

SPORTS

Rawhi just proved he's the NBA's power broker. C1



BUSINESS

Blue Bell is looking at ways to lick-proof its ice cream cartons. B1

NATION

NOAA says 'floodier' future is already here. A8



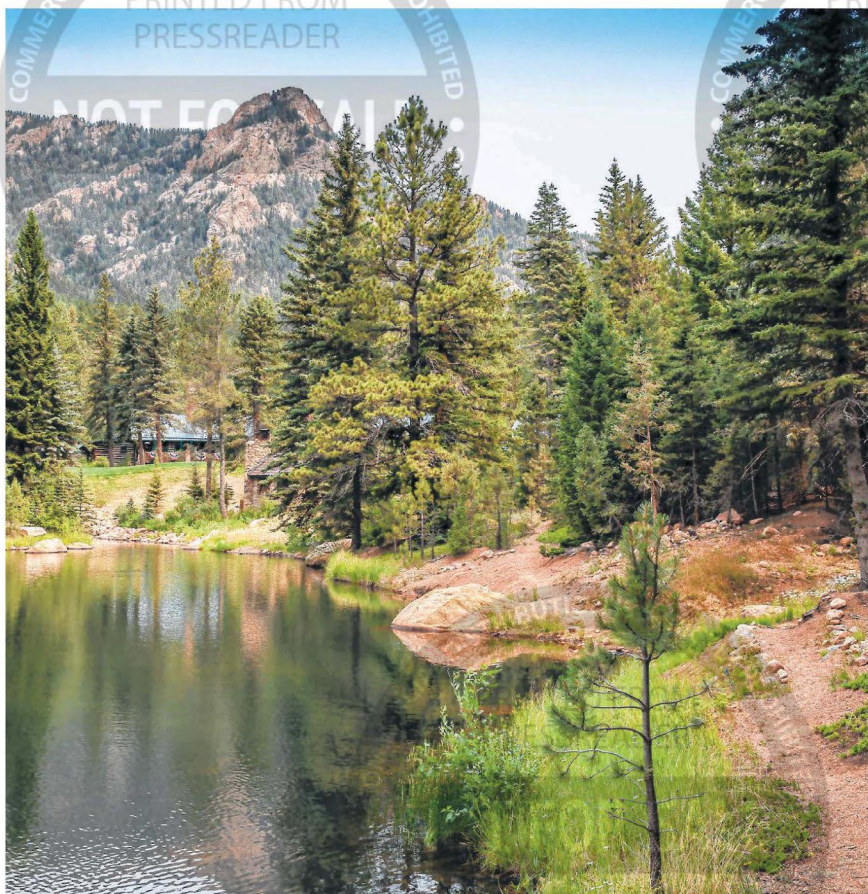
San Antonio Express-News

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Some 1-shotters: High 94, Low 77

TRAVEL

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Rocky ridges define the valley, at the Ranch and beyond.

Photos by Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld | TNS

Colorado guest ranch keeps traditions alive

Indoor and outdoor scenery, communal campfires prompt reflections on Old West life

By Anne Z. Cooke
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

MANTOU SPRINGS, Colo. — I was returning from a hike up Mount Vigil, the peak you can see from the Ranch at Emerald Valley, near Colorado Springs, when a leathery-faced cowboy walked by, humming a tune and leading a horse.

At the same moment, a car pulled up and the driver, eyes masked behind dark sunglasses, leaned out and asked for directions to the ranch, which just happened to be where I was staying.

If you go

GETTING THERE
United offers nonstop flights from LAX to Colorado Springs, or you can fly into Denver and drive, united.com.

STAY
Learn more about the Ranch at Emerald Valley, about Cloud Camp, the lodge atop Cheyenne Mountain, and about the parent property, the Broadmoor Hotel, in Colorado Springs, at broadmoor.com. Rates vary depending on the season.



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TRAVEL

RANCH

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call you to put down roots.

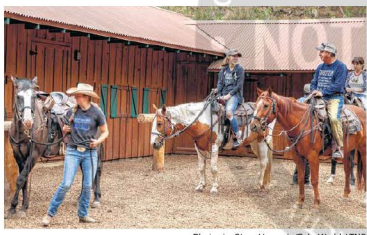
"You buy an acre, build a cabin, get some chickens, and you think you're done. Then the place next door gets a sale sign, so you buy it, get a rail fence and a cow and call it a ranch. Then that homestead down by the creek, well, you need water in these parts, so you buy it, too. That's history, hereabouts."

With that, the old cowboy tipped his hat, nodded to both of us, clucked to the horse, and they disappeared down the road.

"Guess I'll see it for myself," said the driver, adjusting his sunglasses and revving the engine. "Can I give you a ride?"

"No, thanks, I'll walk," I said. "The ranch is pretty close now, down around the corner."

Alone again, I got to thinking. That cowboy was right. Gossip is just another word for history, especially in ranch country.



Saddling up at the Old Stage Riding Stable for a morning ride at the Ranch at Emerald Valley in Pike National Forest.

In the late 1890s, the dirt track here was known as Gold Road. I'd seen the mine tailings myself, a heap of yellow dirt pushed up past the trail, where our horseback ride turned toward the corral. And for all that, they never did find gold.

After the last gold strike petered out, arrivals included a settler, a Girl Scout Camp and finally Spencer Penrose, who leased the 16-acre parcel from the Pike National

Forest for his newly created social club, the Pikes Peak Camping and Mountain Trails Association. The club didn't last, but the cabin survived the years, including an interval as a dude ranch, in the 1970s.

After the Broadmoor Hotel changed hands, in 2011, the new owner, Philip Anschutz, bought the property, eventually restoring and enlarging the lodge and building guest cabins, hoping to re-create

the ranch and its era, along with an authentic touch of wilderness.

When the work was finished, it was so accurate that I couldn't tell the old walls from the new ones or the antiques from the reproductions. The interior furnishings, custom made, not only echoed the era but added a decided touch of luxury. The 10 guest cabins — sized for two, four or eight guests — had their own chinked logs and period décor, all outfitted, of course, with modern amenities.

As for the so-called "palace," that's where I stayed. By the time I tried to make a reservation

each), there was room for eight.

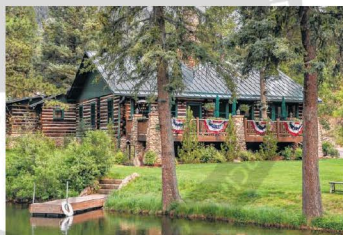
After that, no day was like another. You could sleep late or eat breakfast early, then climb the ridge to see the views. Five or six other trails climbed peaks or crossed through the forest, or you could ride horseback. A hot lunch and farm-fresh salad as you could eat or talk, in the dining room or stargazing around the campfire.

Wednesday and Saturday evening campfires, when recording artists and cowboy singer Jeff Houston entertained, were the biggest surprise of all. Maybe, but don't laugh yet.

I was watching the fire toss up sparks and sipping a smooth cabernet, expecting to hear the usual background thrumming, elevator music, usually, when Houston tuned the strings and tore into the "Orange Blossom Special," astonishing everyone with his lightning fast picking

and perfect rhythm. Not only did he wow us with some of the smartest flat picking ever — and faultless two- and three-finger work — but he sang each song differently, turning the most ordinary lyrics into a drama with an ending.

As the guests called out requests, he called on the vast repertoire he hides under that cowboy hat and performed as asked. Country & western, pop, bluegrass, Pete Seeger, Elton John, the Grateful Dead — he knows them all. Listening, I couldn't help wondering why it felt so familiar. Then I remembered. This cowboy to



Flags and a once-a-season patch of manicured grass celebrate a holiday at the ranch near Colorado Springs, Colo.



WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO... THE BEST RESTAURANTS ARE...



every cabin was booked, except that one up the hill. Climbing uphill on a winding stone path, I'd been lashed to the barn. Then I saw the flagstone patio — large enough for a 50-guest reception, and opened the front door. The living room, furnished with hand-tooled leather chairs, luxurious sofas and a man-sized fireplace, begged me to sit down; the walls, hung with western and Native American art, insisted that I take a closer look.

The kitchen, large-party sized, included a long center island, surrounded by walls covered with cupboards, and counters with three sinks and the latest appliances. With bedrooms upstairs and down — (and bathrooms for

away empty. Cocktail hour followed, improved by the chef's hors d'oeuvres. Dinnertime lasted as long as you could eat or talk, in the dining room or stargazing around the campfire.

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reminded me of Stead's Ranch, founded in 1904 and long gone now, a historical guest ranch and the pines, beneath saucer peaks, in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park.

For many a golden summer, a worldwide procession of guests came through Stead's, from mountain climbers and presidents to stage celebrities, opera singers and families with kids, all sitting around the campfire together, sharing the West's special brand of hospitality.

Which is just how it felt that night at the Ranch at Emerald Valley, at the end of the track they once called the Gold Road. I think they've hit pay dirt after all.