



Rocking Z Ranch

UNITED STATES

This family owned **guest ranch**, nestled in the heart of "Horse Whisperer" country, has over 60 horses and specialises in Parelli **Natural Horsemanship**. The wide range of non-riding activities ensures this fun and friendly ranch offers great riding for all abilities. For the more experienced riders, get involved in the day-to-day tasks on the ranch or explore the wild surroundings on long-distance treks.

Natural Horsemanship	8 days / 6 days riding	From £2,280		Family holidays from 7 y.o	Open to non-riders
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Guest ranch holiday in Montana, USA



Try your hand at Western riding games, such as barrel racing



Natural horsemanship demonstration at Rocking Z Ranch

ITINERARY

Highlights

- Visit a small family owned guest ranch nestled in the grassy foothills of the Rocky Mountains
- Over 60 well mannered horses, all trained using Parelli Natural Horsemanship techniques
- Learn the Parelli skills to communicate with your horse
- Suitable for beginners to advanced riders and ideal for families
- Relaxed itinerary with 3 to 6 hours riding each day
- A wide range of non-riding activities available including clay shooting, fishing, hiking and wildlife watching
- Learn to work with cattle or try riding bareback - you will find there is something for everyone!
- Enjoy the spectacular scenery of the "Horse Whisperer" country, climb mountains and ride across a variety of terrain
- Possibility to visit a rodeo if you travel in June, July and August

Day 1 — 1: Wolf Creek - 3-6 hours riding

Rocking Z Ranch

Flights are not included in this package. You will be met at the airport and transferred to the ranch between 11:00 and 12:00pm. The drive takes about 30 minutes. Please note that you may need to arrive a day early and spend a night in Helena: please contact us so we can help you book flights and a hotel.

The first day is often spent bonding with your horse. Your horse will be assigned to you based on your riding ability and your personality.

Working with your horse from the ground, instructed by Ana and Maria (both qualified Parelli instructors), will allow you to start to feel at ease and prompt your horse to follow you and listen to your instructions. You may learn as much about yourself as the horse entrusted to you; for some people, it can be a pretty emotional day.

In the evening, you will all relax together and enjoy a home-cooked dinner. The meal will be the setting for the briefing for the following day. You will discuss what you would like to do, any weather constraints and what needs of the season are imposed upon the ranch at that time of year.

The ranchers are there to listen and are ready to adapt the programme to riders' wants, interests and riding level.

You plan your next day according to the weather forecast, seasonal needs and your wishes.

IMPORTANT: The below program is provided as a guide, it is by no means exhaustive but reflects all of the activities in which you are able to participate.

Day 2 — 2: Wolf Creek - 3-8 hours riding

 Rocking Z Ranch

After a hearty breakfast, you will head out to lead the horses from their paddock to the corral.

Your days on the ranch follow no set itinerary as the day's programme and day-to-day activities are decided dependent upon guests' preferences, riding ability, the weather and the necessary tasks needed to be performed on the ranch that day.

For example, you may decide today to work once more on the Parelli method under Ana's guidance. The Parelli method that works on the principle that "Horsemanship can be obtained naturally through communication, understanding and psychology, versus mechanics, fear and intimidation."

You may spend the morning learning the 7 Games, first on foot, then from the saddle and learn how to form a lasting bond with your horse. You may finish your morning by riding out bareback with your horse using only a simple rope halter to lead with.

In the afternoon, you may head out on horseback in a small group to discover the beautiful green surrounding the ranch. The horizon is seemingly infinite and the sky overwhelmingly immense. No single file, no imposed pace, here riding is something to be enjoyed. You will ride through narrow gullies, ford streams and break into a gallop where the terrain allows. For the more daredevil in the group, there will be the possibility of riding bareback with only the rope or side pull halter and also a chance to jump over the large natural obstacles found on the property.

In the early evening, you will lead the horses to the stable and return to the ranch to have dinner all together. You will maybe have the chance to hear Anna and Maria playing some music or Zach telling you about the history of the area - the expeditions of Lewis and Clark, or history of Chief Joseph and the surrender of the Nez Perce.

Day 3 — 3: Wolf Creek - 3-8 hours riding

 Rocking Z Ranch

If you are an early-riser and your riding level allows, you will be able to join the wranglers as they head out to herd the horses. Depending on how far out the herd has spread, this may mean some fantastic gallops through the grass-covered rolling hills to bring them all together and a good ride leading them back to the ranch.

In the morning, you may choose to take your first foray into the world of American horseback games: barrel racing, pole bending... You need to be precise and fast - you will get to experience the swift acceleration of the compact quarter horse.


After lunch, maybe expand your ranch skills by learning how to handle a lasso by training on a stationary mannequin. It's not as easy as cowboys make it look, but with the wranglers' instruction and a bit of practice you should pick it up quite quickly.

For any non-riders on the ranch, or maybe if you just fancy taking a break from riding, there are other activities available:

- Walks around the property
- Fly-fishing in the Blackfoot River, subject of Norman Maclean book and film with Brad Pitt, 'A River runs through it'
- Wild swimming
- Archery and an introduction to trap shooting
- Helping out with the agricultural tasks around the ranch
- Bird watching (the region being home to over 250 species of bird)
- Boat trips out on the Missouri

In the evening, you may choose to relax in the outdoor Jacuzzi then eat in the ranch's saloon, playing pool and drinking a cold beer!

Day 4 — 4: Wolf Creek - 3-8 hours riding


 Rocking Z Ranch

After a mighty breakfast, today you may choose to pack up some sandwiches, coral and tack your horse to head out on a long trek. The ranch is situated in a stunning natural setting: dense woods, open stretches of grassland and wild, imposing mountains. The possible trail routes are endless and you can cover up to 40kms in a day (suggested only for experienced riders). Horses and riders will be trailered to the starting point of your ride. The terrain often allows for long canters and gallops and a picnic with a breath-taking view is on the cards at midday!

In the evening, you'll return to the ranch for dinner and a well-deserved rest.

For less experienced riders, the team can organise a morning lesson to help go over techniques - either on foot or from the saddle. The afternoon would then be a short ride along the beautiful trails closer to the ranch.

Day 5 — 5: Wolf Creek - 3-8 hours riding

 Rocking Z Ranch


A day for chaps, as you might choose to ride out with the cowboys and start working with the cattle.

You will start in the yard being taught how to manoeuvre your horse, manage the cattle and the rules that will keep you safe as you work. You will then need to ride out as a team to coordinate the assembly of the herds of cows and drive them back to the corral.

After a much needed pause for lunch, the wranglers will arrange exercises for you to hone your ranching skills: team penning, team sorting and, for the more confident, lassoing.

In July and August, the surrounding towns regularly hold rodeos on Fridays and Saturdays. The Wirths are more than happy to take you to the rodeo to experience a typical American family outing (tickets and food off the ranch are at an extra charge).

Day 6 — 6: Wolf Creek - 3-8 hours riding

 Rocking Z Ranch

For your last day on the ranch, let the team know what you want to do. Work with the cattle, take another long ride around a different part of the ranch's property or work on your technique in the yard.

You will enjoy a final dinner around the Wirth family table and head back to your lodge for the night.

Day 7 — 7: Wolf Creek - Helena - No riding

After saying your goodbyes to the Wirth family, you will be transferred to the airport (a 30 minute journey) - make sure to book your return flight after 10:30 am.

There is the possibility to rent a car to extend your trip and spend some time in Yellowstone National Park, only a three-hour drive from Helena.

Day 8 — 8 - No riding

Arrival into the UK.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
04/02/2024	11/02/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
11/02/2024	18/02/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
18/02/2024	25/02/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
25/02/2024	03/03/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure

03/03/2024	10/03/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
10/03/2024	17/03/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
17/03/2024	24/03/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
24/03/2024	31/03/2024	£2,280	Guaranteed departure
31/03/2024	07/04/2024	£2,470	Guaranteed departure
07/04/2024	14/04/2024	£2,470	Guaranteed departure
14/04/2024	21/04/2024	£2,470	Guaranteed departure
21/04/2024	28/04/2024	£2,470	Guaranteed departure
28/04/2024	05/05/2024	£2,590	Guaranteed departure
05/05/2024	12/05/2024	£2,590	Guaranteed departure
12/05/2024	19/05/2024	£2,590	Guaranteed departure
19/05/2024	26/05/2024	£2,590	Guaranteed departure
26/05/2024	02/06/2024	£2,590	Guaranteed departure
02/06/2024	09/06/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
09/06/2024	16/06/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
16/06/2024	23/06/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
23/06/2024	30/06/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
30/06/2024	07/07/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
07/07/2024	14/07/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
14/07/2024	21/07/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
21/07/2024	28/07/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
28/07/2024	04/08/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
04/08/2024	11/08/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
11/08/2024	18/08/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
18/08/2024	25/08/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
25/08/2024	01/09/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
01/09/2024	08/09/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
08/09/2024	15/09/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
15/09/2024	22/09/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
22/09/2024	29/09/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure
29/09/2024	06/10/2024	£2,780	Guaranteed departure

Price details

- Flights to your destination (international/domestic) are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates.

- Dates are flexible and you can arrive/depart on any day and stay for as long as you like with discounts for longer stays. This holiday will confirm for one person and all departures are guaranteed. We recommend a stay of 6 nights, but it is possible to stay for as little as 3 nights and as many as 10

nights (but Saturday is a rest day with no activities). Please contact us for a personalised quote over your preferred dates.

- If you arrive on the Sunday morning at 11:00 your transfer from Helena airport is included. If your arrival time is later, the private transfers (return trip Helena airport/hotel) will cost approx. \$100 per vehicle. Transfers to Great Falls can also be arranged at a cost of \$200 per vehicle (return).

- We recommend arriving into Helena a day earlier and staying the night in a comfortable hotel to recover from any jet-lag that you may experience from the long haul flight. This way, you will be able to jump right in for your first day on the ranch. If this option is of interest, we would be happy to organise your hotel in Helena - just let us know!

- Free for children under 3 years old. 10% Discount for children from 3 to 12 years old.

- If you sign up to the ride as a solo rider and there are no other riders likely to share your room, you will be charged a single room supplement of approx. 20%. There are two single rooms that come at no extra charge, allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

- Important: Tips are compulsory in the USA and are about 18% of the cost of your stay. These gratuities are NOT included in the above price and are payable locally.

- An electronic travel authorisation (ESTA) is required to enter the USA. It is your responsibility to organise this. Please visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> and contact us if you need help.

- There is a maximum rider weight of 95kg/ 14st 13lbs/ 209 lbs

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

Supervised by one of the qualified Parelli instructors

INLAND TRANSPORTS

Airport transfers Helena airport/hotel if arriving at 11am

ACCOMMODATION

Double/triple room at the ranch with private bathroom and small fireplace

MEALS

Full board from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 8. Wine and beer included in reasonable amounts.

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extra

TRANSPORTS

International flights bookable on request

Visa fees (ESTA) which must be arranged in advance

EXTRA

18% gratuities for the staff on the selling price

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurances are not included. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend to take out an insurance policy as soon as your travel is booked in case of cancellation.

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplementary charge

An additional night at the beginning of the trip in Helena

EXTRA

Additional trips and activities in the surrounding area

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

There is a variety of horses at Rocking Z, mainly Quarter Horses, but also Appaloosas, Paints, Mustangs, Arabians, Welsh and Connemara crosses, a Shetland and 2 Belgians to choose from. All are much loved and most are trained on the ranch using Parelli Natural Horsemanship techniques.

There is a horse for everyone at the Rocking Z but most horses are well-behaved and very responsive. They can be ridden individually or as part of a group and trust their riders. They love human contact and will happily walk towards you in the paddock, asking for an ear scratch!

Guide & local team

The Wirth family have been the owners of the ranch for several years now. Zach and Patty manage the ranch while their 2 daughters, Anna and Maria, are in charge of all things horse related. They buy, raise and train their horses with passion and a gentle hand. The Wirth family has been the owners of the ranch for several years now. Zach and Patty manage the ranch while their 2 daughters, Anna and Maria, are in charge of all things horse related. They buy, raise and train their horses with passion and a gentle hand, and they like nothing more than to share their knowledge and know-how with their guests.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

Open to riders of all abilities from beginners through to experienced riders and also non-riding guests. The itinerary is very flexible and you can ride as much or as little as you want. Each rider will be matched with a horse of their riding level. The horses are very easy to ride and well-educated.

You must be comfortable at all paces to join the long rides (half day and full day).

Children of all ages are welcome. Children six and over will spend much of the day learning to ride and playing games on their horses. If their riding ability is good, children will be allowed to join some adult rides.

There is a maximum rider weight of 95kg/ 14st 13lbs/ 209 lbs

PACE

The pace of the ride varies depending on the terrain and your level of experience. There will be work in hand, and trails are done at a walk, trot and canter, with some gallops where the terrain allows. The riding is very flexible and at your own pace: riders are trusted with their horses and you can canter ahead while others may want to remain at a walk or at a trot. There is no nose-to-tail riding unless the terrain commands it.

Riding in a western saddle with the possibility of bareback and in a halter are possible.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be encouraged to form as strong a bond with your horse as possible during your stay. This will include tacking, untacking, feeding and caring for your mount. The wranglers, all level 2 trained in the Pat Parelli method, will be there to help you and teach you the ranch's methods.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

In general, no specific experience or level of fitness is required for a stay at Rocking Z ranch. However, if you wish to participate in the day-long treks then you need to have a good level of fitness and be at ease at all three paces outdoors.

The most important requirement is that you love horses, appreciate being outdoors and are interested in learning and getting involved in life on the ranch!

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Provided are:

- Saddlebags
- Western saddles and bridles (snaffle bits)
- Ethological working aids (lunges, sticks)

* We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

There are eight spacious ensuite guest rooms, each with a natural-gas fireplace for the cool evenings. There are rooms of varying sizes with king, queen or twin beds. A single room is available on a first come, first served basis.

There is no pool but a large jacuzzi is open to all guests.

Everyone eats together with the family and enjoys great home ranch cooking!

MEALS

Meals on the ranch are always hearty and consist of fresh and local vegetables and meat: beef, pork, chicken etc. Dessert is usually tarts or cakes. For lunch you will have fajitas, lasagna, hotdogs and potatoes or if you are out for a long ride, you will have a picnic lunch carried in your saddlebags.

Fresh fruit is available to you all day and the bread is all home made.

Water, beer on tap and wine are available at evening meals. All other alcoholic drinks are not included in the price of your trip.

CLIMATE

The climate in Helena is typically continental, with hot summers and cold winters.

May and June are mild, with temperatures around 20-25°C during the day and 0-5°C on the coldest nights. The most rainfall is likely to fall in spring. The weather can go through all seasons in a week so you should be prepared to pack a little of everything.

July and August are the hottest months with temperatures sometimes reaching 30°C. The evenings are often around 10-15°C. It is rather dry and sunny weather but thunderstorms should not be ruled out.

Between September and October, the temperature gets progressively cooler to around 15-20°C with cold evenings and nights. There can be some pretty cold spells and snow is a possibility.

Some years the fall and winter may be bright and crisp and other years the snow may start to fall from October.

The weather in winter is impossible to accurately predict. It can range from very cold to quite temperate, and it can go from one to the other in 24 hours very easily.

TIPS

Tipping is an institution in the United States. In all restaurants - except certain snack bars with self-service -, it is expected that you leave around a 0 - 12% tip. Certain tourist hotspots will also add a service charge.

It's also considered 'good manners' to leave a \$1 to 2 supplementary tip to taxi drivers.

Regarding tips made to the team at the ranch, we recommend giving these to Patty or Zach who will then share it out amongst the rest of the team. A 15% tip is expected.

PACKING LIST

Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit.
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana

Upper body

- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun
- T-shirts

- Fleece, jumper or jacket - the evenings can be cold
- Waterproof jacket - the rains can be difficult to foresee and it's better to be prepared.
- Casual clothes for the evening

Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Shorts
- Casual clothes for the evening

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps to protect against thorns. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Sandals, flip-flops or trainers
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun whilst riding

Nightwear

Other useful items

- Swimsuit - for plunge pools
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Mosquito repellent
- Insect bite relief cream
- Chapstick

Our Recommendations

- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- Carry a copy of your passport and insurance details with you.
- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#) .