

The Ranch at Rock Creek, Philipsburg, MT

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The Loft in the converted barn

It just doesn't get any better than this for a western-style, fun-filled family vacation! There are dude ranches, and then there is The Ranch at Rock Creek. As a Relais & Chateaux property, the Ranch is a full-service, 5-star resort located outside of Missoula, Montana, offering incredibly beautiful scenery and accommodations, gourmet meals, a great variety of activities, and options for pure relaxation.



Your host and hostess, Maya and Thomas Kilgore

I visited The Ranch in the wintertime and spent three days discovering the ranch operations and getting to know the new managers who are expert hoteliers bringing a new level of hospitality, service and sophistication to the resort. Maja and Thomas Kilgore, native Germans, have years of experience in the industry and most recently helped create Laucala, a private-island resort in Fiji. They are ever-present on the grounds and make a point to see each guest daily. Expert horsemen and hunters themselves, they have created an outstanding equine program with offerings for both the most experienced and novice cowboys and girls!



The kid will love this "tent"!

Lodging includes hotel-style rooms in the main building, one- to four-bedroom homes, grand converted barn rooms including a kid-friendly bunk house, and family-style tented cabins along the creek. For a special romantic getaway, Trappeur Lodge is a partially-tented cabin removed from the main areas for extra privacy and supreme relaxation.

I enjoyed walks around the property, snowmobiling up into the hills for amazing vistas, horseback riding in snow-covered fields, expert shooting lessons at the pistol and rifle range, and ice skating at dusk on the pond encircled by white lights and with a roaring fire to keep us warm. I was also able to sample the amazing spa treatments, shop for top-notch western duds in the mercantile, and curl up with a book in a giant comfy leather chair in the Great Room, where hot tea, coffee, and fresh pastries are set out daily.





Get back in the saddle at the Silver Dollar Saloon

Evenings were great fun with champagne and canapés at the bar to start, three- and four-course locally-sourced meals with wine pairings for dinner, and lots of late-night fun in the Silver Dollar Saloon. There are saddles instead of stools at the bar, a movie room complete with sheep footstools and a popcorn machine, a four-lane bowling alley, a billiards table, shuffleboard, karaoke, and lots of space for relaxing, playing games and making new friends. In the summer, meals and evening activities are also available outdoors at the Blue Canteen, and with special theme evenings and cookouts.

When you visit the ranch, your rate includes everything: lodging, meals and snacks, all beverages, unlimited non-guided activities, and two guided activities per day. The Rod and Club is the home base for fishing, horseback riding, and shooting. Kids activities are organized throughout the day, and swimming is available at the pool or pond. It's no wonder that families return year after year to create more life-long memories of their western summers together.