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ON THE ROAD by Stan LeQuire

CREATION CARE ON THE RANCH

Apaloosas, pintos and a dapple gray or two. Palominos. Bays. Ninety horses thundered down the dirt road. For a backdrop, a late afternoon sun illumined crags and folds in the Colorado Rockies. Perched on a boulder a safe distance from the action, I let my camera capture the beauty to take home to my urban, East Coast world. One of the first things I heard when I got to Latigo Ranch was, "Don't miss the running of the horses." In fact, it would be my advice to you. Don't miss it.



Nestled up against the Arapaho National Forest, Latigo Ranch is a hidden vacation destination that deserves wider recognition. This classy yet refined resort has it all: spectacular scenery, five-star cuisine, delightful staff including knowledgeable (and patient) wranglers. And for those committed to creation's care, Latigo Ranch has an exemplary environmental ethic. If you want to give your family a memory and support a business with an intentional and creative care for creation, I recommend a week at Latigo Ranch.

Since 1928, Latigo has operated as a dude ranch in the summer and a Nordic ski lodge in the winter. In 1987, Jim and Kathie Yost, with Randy and Lisa George, purchased the ranch. Jim Yost, formerly an anthropologist with Wycliffe International, says the mission of Latigo is to "communicate God's creation to our guests and use that as a means to help families reconnect."

And reconnect they will--be that around dining room tables or out by the barn. For my family, the reconnection happened in our comfortable mountain cabin with a pot-bellied wood stove. We wondered if we would take on a pot-bellied profile from indulging the sumptuous menu of "nouvelle ranch cuisine," which included prime rib, elk medallions, fresh mountain trout, and thick Colorado bacon lovingly prepared by Randy and Lisa George. My daughters still speak fondly of their wranglers that we got to know during the twice daily horseback rides through alpine forests and meadows.



Some will say that horses don't make for good environmentalists, but Jim Yost will make a believer out of you. He has certainly won the hearts and minds of the local rangers in the Arapaho National Forest. Yost builds proactive relationships with the Forest Service and models creation care techniques. For example, Yost pioneered a new method of corralling horses during overnight camping trips with his guests. Previously, the standard was the use of a high line tether or remuda line. Yost uses portable, battery-operated electric fencing and a new corral site with each trip. Then, as camp is broken the wranglers accept an unenviable task. They spread the manure so that it doesn't collect in unsightly piles

or release concentrated wastes. Corralling thus reduces impact on fragile alpine ecosystems and eliminates siltation along stream beds. After initial skepticism, the Forest Service gave up tethering and now prefers Yost's method of overnight corralling. In fact, the Forest Service often seeks his advice on other issues. Yost's Western-style creation care has won him the respect of the Forest Service and he maintains that respect with the same diligence he has for his land, staff and horses.



Beyond this one practical example, Yost keeps abreast of the latest ecological principles in horse care, forest management and pasture care. Yost points out that horse touring combined with a strong ethic of creation care is better than some of the more modern forms of recreation, such as mountain biking. Conscientiously, he trains his staff in creation care. "It's everything," says Yost.

Fodor's Online Guide says, "Latigo has a caring staff that does everything it can to give you an authentic ranch experience." The ranch has been listed as the "Best Dude Ranch in Colorado" in the guide book Colorado's Best. For more information on Latigo Ranch, visit their beautiful website www.latigotrails.com or write for an information packet on rates and activities to: PO Box 237, Kremmling, CO, 80459, USA.

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