

Happy trails, whooping good times makes this Texas dude ranch lively

BANDERA, Tex. — Sunlight filters through the trees and dapples the clearing beside the Medina River, where we eat a ranch-sized breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausage, grits, biscuits and gravy, all cooked in huge frying pans over a barbecue pit here at the Mayan Dude Ranch.

The children from San Antonio are clustered on a log at the edge of the clearing and a group of adult tourists gather around the guitar player, who sings "The Strawberry Roan."

We have come downhill by hay cart, on horseback and on foot. There is the smell of dried leaves on damp ground and of the sun warming the morning earth of the Lone Star State.

When the guitar stops, the sound of birds breaks briefly through the murmur of morning voices before a stronger voice shouts "Saddle Up!"

That marks the end of morning breakfast here in the cypress country of central Texas, where Don and Judy Hicks and their 10 children run this busy ranch for tourists who like their cowboy life with beer and clean sheets.

Bandera is 47 miles west of San Antonio. As you approach it along the highway, Texas rolls away in frayed mounds of mesquite, with windmills turning in the wind and oil derricks lining the arid earth on either side.

AFTER YOU PASS through the town of Bandera, down a single wide Texas street, the road curves through giant cypress trees towards the river. There has been a rare rush of rain. Flood debris still hangs 20 feet up in the trees and the swollen river still bruises the bridge.

One of the favorite sports on this ranch is riding an inner tube down this river, but at least one inexperienced sportsman who didn't follow instructions has been bruised while being dragged in his tube under the bridge.

The road follows an uphill route past the corral, the stage coach and the bunkhouses to the main building, which overlooks both the swimming pool and the path leading to the guest houses.

A dude ranch like this is a total experience for a family that participates in the daily events of the ranch. A single line of horses rides out every morning and afternoon, although guests are not

allowed to ride alone because it is too expensive to insure lone riders against accidents.

The hay cart carries willing guests to breakfast every morning (unless they

prefer to be really dude and eat in the dining room) and to a variety of outdoor evening barbecues and entertainments. People, who don't want to swim or ride, play horseshoes or tennis or simply wander around the large property.

AFTER A HARD DAY in the saddle, guests often go into Bandera, the night-life capital of central Texas for an evening at the infamous Arky Blue's Silver Dollar Saloon.

When you go downstairs to the room where the band plays and couples in straw cowboy hats whoop to the music, you may think that Hollywood designed this dancing bar for tourists. It didn't.

Arky plays his guitar and sings from the bandstand. The crowd, under a ceiling of straw hats, hollers friendly insults from nearby tables. Couples in nailed-studded jeans and high-heeled boots strut out on the dance floor with patterned rhythm. Men play billiards by the bar.

The Silver Dollar Saloon is a great foot-tapping, beer-drinking establishment for people who like local color. The smart tourists, however, remember that they are guests in town. Tempters are as short in a Texas bar as they are in a John Wayne movie.

There is a \$2 cover charge Friday and Saturday nights at Arky Blue's. The rates at the Mayan Dude Ranch are about \$40 a day for adults, including all meals and ranch activities. During peak season, one-day reservations are not encouraged.

The weekly rate is about \$240. The fee for children is about half-price depending on age.

For information, write Don and Judy Hicks at the Mayan Dude Ranch, Bandera, Tex. 78803. For information on other ranches in the area, and on other Texas attractions, contact Elmer Whiddell at the Texas Tourist Development Agency, Box 12008 Capital Station, Austin, Tex. 78763.

A travel handbook called Land of Contrasts is available from Box 5064, Dept. 1J, Austin, Tex. 78763.



The breakfast helpings are hearty but sure to be worn off after a long day in the saddle or riding an inner tube down the Medina River.

Knowing rules tones down those lost baggage blues

It happens to as many as 10,000 people every year. They are burdened with the aggravation of damaged or lost baggage during airline travel.

The Better Business Bureau suggests that many problems travelers have in obtaining reimbursement for lost baggage may be avoided by learning the rules set by airlines and by exercising common sense.

Airlines are required by the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) to give information to passengers on tariffs, the binding contracts between the carrier and the passenger which are filed with the CAB. Airlines have trained personnel to aid customers in finding the particular information they need.

The liability coverage a passenger is entitled to on domestic flights is \$750 per person, not per bag. On international flights, the maximum coverage is \$9.07 per pound depending on the weight of the bag.

Coverage does not ensure that the full amount will be paid if a bag is lost. The passenger must prove that the contents of the bag are worth that amount. Airlines pay the depreciated value of any damaged or lost items, not their original value or replacement costs.

If a passenger feels his or her belongings are worth more than \$750, insurance may be purchased to raise the airline's maximum liability. The amount of excess valuation that may be purchased varies among airlines. Check for exceptions which excess valuation will not cover.

The \$750 or \$9.07 per pound coverage does not apply to such items as glass, liquids, electronic equipment and other fragile items which should not be packed in a suitcase. Airlines are required to make available a list of types or classes of items considered too fragile to be carried in a suitcase and for which the airline will not be responsible.

The CAB also has set certain limits on the dam-

age to fragile or perishable items for which an airline may deny responsibility. Airlines are responsible for:

- Items checked which are not packed in a suitcase (such as a musical instrument) unless the passenger signs a form releasing the airline from responsibility;

- Certain fragile items commonly carried in luggage (eyeglasses or one camera per person);
- Items packed in an original factory-sealed carton;

- And external damage to baggage or other evidence of negligent abuse.

A customer must notify the airline of a lost bag, or missing items from a bag, within 45 days. Do this immediately by filling out a loss-or-damage report. Keep a copy of the report and obtain the name of the airline employee who helped.

Keep the baggage check and a copy of the airline ticket until the lost items are recovered or the claim is resolved.

Airlines are responsible for expenses incurred by a passenger due to the loss of a bag; however, the amount depends upon whether the passenger is away from home and how long it takes to recover the bag. An airline may offer no reimbursement unless specifically asked to do so.

If the problem cannot be successfully resolved at the airport, write to the airline as soon as possible and keep a copy of the letter. Include a brief description of what happened, the consequences and what is expected to be done by the airline. Again mention the employee's name who helped and send copies of any receipts that will back up the claim.

Some precautions to take include not overpacking; labeling both the inside and outside of the bag with name and address; completely fill out baggage checks; pick up bags at destination as soon as possible and examine them before leaving the airport.

pay tribute to Montana, Germany, Scotland, Finland, England, Italy, Yugoslavia, Scandinavia, and all nations, on consecutive days, Aug. 4-12. Plenty of costumes, music, foods, and arts and crafts.

THE BLUEBERRY comes into its own July 18-22 at the National Blueberry Festival in South Haven. The shortage of fresh blueberries is over and a 50 percent crop increase is expected. Time to ready the canning supplies. For information, write National Blueberry Festival, P.O. Box 224, South Haven, Mich. 49090.

ANTIQUES AROUND at numerous festivals in Connecticut during July. The Riverton Country Antiques Festival is 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. July 13-15, Fairgrounds buildings, Riverton. Third Annual Outdoor Antiques Flea Market, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 14, Goodspeed Opera House grounds, East Haddam; 12th Annual Nathan Hale Antiques Festival, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 21, Hale Homestead, Coventry; Essex Antiques Show, July 26-29, Essex Town-Hall, Essex; Guilford Keesing Society's 19th Antiques Festival, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. July 28, Griswold House, Guilford.

For more information on other dealings in that state, or for a list of antique dealers there, write to Travel, Department of Commerce, 210 Washington St., Hartford, Conn. 06106; (toll-free) 800-243-1685.

from the mailbag

A REMINDER that the Frankenthuth Bavarian Festival is on this week, through Saturday. Along with the craft demonstrations, the singing and the dancing, there will be food aplenty at this 21st edition. For information, call 1-517-652-6106.

SLOVAK/CAPTIVE Friday festival at Hart Plaza, downtown Detroit, Friday-Sunday.

DETROIT TIGERS take on the Oakland A's Monday and Tuesday, the Seattle Mariners Wednesday and Thursday and the California Angels Friday-Sunday at Tiger Stadium.

FROM THE WEST comes word of many summer festivals. The Geographic Center Days Festival, in Rugby, N.D., will be June 30 through July 8. Events include a 10,000-meter marathon, Frisbee tournament, swimming and skateboard competitions, antique car show, ethnic food festival, and an international rugby tournament, but of course.

THE GREEN RIVER Rendezvous in Pinedale, Wyo., is July 7-8. Held annually, it is a time when residents there return to the days of fur traders, trappers, explorers, Indians and wagon trains.

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS, in Red Lodge, Mont., at the northeast entrance to Yellowstone Park,

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TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



Hospitality plus

Now, that's Italian

TORRE DEL LAGO, Italy — Anna Maria is part of the People Experience, a sturdy Italian woman of grace and beauty who served us lunch recently here in the Cafe Cecco.

Torre del Lago is a tiny village beside a lake, in the foothills of the Appennine Mountains near Pisa. It was the home of composer Giacomo Puccini, who created "La Boheme," "Tosca" and "Madame Butterfly" in the big old house on the square.

We have toured the house, admired the piano and taken pictures of the bronze statue in the square. Now we are seated at a red-checked table covered with a snow-white topcloth in a beamed room decorated with hunting accessories.

It is midday, the time Europeans eat their main meal. Like all Italian menus, this one is divided into separate sections for antipasto, pasta, fish, meat, vegetables, and dessert.

The Italian meal does not work up towards a huge main course then dwindling to dessert as does ours. Diners usually pick one dish from two or three of the lists, each medium-sized serving as important as the next.

Pasta includes spaghetti, lasagna and other such foods as well as soup and possibly rice. Spaghetti is an ample introductory course served in a soup bowl.

Our friend and guide ordered the specialty of the house from the antipasto list: Crostina de Cecco. Anna Maria placed a large bottle of white wine on the table.

I speak about six words of Italian, accompanied by a lot of non-verbal communication with hands and face. Anna Maria spoke no English, but her voice and face were welcoming enough to bridge international misunderstandings.

"Que recommande?" I asked, hoping it meant "What do you recommend?"

"Spaghetti con Volongio." "Pappardelli con carni." Spaghetti with shellfish? And pasta with meat?

So we began one of those international relationships that cannot really be translated because neither of us fully understood the other's words, although we knew well enough what we were trying to say.

She explained the crostina, a slightly sweetened dough fried and served with a special sauce.

I admired the wine, Valdadice Bianco from Trent.

She congratulated me on being brave enough to try a little Italian. I asked her about her family. She learned to say thank you in English. I took a picture and promised to send it. She brought us an Italian liqueur.

Later, on impulse, I went back and gave her a small brooch, of personal but no commercial value, as a memento of our brief friendship. We said goodbye, and will certainly never see one another again.

What kind of a travel experience is that? For me it is the best. When I sit in the sunset recalling memories, I'll not remember Puccini's house. I'll remember the people I met in nearby and faraway places, including Anna Maria.