the feelings of escape and retreat that you experience once you've finally arrived. But, in the case of Hidden Meadow, secluded isn't synonymous with roughing it. In fact, from the moment the wooden gate swings open and a Hidden Meadow Ranch host politely meets you outside the Welcome Cabin, all doubts are cast aside.

Homesteaded in 1916, Hidden Meadow Ranch still feels much like cowboy territory with its roaming animals, cowboy-hat and jeans-wearing staff members, and lack of vehicles and paved roads (and traffic noise, for that matter). After checking in at the Welcome Cabin you are guided on horseback to one of 12 log guest cabins, where you'll discover a mix of luxury accommodations and decorative cowboy lore. Each cabin can fit up to five guests and includes a master bedroom and upstairs loft; wood-burning stone fireplace; galley kitchen with microwave, mini-refrigerator, complimentary drinks and coffeemaker; and a bathroom equipped with an oversized, slate soaking tub. The cabins are scattered across the property but never too far from the Ranch House dining room and activity centers, making it an easy walk wherever you go.

About a four hour drive from Phoenix, Hidden Meadow offers various activities throughout the day—the perfect way to get your trip started and shake off any car ride sleepiness. Something you'll want to hop on immediately is a horseback ride, which is this former working ranch's signature activity. With about 40 horses available (and the option to board your own horses), Hidden Meadow offers rides for all ability levels, for various lengths of time. Other popular activities include archery; leatherworking (much simpler than it sounds); canoeing; mountain biking; fly-fishing on the Ranch pond; and hiking on Hidden Meadow's 3,200 acres of surrounding trails. The Ranch prides itself on having a "four-season environment," meaning its natural setting is just as beautiful in the winter as it is in the summer—if you're planning a snowy trip this winter, you can look forward to activities like sledding, snowshoeing and horse-drawn sleigh rides.

Another perk to the relaxed, laid-back environment is that unlike many resort vacations, you don't need to plan each day and activity prior to your arrival. Because the Ranch is only able to accommodate a small number of guests at a time, personal, one-on-one service can be expected, making planning simple. Whenever you'd like to try something new, simply call or stop by the Welcome Cabin, where the staff will personally arrange your activity of choice. But in such a peaceful environment, you'll want to be sure to pencil in some down time as well. Remember that reading in a hammock, scouting out wildlife, or taking a leisurely meadow stroll also count as viable activity options.

All the adventures you'll embark upon at Hidden Meadow really work up an appetite, and luckily you don't have to travel far for fantastic food. All meals are taken in the main Ranch House, and are included in the price of your stay (as are your on-site activities). Come hungry for seasonal, enticing selections like rum-infused French toast for breakfast, the sloppy Joe or Buffalo burger for lunch (ask for a side of homemade potato chips), and the pan-seared lump crab cakes and achiote-marinated elk tenderloin for dinner. While you're sure to love the top-notch fare, the elegant, log cabin-chic ambiance of the Ranch House makes the meal even more enjoyable. In addition, Hidden Meadow regularly schedules family-friendly dining events in accordance with the seasons—think outdoor barbecue lunches, campfire S'mores n' Snifters, cookout breakfasts and "Burgers at the Barn" for the kids.

While the fun activities and delicious meals make up the bulk of your trip, it's the details you'll remember most. The personal touches at Hidden Meadow are scarcely found at big-name resorts—think daily newsletters delivered to your doorstep each morning and handwritten poems placed on your pillow upon returning from dinner. It may be difficult to leave, but one thing's for sure: Such a unique trip warrants repeated visits.

Home on the Range

Hidden Meadow Ranch offers ownership opportunities for those interested in more frequent visits. Choose from fractional ownership (where you can own one-sixth of a meadow or forest Club Cabin ranging from 2,500-3,500 square feet), or charter lot ownership (where you can purchase a one to two and a half acre home site and build your own custom log home).

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