

# WILD WEST ROMANTICISM TURNS INTO MODERN LEISURE



Back in the 50's, Easterners of the US used to arrive in Wickenburg, Arizona to put on their cowboy boots and settle for a month or so in a so-called guest ranch. The atmosphere was as in the multitude of films we are subjected to today. Nowadays, the ranches also cater for visitors, yet these are very much visitors of a very different breed.

The cowboy boots have been replaced with skis, roller skates or tennis shoes and tourists come to enjoy their holidays in the place which gave Hollywood the all-important Wild West. Today, people can enjoy a multitude of cultural and sporting activities without running the risk of being gunned down or drowned in the local whisky.

Replacing the old culture of glugging whisky from the bottle, gourmet cuisine is becoming more and more popular every month. Indeed, fine wine-tasting is one of the most popular activities of today's guest ranches. On a similar note, hunters are catered for in most of the ranches, with specialities such as elk, whitetail deer and bison being served up on a regular basis. Sometimes, even game from India and China is imported for the more exotic enthusiasts.

Millions of dollars have been spent on the ranches, most of which now boast spas, salons, massage parlours, tennis courts and offer a host of other activities. Even yoga classes are offered along with swimming facilities. No dude ranch would be at all complete without activities with animals. Cattle and horses are just as important today as in the films, thus riding the horses and cattle go hand in hand with a visit to any ranch.

Perhaps the most famous ranch is the Rancho de los Caballeros, steeped in over 60 years of history and, although it is the most expensive, offers the widest range of activities. This guest ranch has appeared in a wide array of films and is the pinnacle of the guest ranch industry.

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