



RIDE WORLD WIDE

Montana, USA

Flynn Ranch & Flynn Ranch Cattle Drives 2010

Riding Trip Information Sheet

Flynn Ranch is a working ranch just outside the small town of Townsend in Montana, midway between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. It is run by Ted Flynn, whose ancestors have been ranching this land for generations, and his wife Debra and it provides the adventurous traveller with a great chance to experience the real West and life on an authentic working cattle ranch. The ranch covers about 15,000 acres in all, part of which surrounds the ranch house and part of which is in Montana's beautiful mountain country, high above Townsend. It is run as it has been for centuries - yet it also has modern amenities to make your stay comfortable! Ted and Debra take a maximum of 6 guests in any week ensuring that your stay is highly personalised - individual bookings are welcome and it is also a wonderful choice for a group of friends booking together. On certain dates Cattle Drives, moving cattle to or between grazing allotments in the hills above Townsend, are organised.



Dates The ranch is open to guests for set weeks between May and September in 2009 (though stays may also be possible on request for other weeks during this period - please enquire). Ranch stays are generally 6 nights Monday to Sunday with daily riding except on Sundays. Cattle drives are run from set dates in May and are also for 6 nights, Monday to Sunday with 5 days riding. Please see the set dates for both options at the end of this information sheet and contact us to check availability.

The Horses There is a good selection of horses at the ranch, most of which are home or locally bred. The majority are Quarter horse and Quarter horse crosses which average around 15hh to 15.2hh. There is no strict weight limit for riders but as special arrangements for weight carrying horses have to be made (Quarter horses are not that big in general) anyone weighing over 14 stone 4lbs (91kgs) should check with us first. The horses are trained and ridden western style with western tack and traditional western saddles. They are used to neck reining and a relaxed riding style, with a loose contact with the mouth, is required. You will be asked to groom and tack up your own horse each day.

Riding The riding programme during a week's stay at the ranch is quite flexible and you will become involved in the ranch's daily activities, many of which revolve around, or are done using, horses. You might, for example, spend your days moving and working cattle - perhaps bringing mothers and young calves in from high pasture, rounding up bulls or driving cattle from pasture to pasture. Most of the riding is in the hills, a 20 to 25 minute drive from the ranch house and each day horses are loaded into the truck and driven to the hill country where you ride out to move cattle, to round up strays, check fence lines or to check and repair stock watering systems. Other activities might include moving salt blocks, feeding hay and so on - every day is different. Hours can be long, but as well as riding, there is time to relax, to try fly fishing in mountain streams, for photography, to watch the wildlife, to visit a rodeo and for the myriad of other activities that take place during the course of a ranching day. The number of guests taken is limited, with a maximum of only 6 each week and this ensures personal attention. You will receive informal, personalised instruction in all aspects of ranch life and work - from saddling your horse to fencing and fly-fishing techniques. The Cattle Drives planned by the ranch are real working drives, moving cattle that have to be moved. In late May and June cows and calves that have just been branded are usually moved from foothill grazing close to the ranch (at about 4,000 feet) to their summer grazing pastures in the hills at 5,000 to 6,000 feet. In August, cattle are normally moved to higher pastures at 6,000 to 7,500 feet. The drives normally move about 500 pairs of cattle in all - these are split into manageable groups of 200 to 300 pairs so you may (as is usual in a 'real' drive) ride the same route more than once with different cattle. Up to 12 guests are taken on each drive and riders may be split into smaller groups and perhaps given specific tasks to fulfil - to head off and round up stray cattle hiding in rough country or river valleys or perhaps to trail cattle for a time at a slow pace at the back of the herd.

Pace The riding pace during a stay at the ranch and on the Cattle Drives is varied and really depends on the work that you are doing. During a ranch stay, with small groups of only up to 6 guests, riding is relaxed and you will be encouraged to spread out and take your own line. Riding is often in the mountains away from the main ranch house, moving cattle, checking fences and so on and there can be large distances to cover when the pace might be fast over open, grassy but undulating, country. Alternatively, you might trail cattle at a slow pace or might have to slowly negotiate steep banks or rough, scrub covered valleys and narrow, rocky tracks.



Riding Experience To ride at Flynn Ranch or to join a Cattle Drive you must be a reasonably experienced rider. With the variety of riding and varied terrain, you need to be confident, relaxed and well balanced on a horse and in control at a walk, trot and fast canter over different going. Riders and horses are carefully matched and there is a good selection of experienced horses but, as you need to be prepared for whatever the countryside and the work you are doing throws at you, neither ranch stays nor Cattle Drives are suitable for novice or nervous riders. Children under 18 years are not usually accepted at the ranch (exceptions for experienced riders are sometimes made on request).

Accommodation Accommodation at the ranch is in one of three 'bunkhouses' - weatherboard cabins - built in the gardens of one of the ranch houses, home to Ted's son Warren and his English wife Becky. Rooms are simple but the bunkhouses are fairly newly built, are well decorated in Western Style and reasonably comfortable. The main bunkhouse has three bedrooms, each with a 'bunk bed' arrangement of a double bed on the bottom and single bed on top. There is a second smaller bunkhouse, the 'Blue Room' which is a one-room cabin, with two bunk beds each with double bed at the bottom and single at the top. There is also a third bunkhouse, known as the 'Guest House', which is a small en-suite guest house with a double bedroom, a small kitchen, a bathroom and living area with satellite television, sofa and tea and coffee making facilities. Generally the Guest House bathroom is shared by all guests, although it can be reserved privately by those wishing to book the exclusive use of the Guest House, for an extra charge. There is also a fairly newly built 'Cookhouse' where guests congregate in the evening and where meals are served. This has a kitchen with cooker, microwave, satellite TV, 'fridge and laundry facilities which guests are free to use at any time. It also has two bedrooms, a single and a double, although these are generally only used during Cattle Drives when the ranch is busier than in normal weeks. Altogether there are four loos / shower-rooms in the ranch's guest accommodation for guests to share - two in the Cookhouse, one in the Guest House and one in a separate building along a wooden walkway. On Cattle Drives riders return to the ranch each night and accommodation is in the main bunkhouse, Guest House, Cookhouse and Blue Room with shared bathrooms, with tents available for anyone who wishes.



Meals Food at the ranch is good, plentiful and fresh - days outside in the mountain air do wonders for your appetite - and the majority of meals are home cooked by your hosts. Most days begin early with breakfast served in the Cook House. During a ranch stay, lunch is usually a picnic out riding - bread, cheese, cold meat, fruit, biscuits and so on - and is often eaten on a break near a mountain stream. Dinner, which (as is usual in the US) is generally eaten early at about 7 or 7.30 pm, is served family style, around the kitchen table in the Cook House or perhaps outside if the weather is good, or you might be taken out to a local steak house or bar. At least once during your stay (weather allowing) there will also probably be a 'cookout' (barbeque) at one of the mountain cabins. On the Cattle Drives lunch is eaten along the trail and dinner is back at the ranch or sometimes a barbecue around a campfire. Tea, coffee and some soft drinks are included with meals and you are welcome to take your own alcoholic drinks (there are refrigerators in the Guest House and Cook House in which to store beer or wine).



Weather. The climate in the area in summer is often perfect for riding, but weather in the mountains in Montana can be very changeable and unpredictable so warm clothes are always essential. Day time temperatures in May and early June are generally around 60 to 75 degrees F but rain, and even snow, is still possible at this time of year and the weather can change from warm and sunny, to cold and wet (or even snowy!) in one afternoon. From July to September days are generally warm with temperatures between 70 and 90 degrees F, though early mornings and evenings can be cool dropping to about 40 F. Rain showers and thunderstorms are possible year round even in summer, but are more likely in the early season in May and June.

What to bring We will send you a list of things we suggest you bring when you make your booking.

Itineraries

Flynn Ranch The daily routine at Flynn is very variable but you will usually meet for breakfast between about 7 and 8am. Then, after breakfast, you saddle the horses which may have spent the night in corrals close to the house and load them into the trailer for the drive into the hills where cattle will be grazing, fences have to be checked and the day's work is to be done. There is normally a break for a picnic lunch in the hills at about midday and you then usually continue riding in the afternoon - or you may return to the ranch for a shower and perhaps to visit a local Rodeo before a relaxing dinner at the ranch house, outside if the weather is warm or maybe an evening trip to the neighbourhood 'Bunkhouse Bar'. In summer, the horses are often left in corrals in the hills close to where cattle graze. The working day can be quite long - sometimes you might start at 7 am and not finish until 9 pm - but as well as joining the daily ranch routine, there is generally also be time to relax, for fly fishing, photography, wildlife viewing and many other activities in the beautiful mountain surroundings. Occasionally during summer months, there will be slack days at the ranch and then you might have the chance to try some of the activities in the surrounding area such as a canoe float on the Missouri river or to visit the museums and shops in Helena or Bozeman. Time permitting, Ted and Debra your hosts will try and make sure you see all you want. The ranch is also about 120 miles from Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks and 90 miles from the Old West Mining town of Virginia City so it is easy to add a few days here either before or after your stay.



Flynn Ranch Cattle Drives The following is an example itinerary for one of the Flynn Ranch Cattle Drives but please note that it is only an example of what is planned and each day's route and 'on trail' schedule is flexible - it depends on factors such as the behaviour of the cattle, the weather and the miles ridden and may well vary every day and from drive to drive.

Day 1 (Monday) - You will be met in Bozeman, either at the airport or at your hotel and driven to Flynn Ranch. Shown to your rooms and meet your hosts and other guests. Dinner and the night at the ranch. (D)

Day 2 (Tuesday) - Breakfast then meet the horses. You will be introduced to the Western tack and there will be a short safety talk, followed by a familiarisation ride to get used to the horses and tack. Typically you will ride out from the ranch to gather cattle in the lower pastures where they have been kept for the winter. However, depending where the cattle are, horses may be taken by truck to the hills, where you mount up and ride out to where cattle are at pasture. A break for lunch, then start rounding up mothers and calves, herding them into corrals for the night. Return to the ranch for dinner, some evening entertainment and stories around the camp fire or perhaps a chance to fish in the river. (B,L,D)

Day 3 (Wednesday) - Breakfast then return to the horses and cattle and mount up to start driving cattle. A picnic lunch along the way then continue herding cattle in the afternoon, driving them into holding pens for the night. Return to the ranch for dinner around the camp-fire, perhaps with a chance for some evening fishing or a trip to a natural warm spring spa. (B,L,D)

Day 4 (Thursday) - Breakfast and continue along the trail until lunch at about noon. After lunch move cattle on up the trail and corral them for the night. Dinner at the ranch and a briefing about the next day, then perhaps a visit to the local watering hole, 'The Bunkhouse Bar'. (B,L,D)

Entertainment at night at the ranch is usually low key, local 'cowboy' style - it may include such things as a recital of cowboy poetry or a lesson on how to throw a lariat rope. There may be a chance to learn how to dance 'cowboy style' or how to fly fish, or a short talk on the area's natural history or on the history of cattle ranching in Montana. During the week there is also often time for walks to enjoy the scenery, to watch wildlife such as elk, moose and deer and for photography and you might also have a go at the traditional cowboy game of pitching horseshoes.

Dates 2010:

Ranch stays

7th to 13th June

19th to 25th July

6th to 12th September

21st to 27th June

9th to 15th August

5th to 11th July

23rd to 29th August

Cattle Drives

10th to 16th May

24th to 30th May

2010 Rates

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in US\$. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the US\$/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Ranch stay (6 nights) - US\$ 1595 per person

(supplement to book exclusive use of the Guest House - US\$ 200 per week (6 nights))

Flynn Ranch Cattle Drive (6 nights) - US\$ 1795 per person

Rates INCLUDE 6 nights accommodation as appropriate (single rooms / tents are usually available for those travelling alone although this is subject to availability), meals, tea, coffee and some soft drinks, airport transfers from Bozeman or Helena airports on the first and last day, riding and equipment, fly fishing and camping gear when required.

They EXCLUDE international flights / travel to Bozeman / Helena and taxes, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), any visa fees, alcoholic drinks, tips and personal extras such as fishing licenses etc.

Flights and transfers - The nearest airport to Flynn Ranch is Bozeman in Montana although you can also fly to Helena if you wish. Transfers from / to Bozeman and Helena on the first and last day are included. There are several options for flights to Bozeman - usually the best routing is with North West Airlines via Minneapolis but this depends on the time of year and there are various other options. For flight information we suggest calling a specialised North American flight agent such as Trailfinders Transatlantic in London (tel: 020 7 937 5400). Airfares vary with the season but budget around £650 to £800 for an economy return to Bozeman in July / August. Please contact us for more flight information. As flights often arrive late in the evening and there is a significant time change between the UK and USA, it is often better to take a flight which arrives the day before your ranch stay / the Cattle Drive and to spend the night in Bozeman. We generally suggest accommodation at the Grantree Inn in Bozeman - a standard but reasonably comfortable 'Best Western' Motel. We can book this for you and can also arrange for you to be collected from the Motel by your host on the Monday (or Friday for the Branding Week). Pick up is usually at around 11 am to noon.

General visa and health information (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking.)

Visa If you hold a full British machine readable passport a visa is NOT currently required for a holiday in the US of less than 90 days.

Health No jabs are currently required as a condition of entry to the US from the UK and Europe, although you should be up to date with inoculations against Polio and Tetanus, particularly Tetanus, when spending time around horses. Please also ensure you have adequate medical / travel insurance in case of an emergency. This is particularly important for visits to the US because of the cost of medical treatment. **(updated 21/10/09)**