

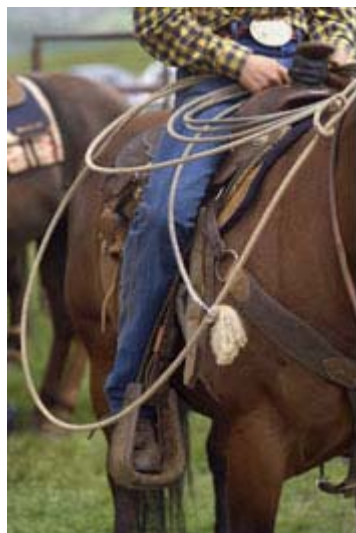


HOME & AWAY

Git Along

Saddle up for authentic ranch-hand experiences across Ohio.

By John Wisse



There's no need to travel outside Ohio if you're looking to enjoy an authentic Western dude ranch experience. Simply get in your car or truck and giddy-up along the road to southeast Ohio, where a weekend of saddling your horse, herding cattle, roping and eating plenty of good grub awaits you.

While Ohio has many bridle trails, riding stables, horsemen's camps and other guest homes that cater to horse lovers, I could find only two locations that qualify as true single-day, overnight and weeklong dude ranch experiences. The real secret, which I am about to share, is that an Ohio dude ranch experience is affordable, well-suited to family activities, and welcome to both novices and experienced riders. What's best, these experiences can be enjoyed close to home and offer a good feel of ranch life in the West.

KD Guest Ranch, Adamsville, Ohio

This small, new guest ranch is owned and operated by Dave and Kari Burkey. It is located off of Ohio Route 93, approximately 13

miles east of Zanesville and easily accessed from Interstate 70.

Guest ranch operations began last summer and include newly constructed dining and lodging facilities derived from the same designs used on Western ranch resorts. The authenticity of the building designs and interior decor make visitors feel like they are on location in Colorado, Utah, Montana or Wyoming.

Two duplex cabins can accommodate 18 overnight ranch guests. In the main dining lodge, home-cooked meals are served in a family-style setting, and no one leaves a table hungry or thirsty. A library, gift shop, saloon, game room and hot tub are joined with this year's addition of conference rooms and massage and exercise spaces.

Guests begin their relationship with KD's majestic, gentle steeds with a general orientation in the round pen situated directly below the dining hall. This helps provide insight on how KD's horses are trained, how they are to be equipped with saddles and other riding gear, and how they respond to basic commands. Next it's back to the stables where you will groom and saddle up your mount under the supervision of ranch hands.

An important note for guests is that they may not bring their own horses to the KD Ranch. Guests who are riding horses may not weigh more than 225 pounds and must be at least 7 years old to ride.

Trail rides begin the first day of activities and include checking the general condition and location of cattle, riding fence lines and enjoying the beautiful scenery of the rolling, forested hills of southeast Ohio.

During cattle drives, guests are expected to help move cattle from one location to another on the ranch. It is



slow-paced and easy for beginning riders, and families love the activity as their own unique experience in Ohio's great outdoors. Team penning is an exciting activity that involves some basic rider skills and concentration. A timed rodeo game is often played in the outdoor arena, too, where guests work in pairs to sort three calves from a cattle herd and escort them into a small holding pen.



There is much to see and do at the KD Ranch, and nearby attractions offer an additional variety of activities to enjoy. Prime season rates are in effect June through Labor Day. All-inclusive ranch stays are \$1,250 per adult for a six-day/six-night package and \$825 per adult for a four-day/four-night package. Rates for children age 7 to 17 are \$900 for the full six-day/six-night package and \$600 for the four-day/four-night package. Rates for children age 3 to 6 are \$250 for the six-day/six-night stay and \$165 for the four-day/four-night stay. Pricing includes all meals, lodging, horse rental and on-site activities. Fees do not include applicable taxes and gratuities. The Labor Day through October and mid-April to Memorial Day rates are priced lower.

Single-day rates are \$180 for adults and \$135 for children prior to and after the peak summer months. Special group rates, conference and custom packages also are offered. For more information on staying at the KD Guest Ranch, call (740) 796-0099 or (740) 252-6456 or visit www.kdguestranch.com.

Smoke Rise Ranch, Glouster, Ohio

A second authentic dude ranch is located on 2,000 acres of private land off of Ohio Route 78 near Murray City and Burr Oak State Park in Morgan County. An additional 30,000 acres of state lands are located adjacent to the Smoke Rise Ranch. Directly adapted by the Semingson family from its former ranch operations in Montana and North Dakota, the Smoke Rise Ranch is one where you play and work hard.

Smoke Rise Ranch, started in the early 1990s, reflects a working ranching operation and generally requires something more than first-time riding to really enjoy the full experience. That being said, a visit here can be rewarding and safely enjoyed at a slower pace by new riders with little trail riding experience.

Smoke Rise Ranch lets you become involved in the faster-pace action of team penning, cow cutting, and searching for and escorting a rather tame long-haired ranch bull. The outfit of Semingson family members, ranch hands and friends also allows guests to enjoy a pace of leisure somewhat removed from the actual excitement of cutting cattle and driving them out of a tight pen, along a narrow chute and into a holding area.



The resident herd of about 25 horses allows guests to be saddled to a diversity of steeds, though ranch guests may bring their own horses and equipment. The sometimes unspoken rule on this ranch is to pet your horse often and tip your wrangler at the end of your stay. As for the livestock you'll be rounding up and herding across the scenic hills of southeast Ohio, there are plenty of Angus cattle and Texas Longhorn steers.

Two campgrounds offer more than 80 horsemen's camp sites. Six rustic bunkhouse-style cabins that each accommodate up to six people are available, as well as the Hewitt ranch house, which rents by the week or weekend and can comfortably sleep up to 12 people. Not to rough it too much, Smoke Rise additionally features a heated swimming pool and hot tub.

Guests have the opportunity to learn and improve horsemanship skills, and special events such as competitions, clinics, event weekends, hay rides, pool parties, outdoor barbeques, team penning and more are offered throughout the year.

Daily fees for one adult staying one to three days are \$245; the fee for a second adult is \$175. Stays of four to six days are priced daily at \$195 per adult. Rates for children age 6 to 14 are \$185 daily for a stay of one to three days and \$175 daily for stays of four to six days.

Additional information about Smoke Rise Ranch fees, amenities, activities and event schedules are available by calling (800) 292-1732 or at www.smokeriseranch.com. For travel planning information, visit AAA.com/travel.

On Your Own

The Buckeye State is blessed with hundreds of miles of scenic bridle trails on public lands where you may bring your own horse, ride for a day or more, and secure your own lodging. In some cases, you can locate an affordable bed-and-breakfast or choose to stay overnight at a nearby state park lodge, such as those at Shawnee, Salt Fork and Mohican state parks. For those who want to rough it a little more like the wranglers and cowboys of a century ago, Ohio's state forests offer overnight horsemen's camps.

For more information on state park and state forest bridle trails and lodging opportunities, visit the Ohio Department of Natural Resources online at www.ohiodnr.com. More than 300 miles of bridle trails also can be used for a fee in Ohio's portion of the Wayne National Forest. More information can be found online at www.fs.fed.us/r9/wayne/rec.html.

Metropark systems also offer some limited, day-use-only bridle trails. Horseback riding opportunities can be enjoyed in the Hamilton County Parks District, www.hamiltoncountyparks.org; the Cleveland Metro Parks system, www.clemetparks.com; the Five Rivers Metro Parks in the Dayton area, www.metroparks.org; and the Columbus Metro Parks, www.metroparks.net.

Perhaps the best Web site and organization where you can find information on recreational horseback riding is the Ohio Horsemen's Council at www.ohiohorsemenscouncil.com. This nonprofit organization was formed in 1972 and serves to inform, educate and provide social opportunities for equine enthusiasts. The Council claims Ohio offers more miles of bridle trails than the combined total found in all of its adjacent states.

And remember, making rider safety education a first priority helps to ensure riding continues to be a safe and enjoyable activity for all participants.

For related stories, see:

[Home on the North Dakota Range](#)

[Family Cowboy Vacation](#)

[Country Adventures](#)

[The Road Back](#)



Mohican State Park
Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

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