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USA Ranch Volunteers

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: USA Ranch Volunteers **Trip Code:** USRV **Duration:** From 20 days

Trip Highlights

- Riding a horse through incredible scenery and wide-open sagebrush valleys, along streams and into the mountains.
- Being part of a real working ranch – learning to lasso, fix a fence, pitch hay, gather cows on horseback and watching farriers at work.
- Camping overnight, seeing amazing wildlife – deer, antelope, and elk – and hearing coyotes sing every night.
- Taking an evening horseback ride after dinner while the moon is rising and the sun is going down – you really will ride into the sunset!
- Exploring Yellowstone country and canyons, geysers and waterfalls (and seeing herds of buffalo) during a weekend off the ranch.

Overview

Experience life to the full volunteering on a real working ranch in the American Rocky Mountain West. During this unique three week volunteer project, you will bond with a horse that is matched to your experience and abilities, ride through incredible scenery and wide-open spaces straight out of the big screen.

You will also learn to be a real ranch hand with other volunteers - fix fences, pitch hay, gather cows, wrangle horses and be part of life on a ranch where every day is an adventure. There will be plenty of time to relax around the campfire, enjoy home-cooked meals in a spacious Western dining room, view wildlife and explore the gorgeous Yellowstone country.

Destination Info

The USA is a melting pot of cultures all thrown together 200 odd years ago by the mass immigration to the ‘New World’ by pretty much everyone - Europeans, Asians, South Americans and so on.

Wyoming, known as the “Cowboy State”, is famous for its northwestern corner, which is home to two of the USA’s most magnificent national parks: geyser-packed Yellowstone and the majestic Grand Tetons. Towns, such as Jackson and Lander, are ideal bases for hiking, camping, climbing and skiing adventures in the region. There is so much to do in this beautiful state, especially volunteering on an authentic American ranch.

Itinerary

You will be based on the working ranch for the duration of your trip. You will be involved in hands-on activities including participation in chores, trail riding, horse wrangling, cattle gathering, branding and cattle drives. You will be carefully matched with a horse based on your riding experience and your goals for your 3-week project. The project will be tailored to your riding ability and interests as often as possible.

Volunteer tasks and activities may include:

- Learning how a working ranch is run by getting involved in daily ranch chores
- Looking after the horses and equipment - feeding, watering and cleaning
- Cattle work such as checking the health of the herd, moving cattle when needed (on horseback), and fixing fences
- Short trail rides
- Long trail rides with lunch and overnight camping for 2/3 day rides
- Wrangling between 40 and 80 head of horses
- Barrel racing
- Team-penning (cattle work)
- Basic roping lessons (on the ground)

The ranch occasionally has one day sessions for groups of children (under 12) to teach them about horses. Volunteers are welcome to get involved in these sessions when they occur as the kids love to meet the people with the funny accents!

You will have the amazing opportunity to ride and bond with your horse each day on the ranch. In your free time you may be able to visit local attractions including Yellowstone National Park, hot springs, historical centres, and rodeos. During your 3-week placement you will truly get to experience the Western lifestyle and country from the back of a horse.

6.30am Wranglers bring in the horses
7am Morning feeding
7.30am Breakfast
8am Horse assignment, grooming and tacking
8.30-9am Morning riding commences (arena/trail ride/all day ride/specialist activity)
12.30-1pm Lunch begins
1-30pm to 2.30pm One hour rest time if schedule allows
2.30- 3pm Afternoon activity - i.e. re-tacking horses for riding
6.30-7pm Supper begins
8pm Evening walk/games/down-time until bed time

Accommodation

Your accommodation will be a 12 x 12' fully-carpeted log cabin, with full electricity, nightstand and lamp, in Western style, with old-fashioned curtains in each of the four windows. Each cabin is fully heated and has an electric thermostat and a ceiling fan attached to the overhead light. All of the cabins have shaded front porches with chairs, old-style horse-shoe hooks mounted on exterior walls for hanging and drying outdoor gear and clothing, and charming old-time cowboy porch lights. There are no bathrooms or running water in the cabins, these are located in a separate building.

Close to the guest cabins is the Hub, which has a full professional kitchen, spacious dining room with heavy log tables and benches for family-style dining with a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. There is a specially-designated area just for interns and guests with two big comfy couches for reading and relaxing, a CD player/radio, and a telephone. There are lots of board games, cards, books, a piano keyboard, guitar and banjo. There is no television on the ranch, but occasionally, movies may be watched on one of the ranch laptops.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

To get the most out of your experience at the lodge and it's 'back to basics' approach, we do not recommend using the internet whilst you're here. There is limited access to the Internet available on the ranch, however, because it is located in the ranch office and used primarily by the ranch owners you will only be able to use it for a limited amount of time each week.

Telephone

We recommend purchasing a phone card in the local towns before using the telephone at the ranch, as long distances calls can rack up quite a bill! On site staff may request a deposit before you use the phone for long distances calls if you do not have a phone card.

Please note that there is no cell/mobile phone reception at the Ranch.

The phone code for the USA is 00 1. To dial America from the UK dial 00 1 (3 digit area code) 7-digit number. To place an outgoing, direct-dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK, followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap Experience dial +44 1892 516164.

Laundry

There are laundry facilities onsite. There is no charge for this service. However make sure you buy washing powder on your weekly shop.

Electricity

There are electrical outlets in your cabin and in the Hub that you will be able to use to charge your camera and so on.

Meals

There is an open kitchen, plenty of snacks and three full meals a day.

What's Included

- Airport Transfer
- Orientation on arrival
- All Accommodation
- All Meals
- Instruction by ranch staff
- Tack
- Use of the horses
- Support and assistance from the coordinator
- Buddy list
- Emergency 24 hour support number

What's Not Included

- Flights
- Travel Insurance - must cover horseback riding
- Email or phone charges
- Any excursions not in itinerary

Is This Trip For You?

You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. However, you will still have the full support of your in-country team and those at the project. If you are looking for a group volunteering experience we have plenty of options for you to consider.

What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore, you may not need all of the listed items on your travels nor is it exhaustive.

Personal Admin

- Documents
- Passport
- Driving Licence
- NHS card or a National Insurance card or proof of entitlement to your National Health Service
- Insurance Policy document or card
- Credit Card, for emergencies and booking internal flights

General

- Journal or diary
- Towel
- Toiletries
- Alarm Clock
- Torch
- Sleeping bag
- Pillow (you will *not* be supplied with one at the lodge)
- Hand wash for clothes
- Books/games for entertainment
- Camera
- Ipod/CD walkman/speakers/headphones

Clothing

- Jacket/Coat/Jumper for cool evenings
- Riding Helmet*
- Riding Boots without cleats (no big toed, cleated hiking boots)

- Trousers for riding (jeans or jodhpurs)
- Head to toe rain gear (no ponchos)
- Casual clothes including lightweight shoes for indoors and walking shoes for non-riding activities
- Comfortable but sturdy boots for outside work
- Sunglasses
- Scarf or bandanna (to protect the neck from cold/sun)
- Wide brimmed hat to shade you from the sun
- Swimsuit (for the visit to the Hot Springs)
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Medical Kit

- Medication
- High factor sun cream and lip balm for sun protection
- First Aid Kit
- Insect Repellent

Please note: It is a good idea for you to pack a change of clothes in your hand luggage in case your main luggage gets lost in transit.

We ask volunteers to wear modest clothing appropriate for a ranch environment and to a place that caters to families and other guests. That generally means Western jeans, Western shirts with sleeves, not midriff shirts or low-cut shirts or jeans. Besides presenting a Western appearance, it prevents sunburn and mosquito bites. You will be taken to town soon after your arrival and given a chance to purchase cowboy hats and other authentic Western wear, as well as additional international phone cards.

* Please bring your own riding helmet to the Ranch. We strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet at all times whilst riding. A bike helmet is *not* suitable.

Minimum Age

Minimum 18 years, maximum decided on potential participants' health. Please note that the age range of volunteers at the ranch may differ, so please be prepared to work alongside other volunteers of different age ranges.

Minimum Numbers

There are no minimum numbers on the trip.

Please note: you may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us

Flights

Your flight to Wyoming should arrive at Cody Wyoming Airport on the evening of your programme start date (always a Sunday), and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date (always a Friday).

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day.

Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your Online account, or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

FAQs

1. **Is previous horse riding experience essential to join the programme?**
   No previous experience is necessary as the Ranch offers instruction. Rides are tailored to all levels of horsemanship experience and disciplines of riders. Riders are matched to appropriate horses for their abilities, so the beginners are comfortable and the advanced not held back. A unique feature of our programme is that riders also have the option to stay with one horse or learn from the experience of riding several horses during their stay.

2. **Are riding helmets provided?**
   Please bring your own riding helmet to the Ranch. We strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet at all times whilst riding.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

The currency in the US is the US Dollar (USD, symbol; $), which is divided into 100 Cents. Coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Cents (¢) and the 1 Dollar coin. Notes come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Dollars, though the $2 note is rarely used.

No other currency is accepted but most major credit cards are universally accepted, especially Visa or MasterCard, and may even be required for larger purchases. ATMs are available almost everywhere and will charge a small fee for withdrawing cash using a credit card or international card, unless your card belongs to a worldwide network such as Cirrus or Exchange.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 11.16 $

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 3.21 $
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 1.48 $
Water (0.33 litre bottle) 1.27 $

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

Passports and Visas

You should ensure that you have a full passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information provided below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

For stays of up to 90 days citizens of Australia, New Zealand and most European countries will need to apply for an ESTA visa before they go. The ESTA visa can be applied for online for a small fee and must be used within two years of issue.

For working holidays applicants will usually need to hold an ESTA visa and a working visa, the type of visa required will depend on the nature of your work, your nationality and the length of your stay; you will also usually need some form of sponsorship from an employer in the USA.

For the most up to date information on passports, visa requirements and working in the USA, please visit http://www.visabureau.com/america/default.aspx

Cultural Considerations

A global culture and tradition is virtually non-existent in the USA because of the vast mixture of backgrounds that its original immigrant education came from. This is particularly reflected in the number of China Towns, Irish Districts, Jewish districts and so on that are in virtually every city across North America, as well as the fact that several states have Spanish and French as official state languages alongside English.

The American people are similar to Europeans in terms of what does and doesn't offend them. Although sometimes seen as loud and crass when outside their native country, you may find that Americans in America are less overpowering than you might expect. Here are a few ways to avoid offending your hosts:

- It is best to avoid talking about religion – faith is seen as being entirely personal to many Americans, although you are likely to come across people belonging to religions that have the intention of trying to convert you. Whichever of these you come across, they will not be used to having their beliefs challenged and may become offended easily.
- Smoking in public is becoming restricted more and more – keep an eye out for signs.
- Americans tend to have a relaxed social attitude and you may find that people (even shop assistants and waiters) are really interested in talking to you, especially about your country of origin. This is seen to be polite so engage them in casual conversation.
- In such conversation you may find that the person you are talking to has little knowledge of life outside the US (this is by no means the majority of people) and may refer to stereotypes – if you feel that you need to correct their views, do it politely and they will be gracious.
- US residents feel a strong connection to their 'land of origin' even if their family has lived in America for 200 odd years and once had an Irish relative!
- Terrorism is still very much a topic that must be approached with utmost respect. Talking about war should also be approached with caution - the American public are very patriotic about their troops.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in the USA. The legal age of alcohol consumption in the US is 21. However, please respect other participants. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact on your volunteer work during the week. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into the USA. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, the USA has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including "soft" drugs like marijuana, are ILLEGAL. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

Tipping

In a restaurant or taxi you should tip 15- 20% of the bill total, as no service charge will be added on. Tipping is widely practiced due to the low wages that the workers in such professions receive.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

As in most countries there are people who try to take advantage of tourists. The following advice is intended to help you stay safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you and in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your bag without your permission.

- Don't carry excess amounts of cash
- Wherever possible, walk around in groups, especially after dark, and avoid taking short cuts
- Do not pick up hitch hikers if you are driving and do not hitch hike yourself
- When you are out do not leave your drinks unattended, as there have been reports of drinks being spiked

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: www.fco.gov.uk
USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if you card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Language Guide

Here are some choice American phrases to get you started!

Pants - *Trousers*

Restroom/washroom - *Toilets*
Sidewalk - *Pavement*
Subway - *Underground*
Laundromat - *Laundrette*
Band-aid - *Plaster*
Soccer - *Football*
Football - *American Football*
Fanny Pack - *Bum bag*
Philly Cheese Steak - *A long sandwich made with thin slices of steak and melted cheese*
Twinkie - *A little golden sponge cake with a cream filling*
Candy - *Chocolate/sweets*

Americans tend to call certain things by their brand names, for example tissues are 'Kleenex' and so on.

Food & Drink

Currently the USA is famed for its love of the quick and easy fast food- burgers, pizza, fries and so on. However, there is so much choice out there, budget and otherwise- get out and sample it! You will be able to get any ethnicity food you could possibly imagine but if you want something properly American try out some steak, ribs, seafood in

the coastal areas (especially Florida and California). Try some Cajun food (spot the European influence!) or something Mexican both options are delicious.

It is really important that you let us know before you depart if you are a vegetarian or have any other dietary requirements.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country.

To view a list of the public holidays for the USA, please see the link below:
www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/

Weather

The climate in the USA is relatively temperate though specific weather conditions can vary greatly depending on where you are; this country is pretty huge! As a general rule the further south you go, the hotter it gets, while the north and areas far from the coast experience the most extreme weather. California and the east coast are warm and balmy for most of the year while northern areas such as New York experience 4 definable seasons.

Hurricanes and tornadoes are more common in south-eastern areas and occur during excessive warm weather on a sporadic basis. The USA is the only country in the world to cover all of the six climactic zones, ranging from tropical to polar, which means that a trip here will be an adventure in more ways than one!

Time

The USA has four time zones (not including Hawaii and Alaska) all of which are behind the Greenwich Mean Time. They are:

- Eastern time; five hours behind GMT (New York)
- Central time; six hours behind GMT (Chicago, Texas)
- Mountain time; seven hours behind GMT(Rocky Mountains, Southwest)
- Pacific time; eight hours behind GMT(California, Nevada)

Don’t forget to take Daylight Saving Time into account from mid-March to early November

Electricity

In the USA the electric system is 120 Volts and frequency 60 Hertz. If your device does not accept power at this voltage you will need an adapter. Outlets in United States of America / USA generally accept 1 type of plug:

Flat blade plug

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith.

Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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