

Thursday, March 12, 1981



# Order the saguaro with ranch dressing

travel log  
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contributing travel editor

## Cookin' vacations north on the range

Doris Scharfberg's story about horseback riding in Arizona, which is featured on this page, reminds me of another ranch experience, in what people have called the Texas of the North: Alberta, Canada.

Alberta joins the prairies to the Rocky Mountains, so its foothill country is perfect for raising cattle. Fur trading was at the beginning of its history, and oil is its current crop, but ranching has been important in Alberta for 100 years.

A growing number of ranches are both working ranches and guest ranches, especially in the country between Rocky Mountain House, where the fur trade began, and Drumheller, where a large number of dinosaur skeletons have been found.

WE ARRIVE at Rocky Mountain House on a modern highway, but the film by Parks Canada shows graphically how the voyagers and the fur traders had to move across this land centuries ago.

It was the fur traders who opened up all this western land by canoe in an effort to provide beaver skins for the European market.

There is not much left of this important fur-trading post now, but it is one of several forts in the area being excavated and restored.

Southwest, at Drumheller, we are taken well before the fur-trading era to the era of dinosaurs. This is the land that yields dinosaur bones, which can be seen in museums all over the world.

A beautifully restored dinosaur skeleton, the Edmontosaurus, is on permanent loan as the centerpiece of the Drumheller Dinosaur Museum. A few miles away, where the soil has been washed away to form dry spikes of land, called hoodoos, we look across Horseshoe Canyon to the Red River Badlands.

IN BETWEEN Rocky Mountain House and Drumheller, and in foothill country all around Alberta, are a growing number of small guest ranches for one, two or a dozen travelers.

We stopped at the T and L Ranch, owned by the Lynch family, but there are many such ranches here in dinosaur country.

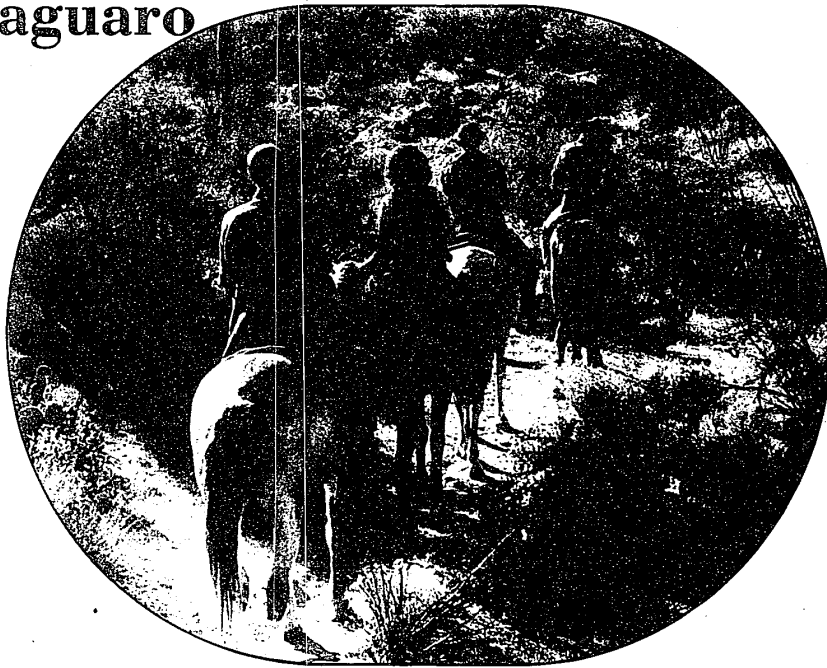
Another, Green's Farm, takes 10 guests at rates of \$200 a couple per week, including meals, entertainment, horseback riding and riverboating. The A&H Farm of Amos and Heather Neufeld of Elnora, offers all of the above as well as pack trips and hayrides.

George and Esther Vermillion run the Diamond 4 Guest Ranch 10 miles away, 800 acres for \$20 a day or \$125 a week.

The Lynch family houses guests in their own ranch house or adjacent cabin. They also provide camping space for people who want to stay overnight or by the week and either cook their own meals or eat with the family at the house.

ONE OF THE unusual features of a ranch vacation in this area is fossil hunting on the nearby hill. So far there is no law against removing small fossils from these unprotected areas, and it is easy to find them.

Travel Alberta offers a brochure called "Ranch Vacations in Alberta." Ranch vacations have become so popular they are offered by some travel agents as an air tour adventure package. Many of these ranches offer both summer and winter vacations.



Guests at the Tanque Verde Ranch ride out to a chuckwagon breakfast of hotcakes, sausage and biscuits.

Story and photos:  
DORIS SCHARFBERG

TUSCON, Ariz. — I was standing in the most unlikely international rendezvous on earth, a pungent corral on the edge of a cactus-filled desert, about to do something I never do — ride a horse.

The voices around me, giggling and joking, were Japanese, German, French, New York and probably mid-town Flint. We were guests at the Tanque Verde Ranch, one of Tucson's many posh and popular western resorts, about to ride out into the sage and saguaro for a chuckwagon breakfast.

"How did you happen to come here?" I asked a tiny Japanese woman who rode like a veteran.

"My husband is bird-watcher," she said.

"He found desert birds most interesting and once, while driving through, decided to come on vacations."

The Germans came because they loved horses, and it was so different.

"No scenery like this in the Rhineland," they said laughing.

"Besides, wait til you get to the breakfast! Worth coming 6,000 miles for."

THE AIR WAS clear as crystal. The landscape of saguaro cactus standing tall against a background of angular mountains reflecting morning sun was beautiful.

My unaccustomed bones survived the ride, and the breakfast — sausages, pancakes, biscuits and the general works — was supreme.

Although missing such events because of horse-ness would be too bad, you don't have to get into a saddle when you vacation in Tucson. The old-time ranches have evolved into glamour spas with swimming pools and tennis courts as standard equipment.

Skin care clinics and art classes are tucked into daily routines, along with trips to a dozen points of interest around Tucson.

The city spreads across the heart of southern Arizona's cactus country, a swift-growing urban of gleaming towers and low earth-hugging Spanish architecture. Constituting an inner city of its own, the University of Arizona is a 30,000-student complex with all the lively goings-on of a campus that size.

TUSCON MIXES the old with the new like crossed threads of the same cloth. The visitor with the untrained eye sometimes needs a little help sorting out authentic Tucson. Authentic-looking duplicates of old inns, and well-kept but ancient structures stand side by side.

When you are in front of the San Xavier Mission, however, there is no doubt. One of the finest examples of mission design in the United States, San Xavier is still in daily use after 200 years.

One gleaming white tower remains incomplete as a tribute to the worker who fell to his death during construction.

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson Mountain Park presides over a magnificent forest of saguaro, a tall cactus that doesn't sprout arms for the first 80 years of life, then assumes a humanistic silhouette. It is forbidden to cut one down or even move one without permission.

The sleek, imaginative museum has everything from wildcats to scorpions, and yes they're real.

Now switch back to doubt. Down the road from the museum is a make-believe Old Tucson, originally a movie set built for the filming of "Arizona."

The dusty streets and false-front saloons are still used by Hollywood and TV film makers. But now the riders in stage coaches are likely to be visiting Iowans.

REALITY STRIKES again in the person of Arizona artist Ted DeGrazia. DeGrazia sells more prints, plates and cards of his own work than any other person alive.

He hand-built his studio and museum to vaguely resemble the mines he worked while struggling to become an artist.

The University of Arizona has published huge volumes of his work, and DeGrazia's card "Los Ninos" was one of the most popular ever sold by UNICEF. On a lucky day, you might find him in his patio-garden or in the small chapel he built next door.

Colossal Cave, the Kitt Peak National Observatory, the Pima Air Museum (largest collection of vin-

tage aircraft in the West). The desert is blooming and so is Tucson.

You can get there by air (Frontier, for example, now has direct Detroit-Tucson flights), Amtrak, bus or highway. The favorite way, however, to get around and see the desert at its best is by horse. For that, a galaxy of resorts are ready to put you into a saddle.

TANQUE VERDE RANCH — High in the foothills, the Tanque borders the million-acre Coronado National Forest. It offers a textbook example of wide open spaces. Two heated pools, health club and classy dining room aside, horses are still the main attraction at the 130-year-old establishment with one of the largest guest stables in Arizona. Route 8, P.O. Box 66, Rincon Foothills, Tucson, Ariz. 85710.

WESTWARD LOOK — A short ride from downtown Tucson, the Westward boasts elegant rooms, balconies, paths, flowers and super scenery. The dining room is one of the best in the state with tailored waiters pulling flaming miracles out of tableside pans. They've got a nightclub, and Ma Nature's sunsets are spectacular. 245 E. Ina Road, Tucson 85704.

CANYON RANCH — This multi-million dollar vacation fitness resort, is part of a condominium community where overnight guests are welcome.

They'd rather you stay a week, however, so they can feed you a tailored-to-you diet (if you want), show you how to breathe properly (if you want), or they'll leave you strictly alone (if you want).

8600 E. Rockcliff Road, Tucson 85715.

BEAVER BULL RANCH — Here is where you can join wildlife artist Ray Harm on jumps over secluded mountain trails. Harm's paintings line the lobby. Along with invitations to use the heated pool, you can see the movies or have a snack brought to your private patio. Free pickup available at Tucson International Airport.

Route 18, Box 233, Tucson 85704.  
For more information: Tucson Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 27210, Tucson, Ariz. 85726.

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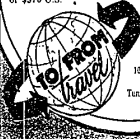
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