

Range of Mission

Written by Christine Whitton

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The desert—coined the Wild West—has long been hyped by Hollywood filmmakers for its mountainous terrain, rolling tumbleweed and gun-slinging cowboys. And yes, these classic Westerns exhibit great cinematography, but rather than watching the Old West on screen, experience it for yourself at Tucson's Tanque Verde Ranch.



It's no surprise why Tucson's rugged landscape has long been the framework for classic Western films like "Tombstone" and "Hondo"—panoramic views, diverse wildlife and soaring vistas are just a few of the appeals. But, what many don't know is that same setting is the backdrop for Tanque Verde Ranch, whose homestead architecture remains reminiscent of the Old West.

Tanque Verde Ranch is owned and operated by the Cote family, who recently celebrated their 80th year running the ranch. This nearly 60,000-acre spread abuts the picturesque Rincon Mountain Range, bordering both Saguaro National Park and the Coronado National Forest. Today, Tanque Verde Ranch is the largest dude ranch in North America.

Of its surrounding acres, 640 are Tanque Verde Ranch property. The 76 guest rooms at the ranch have been recently renovated, and The Reddington Rooms, Coronado Casitas and Sonoran Suites are all well-appointed with classic Southwestern furniture. Of these spacious digs, most are adorned with private fireplaces and patios. Here, rooms are equipped with satellite radio, but no television. Yes, you read right: no TV. Owner Bob Cote explains that the objective of this dude ranch over the years has continuously been to reconnect families lost amid common-day chaos and kids on the go. And his mission can best be described as accomplished—after every stay, parents leave gratified and children fulfilled.



Cowboys and girls can saddle up to several resort activities, including the ever-popular riding program. Ranch wranglers have spent countless hours training their 180-horse herd for all levels of expertise. Choose from a leisurely stroll through the desert on horseback, learn the fundamentals of being a true cowboy, groom the equestrian beauties or oversee professional horseshoeing. (Tip: Private lessons and rides are available upon request.) Up for an adventure in the saddle? The riding program's group activity, called team penning, is a hilarious interaction among ranch guests where groups attempt to herd cattle from one end of the horse corral to another. Think it sounds simple? We'll let the wranglers be the judge of that.

Other action-packed outdoor offerings include nature walks, tennis, swimming, hiking and mountain biking. The ranch, in conjunction with onsite bike guide Brian Buchanan, recently added a pump track to its mountain bike excursions. This intensive thrill-seeking adventure allows riders to maneuver through endless loops of rollers and berms.

Between the day's adventures, break for a bite to eat. The main dining room serves American-style buffet breakfast and lunch, while dinner is ordered off a menu. In addition, themed weeknight dinners offer variety like Mexican fiesta night, complete with live mariachi music and a barbecue cookout at the Cottonwood Grove. While there, snuggle fireside and listen to Tom Chambers's one-man band. Afterward, enjoy a nightcap at the Doghouse Saloon, where bartenders mix up some of the best prickly pear margaritas this side of the border. In fact, the ranch harvests its very own prickly pears onsite. We bet you can't have just one.



While the kids are off to the ranch's highly touted kid's program, why not reserve some private time at La Sonoran Spa? (No need to worry about your little ones—the program's trained counselors are parents themselves.) Once at the spa, choose from several luxurious treatments, one of which is the Rincon Mountain rock massage. This 60- or 90-minute rub-down incorporates the heat of hot volcanic stones to release

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tension and relieve stress.

With June paying homage to fathers everywhere, and the kids on summer vacay, what better excuse to escape the Valley's sizzling summer temps for some of Tucson's beloved family fun.

Take Note:

Tanque Verde Ranch

800.234.3833, www.tanqueverderanch.com.