

# COSMOPOLITAN

## Join the Yeehaw Agenda at Lone Mountain Ranch in Big Sky, Montana

Giddyup or giddy outta my way!



by SHANNON BARBOUR

NOV 20, 2019



**A**h, Montana. The state where pseudo disgraced celebs (ahem, John Mayer and Justin Timberlake) go to rehab their douchebag image. Of course, that's not all this place is. No, my friends. As I've been referring to it ever since I touched down and saw on a T-shirt in the gift shop, Montana is objectively the last best place. It's the last vestige of cool, and when you check into Lone Mountain Ranch in Big Sky, you'll be far removed from all the umbrella-topped cocktails and rooftop-brunch-filled vacations in the best way possible.

I went during one of the ranch's specialty weeks called Cowgirl Up, which means the ladies take over the ranch for six days and do whatever they damn well please. If you hate planning trips but love to do all the things, the lovely organizers of the Cowgirl Up (shout-out to Aleksandra!) take care of all the annoying scheduling so all you have to do is show up and have fun, no matter what your cowgirl experience level is. (Spoiler: With the exception of knowing all the words to every "Old Town Road" remix, my cowgirl skills are nonexistent, but I survived! Nay, thrived.)

Here's everything you need to know about your new favorite vacation spot.

Do you prefer to do lots of activities or just chill out on vacation?

I want a full itinerary!

I just wanna chill.

**BOOK NOW** *Lone Mountain Ranch*

Extra note about packing: Since the weather this time of year can range from 70 to 7 degrees, layers are your friend. Also, the ranch has a lovely selection of cowboy boots that you can borrow, so don't even worry about bringing your own.

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## ***1. TOUCH DOWN AND MEET YOUR HORSE.***

The ranch's wranglers will set you up with a horse that is all yours for the week. I'm not a Horse Girl™, so IDK what type they all were, but mine was named Roscoe, a sweet blondie who was a D-I-V-A and flipped his wavy mane legit every five seconds. I had no choice but to stan.



While everyone meets each other and their horses on the first night, enjoy some mulled wine, the best charcuterie, and s'mores while sitting around a campfire.

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## 2. UNPLUG AND SPIN SOME RECORDS.

I stayed in the two-bedroom, two-bathroom Coyote cabin with my BFF, Sahara, and after spending a solid hour praising the cabin's heated floors (cannot believe we have to go back to life without them), we dusted off the record player and set the ~vibe~ by spinning some Dolly Parton, Fleetwood Mac, and Chicago. If the selection in your room isn't up to par, no worries. Just go swap 'em out for some others in the main cabin or with the other cowgirls on the ranch.



Also, you'll quickly learn that Wi-Fi in your cabin is shoddy at best (it just adds to the off-the-grid charm, IMO), so take advantage of the Jon Muir and Walt Whitman essays and poems in your cabin. I mean, if you didn't go to the wilderness and quote John Muir at least once, did you even go?

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### 3. EAT ALL THE FOODS.

Since the Cowgirl Week package is all-inclusive (with the exception of cocktails), you can try anything and everything on the Horn & Cattle menu, which is exactly what Sahara and I did on the first night against our better judgment. Learn from our mistakes and try not to load up on the so-good-you-wanna-die sourdough bread they call Betty so you can savor the bison stew, elk meatballs, white bean hummus, and crispy Montana trout.



Remember: If you choose one of the ranch's weeklong packages, you have several days to try everything on the menu, so no need to cram it all in on the first night. And later in the week, you'll get to take a horse-drawn wagon ride up to the North Fork Cabin for a whiskey tasting and a cooking lesson from chef Eric Gruber.



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#### 4. GET A COWGIRL CRASH COURSE.

Throughout the week, you'll have several chances to go on horseback rides through the ranch and the Gallatin National Forest. Before my first ride with Roscoe, which was led by a wrangler named Matt, I made sure to hit up the front office to borrow a pair of cowboy boots for the week, but you'll absolutely want to wear a warm pair of gloves too. If you haven't rocked a cowboy hat yet, now is the time!



Now that you've gone out on the trails, it's time to level up. Go down to the pen to learn how to unsaddle your horse and throw a lasso. Full disclosure: This is a ranch and you're in a horse pen, so you'll be stepping in a lot of horse sh\*t.

## 5. SURVIVE YELLOWSTONE'S SUPERVOLCANO.

Hop on a shuttle and spot moose, elk, and bison as you head to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Once you're there, forget about the fact that you're literally hanging out in a supervolcano that's due to go off and decimate a solid, like, 90 percent of the continental United States at any given second. Fun times!



Take Sean's tour if you want someone to entertain every single question you've ever had about Old Faithful, why parts of the park smell like rotten eggs, and the park's version of the Grand Canyon.





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## 6. BE HORIZONTAL AND EXPLORE THE TOWN.

Turns out, taking a daylong road trip through a national park can be quite exhausting. Chill out the next day by enjoying a hot cup of coffee—delivered straight to your door every morning—going to a sunrise yoga class in a toasty cabin, and melting into the massage table during an hour-long session complete with CBD drops for maximum relaxation. Once you do all that, follow it up with a nice long nap because it's your vacation and you can spend a whole afternoon in bed if you want to!



To combat any cabin fever that might slowly be setting in, go to town! Just down the road from the ranch is a movie theater, some shopping, coffee shops, and a couple of restaurants. If you didn't rent a car, all you gotta do is send a Zingle (that's text in LMR speak) and they'll have someone drive you down there and pick you up whenever you're ready.





Speaking of texting, if you ever need anything during your stay, just Zingle/text the ranch's number and they'll take care of it. No need to ever awkwardly call the front desk, talk IRL, or do anything else that might cause millennials to spontaneously combust. But seriously, why can't all hotels be like this?



## 7. HONOR BRAD PITT AND GO FLY FISHING.

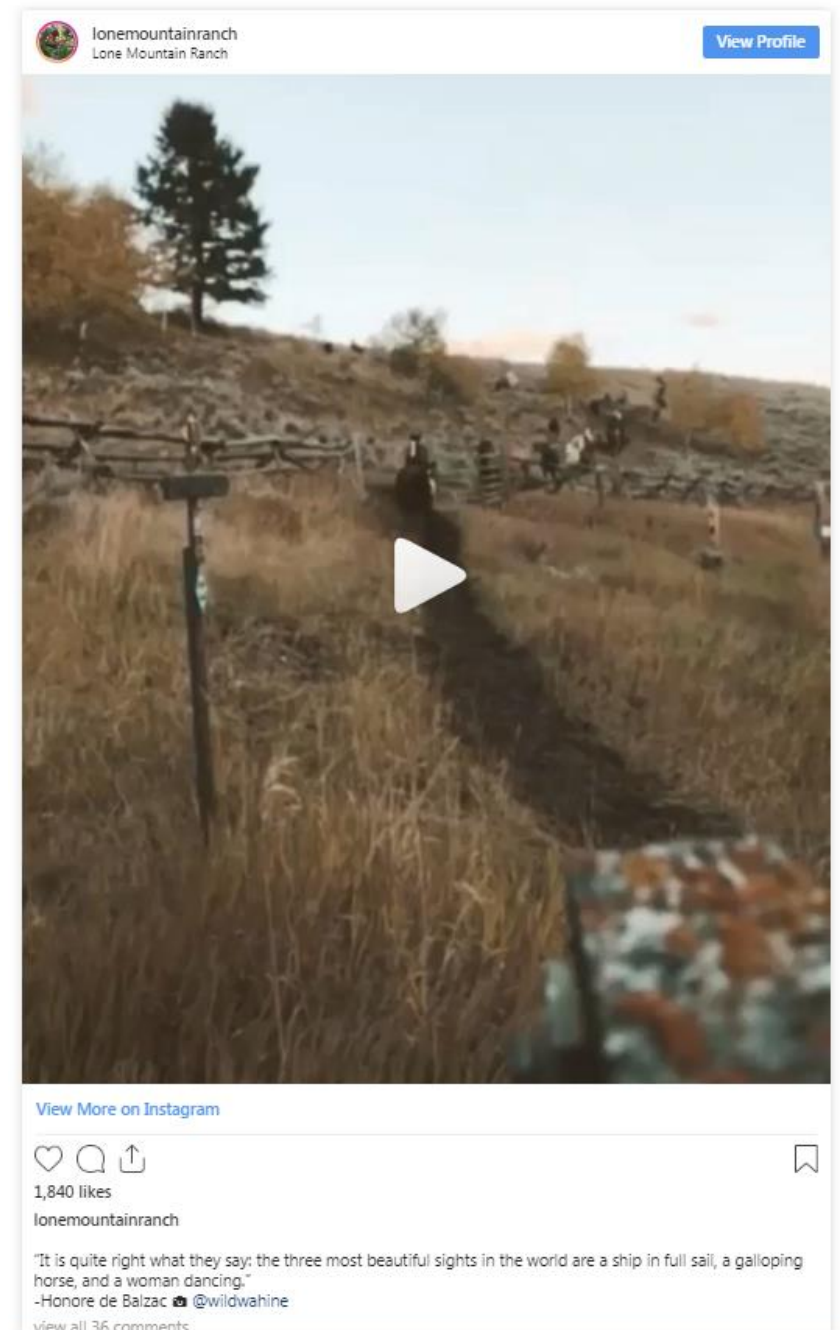
If you're a Brad Pitt fan (who isn't?), you'll be delighted to know that the whole *A River Runs Through It* movie was set up here. Clearly, I had to make the pilgrimage to the Gallatin River for some fly fishing. But as our instructor Neil made sure to point out, Brad's character in that movie doesn't know sh\*t about fly fishing, so listen to the professionals.



With the help of Neil, the most patient fly fishing instructor who had to deal with me and Sahara getting our fishing lines tangled every two minutes (I wish I was exaggerating), I caught a brown trout (named him Brad, obviously) and didn't fall in the river!

### 8. GO WINE TASTING AND GET LIT IN THE SALOON.

On the last couple of days, everyone goes on a horseback ride up to an open field where the wranglers let the horses run around an outdoor arena while the humans do some wine tasting around a campfire. Once you're sufficiently saucy, go watch the most majestic sight you'll ever see: dozens of horses running across the field and down through the ranch.



To wrap it all up, on the very last night, the Horn & Cattle clears out and is reserved just for the Cowgirl Week ladies to get loose and dance to live music.







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Things I learned this week:

1. @shannonbrandace and my content definitely peaked in Montana (warning: everything else will be down hill from now)
2. Brad Pitt didn't know a thing about fly fishing in A River Runs Through It
3. Horses can give the best side eye imaginable
4. Some people are not built for two stepping
5. Nothing beats traveling with your bestie!

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After you've yeed your last haw, say your goodbyes and immediately start googling job listings and the cost of living in Big Sky so you never have to leave this place again.

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