

LIFE AT A DUDE RANCH

By JUDITH BERNE

TUCSON, ARIZONA --Have you thought of spending your summer vacation at a ranch?

Even if you are not a rider, you can become one as you relax into the ways of the west. With the proper attire--jeans, shirt and cowboy boots and a few days on horseback--nobody could tell you from a genuine wrangler--as long as you go no faster than a walk!

Actually, most of the Arizona ranches close up for the summer because of the intense heat, but the same kind of life style can be found at the more northern ranches of Colorado, Wyoming and Nevada. These ranches are for "dudes" and the whole orientation is to introduce you to the western style of living in the nicest possible way.

They differ from "working" ranches, some of which accept guests but make fewer special provisions for them.

A typical day on a dude ranch begins with a large and early breakfast so that you are well nourished for a morning ride. The children ride at a different time than the adults; both receive full attentions of the wranglers, who are real professionals. Very few missteps can be made by you or your horse that does not come within their scrutiny.

A session or two in the corral usually precedes going out on the trail--exciting for the scenery as well as the actual riding.

As your stay progresses, you will have the option of going on the fast ride when the constant cry of the wrangler is "Let's lope along now." Loping is the western way of cantering. But if the most you want to do is a slow trot, you will have plenty of company on the slower rides.

After the ride, you are glad to head for the swimming pool where a few laps in the cooling water does a lot to take the dust out of your mouth and to relieve the soreness which just may have hit you as you got out of the saddle.

Lunch is often a buffet of cold cuts or a hot dog and hamburger barbecue served by the pool. Children and adults mingle together so that at the smaller ranches you may become one big and happy family.

A game of shuffleboard, horseshoes, ping pong or for your little ones, a dig in the sand might follow your repast and precede the afternoon ride. Again, the children ride an hour before the adults, giving mom, dad and an assorted grandma or two, time for a snooze before their turn.

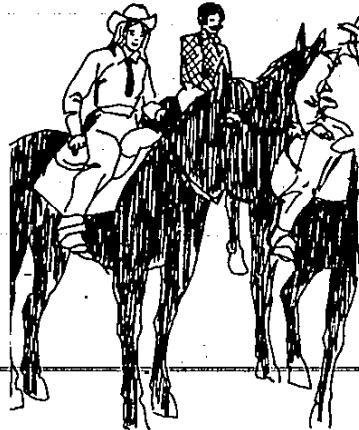
Plenty of free time before dinner which very often features a sizzling sirloin or prime ribs of beef with all the trimmings. The evening's entertainment is in keeping with the western environment --a square dance

one night, guitar-playing cowgirl the next, a rip roaring John Wayne movie another evening.

During the couple of free evenings a week, you might go miniature golfing, play cards or take the opportunity to do your laundry.

In general, people go to bed early--most have had an energetic day!

The routine is broken up a couple of times a week by a breakfast ride to a near-by canyon, or a luncheon ride to a not-so-nearby mountain. The younger children and non-riders drive by car to a scenic spot where the riders meet them some



time later. A complete breakfast of juice, pancakes, eggs, bacon, coffee and sweet rolls is fed to fifty or more hungry guests and wranglers in the middle of what has to be God's country.

It is not the kind of vacation for you, if all you want to do is lie in the sun or go nightclubbing. It is a great place to go with children. They have enough to do to keep them beautifully occupied and away from parents for part of the day.

Yet the sense of togetherness when the whole family participates in a ride to the mountains is something you can't duplicate by taking them to a movie or other non-participatory activity.

Ranches may vary in their names --Double U, T-Bar M, El Dorado, Tanke Verde. They vary somewhat in the activities they offer, the accommodations they provide and the prices they charge.

All are pretty nearly the same in the terms of the relaxing natural kind of atmosphere they provide where children can be children without having to adjust to the adult world; where adults can be themselves without having to dress up for other people or play roles they do not like; and where city folk like ourselves have a chance to explore the big, wide open west on horseback and perhaps get some of the feeling of what our country used to be and what it can still become.

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