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## LATIGO RANCH: FOR DUDES AND OTHERS, A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

By Anne Z. Cooke, Tribune Media Services,  
[World's Fare](#)

If you were a cowboy comic, you'd say Latigo Ranch was a horse of a different color. Not just a maverick, you understand. Latigo, a dude ranch on 550 acres in north-central Colorado, is a bona fide original.

But you won't notice it at first. Like the man said, the devil is in the details. There's the narrow country road -- dirt, of course -- winding around the hill, beneath the old-growth spruce and through the big ranch gate. There's the de rigueur pioneer cabin, with its chinked log walls and uneven plank floors. You'll get to know it well since this is where you'll eat your three squares a day.

Ahead is the pond, where the kids -- and others -- practice fly-casting, and where someone actually catches a fish now and then. Over there is the stable, headquarters for Latigo's top-notch equestrian program and home to 80 of the best trained, well-fed horses you could ever hope to swing a leg over. One of them will be yours for an entire week, to befriend and to ride. Beyond, in the national forest, is where you'll ride, on a network of trails, some for walking and some for loping.

If you weren't born in the saddle, however, Latigo has hiking trails, fly-fishing lessons, river rafting, hayrides, chuck wagon dinners and wilderness overnights. For the buckaroos, nature discovery, lariat tossing, archery and cowboy crafts keep kids enthralled.

Yup. At first glance, Latigo looks like the rest of the steers in the herd. Except that the stereotypes don't fit. For one thing, Latigo was never a working cattle ranch run by a hard-working family who used to raise steers for beef but switched to tourism. Instead, Latigo, formerly called Snowshoe Ranch, was a local settler's mountain eyrie. Here he sat on his spacious front porch, rocking in the heavenly solitude and drinking in the view: 100 miles of breathtaking mountains, the snow-capped Continental Divide.

If you're expecting a kindly dad wearing a battered Stetson, or a

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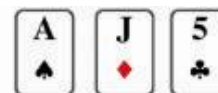


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crusty but amiable ranch hand, or a mom in an apron who rises before dawn to bake pies, you'll be disappointed. Two contemporary couples are the force behind Latigo's success.

Your on-site host and co-owner is Jim Yost, formerly an anthropology and linguistics professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. A friendly, talkative guy who welcomes the "interaction with guests," Yost loves to kick around big ideas. Check the Internet for his research years in Ecuador and his film, "Nomads of the Rain Forest." Jim's wife Kathy, a music teacher, lends a hand as ranch hostess.

Jim's partner, Randy George, keeps a lower profile, managing the outfit and oiling the wagon wheels; his wife, Lisa, a trained chef, is the one who rises with the dawn to order fresh greens, fruit in season, hundreds of eggs, gallons of olive oil, bags of flour, chicken and steak. She does bake cookies, too.

As for style, Latigo is hardly a movie classic look-alike, one of those raggedy clutch of barns and bunkhouses huddling together on the open range. Latigo Ranch, inside the Routt National Forest, is at 9,000 feet elevation. Guest quarters, sprinkled amongst the trees, consist of 10 log cabins, each with a covered front porch. Six cabins have three bedrooms and sleep up to six. Four have one bedroom and sleep two or three. All have modern bathrooms with tub and shower, refrigerator, coffee maker, hair dryer, comfy quilts and a heater to take off the chill.

The real tail-twister -- as guest ranches go -- is that Latigo Ranch is open year-round. Here, on the mountain's west-facing slopes, the annual average snowfall measures 18 feet or more, and lasts until late spring. Once the flakes fly, Yost fires up the Snowcat and grooms 65 kilometers of Nordic trails, for skate and classic cross-country skiing. After a frosty day in the snow, there's nothing better than a hot cup of cocoa and a fire in the fireplace.

In winter, Latigo takes guests on a flexible schedule, for half weeks or long weekends. During the fall, Latigo puts up hunters and will pack out the meat.

But the ranch's summer program is planned to run for a week, from Sunday to Sunday. Priced as an all-inclusive, it pays for a full week, covering everything except taxes.

That means lodging, all meals, snacks, soft drinks, use of the guest laundry, horseback riding, guided trips, wilderness overnights, fly-fishing lessons, archery, lessons and all equipment, and all off-site recreation (including outfitter-provided river rafting). If you're deciding what to do based on the cost, you won't have much of a vacation, according to Jim Yost. And when it comes to big ideas, he's often right.

### **INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE:**

For more about Jim (James A.) Yost and his film, "Nomads of the Rain Forest," go to [www.lastrefuge.co.uk](http://www.lastrefuge.co.uk).

From late June through mid-August, many guests are families with children. When it's fully booked, the ranch can sleep up to 48 people. During peak season, all-inclusive rates per person are \$2,400 for adults, \$1,725 for kids 6 to 13, and \$1,250 for children 3 to 5. Two years and younger are free with parents. Rates in spring and fall are discounted. Shorter visits are sometimes possible, but with a three-night minimum. Rates are adjusted accordingly.

Latigo Ranch is in Grand County, at 201 County Road 1911,

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Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty explore the world from Venice, Calif. They can be reached at [TravelsWithAnne@cs.com](mailto:TravelsWithAnne@cs.com).

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