

# PICK YOUR PASSION AT DUDE & GUEST RANCH SPECIALTY WEEKS

Between the plethora of activities, all-inclusive meals and peaceful surroundings, it's not as if you needed more reasons to plan a trip to one of Colorado's two dozen or so guest ranches. But the ability to tailor your getaway with these themed offerings is just too good to resist. Giddy-up!

BY ASHLEY HUGHES







OPPOSITE PAGE: ELK MOUNTAIN RANCH, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHICO BASIN RANCH; VISTA VERDE RANCH; ELK MOUNTAIN RANCH, MILES/NICOLE CROSS; LOST VALLEY RANCH, JEN BRITTON.



## WORK IT

Longing for that cowboy or cowgirl life? Live the real thing during **Cattle Work Weeks** (Sept. 1–29, 2019) at **Vista Verde Ranch** in **Clark** — just be prepared to spend a lot of time in the saddle! Not only will you get to soak up the colors of fall foliage, you'll do it while honing your riding skills, bonding with your steed and working cattle. Later in the week, show off what you've learned while roaming 16,000 acres of forested land to find, move and round up the herd before snow begins to fly. [vistaverde.com](http://vistaverde.com)

**Lost Valley Ranch's Cattle Week** (Sept. 22–29, 2019) offers the chance to take part in a real-life cattle roundup, a key aspect of any ranch operation. Head to this all-inclusive property in **Sedalia** and lend a hand with the grazing cow/calf pairs in full-day and half-day shifts. When the hard yet rewarding work is done, soothe your muscles with a soak in the hot tub or treat yourself to an in-cabin massage. [lostvalleyranch.com](http://lostvalleyranch.com)

## LADIES ONLY

Grab you sister, mom or best gal pal for a fun-filled bonding experience — no boys allowed! In **Kremmling, Women's Week** (first week of June 2019) at **Latigo Ranch** means you'll learn horsemanship skills, ride amid the splendor of the Rocky Mountains and hear the stories of women who have worked the West as farriers, cattle ranchers and performers. And with any luck, you'll also meet new friends during a fly-fishing lesson, guided hike or line-dancing sesh. [latigotrails.com](http://latigotrails.com)

You won't want to miss **Zapata Ranch's Women, Horses and the West** workshop (June 16–23, 2019), which combines a love for literature, horsemanship and the land. Dive into classic childhood reads like *Black Beauty* and *Charlotte's Web* while contemplating your connection to the natural world through discussions led by Dr. Bonney MacDonald, an English professor at West Texas A&M University. The ranch's location in **Mosca** also provides the opportunity to ride through nearby Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. [zranch.org](http://zranch.org)



Lost Valley Ranch



Native American Living History Week



Tent camping at Chico Basin Ranch



Elk Mountain Ranch

## UNIQUELY YOURS

It's not all ropin' and ridin' when you're on the ranch. Broaden your horizons by partaking in a program that matches your specific hobbies or interests, in addition to the usual horse-centric lineup. Bringing a taste of Nashville to **Granby, Singer Songwriter Week** (June 23–30, 2019) at 100-year-old **C Lazy U Ranch** features musical husband/wife duo Monty Powell and Anna Wilson. Under their tutelage, you'll learn how to write your first hit (watch out, Taylor Swift). The week caps off with an intimate private concert where Powell performs his country jams made famous by the likes of Tim McGraw, Keith Urban and Lady Antebellum, while Wilson pays tribute to the jazzy stylings of the Tin Pan Alley era. [clazyu.com](http://clazyu.com)

For the second year, **Chico Basin Ranch** is opening up its leather shop for a multi-day workshop (July 7–11, 2019) southeast of **Colorado Springs**. Whether you're just getting into the craft or are a seasoned pro, you'll delve into pattern making, tooling and finishing leather in a group of no more than six participants. Then, delight in creating a leather satchel or detailed belt to take home with you — along with a new sense of Western style. [chicobasinranch.com](http://chicobasinranch.com)

Through its **Heart-J Center**, an experiential learning hub, **Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch** in **Loveland** brings ancient traditions to life for **Native American Living History Week** (July 14–20, 2019). Perfect as an intergenerational vacay with your whole brood, you'll enjoy learning skills like Native American leather working and hearing stories from your guide, Gray Wolf, while gathered in a beautiful riverside setting. [sylvandale.com](http://sylvandale.com)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: SYLVAN DALE GUEST RANCH; CHICO BASIN RANCH; ELK MOUNTAIN RANCH; LOST VALLEY RANCH.



## BORN TO RIDE

Hitting the trail is a given during a dude ranch stay, but if you really want to ensure plenty of equine face time and take your abilities to the next level, book when the focus is on riding.

**Horseman's Week** (Sept. 1–8, 2019) at **Colorado Trails Ranch** outside of **Durango** does just that, letting horse enthusiasts drill down on their technique, get involved in grooming and saddling, and attend talks about horse nutrition, shoeing, veterinary care, tack care and more. Don't be surprised if you depart having reached full-blown horse-whisperer status. [coloradotrails.com](http://coloradotrails.com)

Surrounded by Pike National Forest near **Deckers**, **Lost Valley Ranch** presents not one, but two ways to get your saddle on: **Horsemanship Week** (Sept. 8–15 or Sept. 29–Oct. 6, 2019) and **Ride, Ride, Ride Week** (Sept. 15–22, 2019). The former is a chance to work with a professional trainer to improve communication with your horse and build confidence through individual and group instruction, as well as in an arena and on the trail, which happens to traverse some of the state's most-scenic terrain. The latter is an adventure out to the remote backcountry, making your way back to the ranch on — you guessed it — horseback. Be prepared for six- to eight-hour days, but you will have a hot meal, hot bath and soft bed to relish at each day's end. [lostvalleyranch.com](http://lostvalleyranch.com)

## ADULT ESCAPES

With lots of space to roam and activities galore, ranches are a natural fit for families with little buckaroos. But there's also a tranquil side that makes for an ideal retreat — sans kiddos — and some spots recognize this with blocks on the calendar reserved for the of-voting-age-or-older crowd. Just in time to scope out the golden glory of fall leaves around **Buena Vista**, **Elk Mountain Ranch's Adults-Only Week** (Sept. 1–8 or Sept. 8–15, 2019) emphasizes riding and relaxing, and is limited to a maximum of 20 guests. So, whether you're curling up with a book by the fireplace or trekking through brilliant aspen forests, the solitude will be uninterrupted. [elkmtn.com](http://elkmtn.com)

Not to be outdone, **Black Mountain Ranch** scatters its adults-only weeks between June and August, a peak-season rarity among the state's ranches. Nestled near the town of **McCoy** in northwest Colorado, the environment is ripe for a respite that includes gourmet meals, fly-fishing, nature walks, a trip to the rodeo in nearby **Steamboat Springs** and whitewater rafting on the Colorado River. [blackmtnranch.com](http://blackmtnranch.com)



Adults-Only Week at Elk Mountain Ranch

As the first Colorado industry organization to become a Sustainability Partner of the Colorado Tourism Office and the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, the Colorado Dude and Guest Ranch Association has long been committed to protecting Colorado's land and resources. Our dude and guest ranches strive to be stewards of the lands they live on and surrounding open spaces, which includes the practice of sustainable agriculture and finding ways to enrich the land. Most ranches also recycle, reuse materials, compost waste and use eco-friendly cleaning supplies, and encourage the nearly 15,000 guests who visit each year to do the same.

