

Tour & Travel

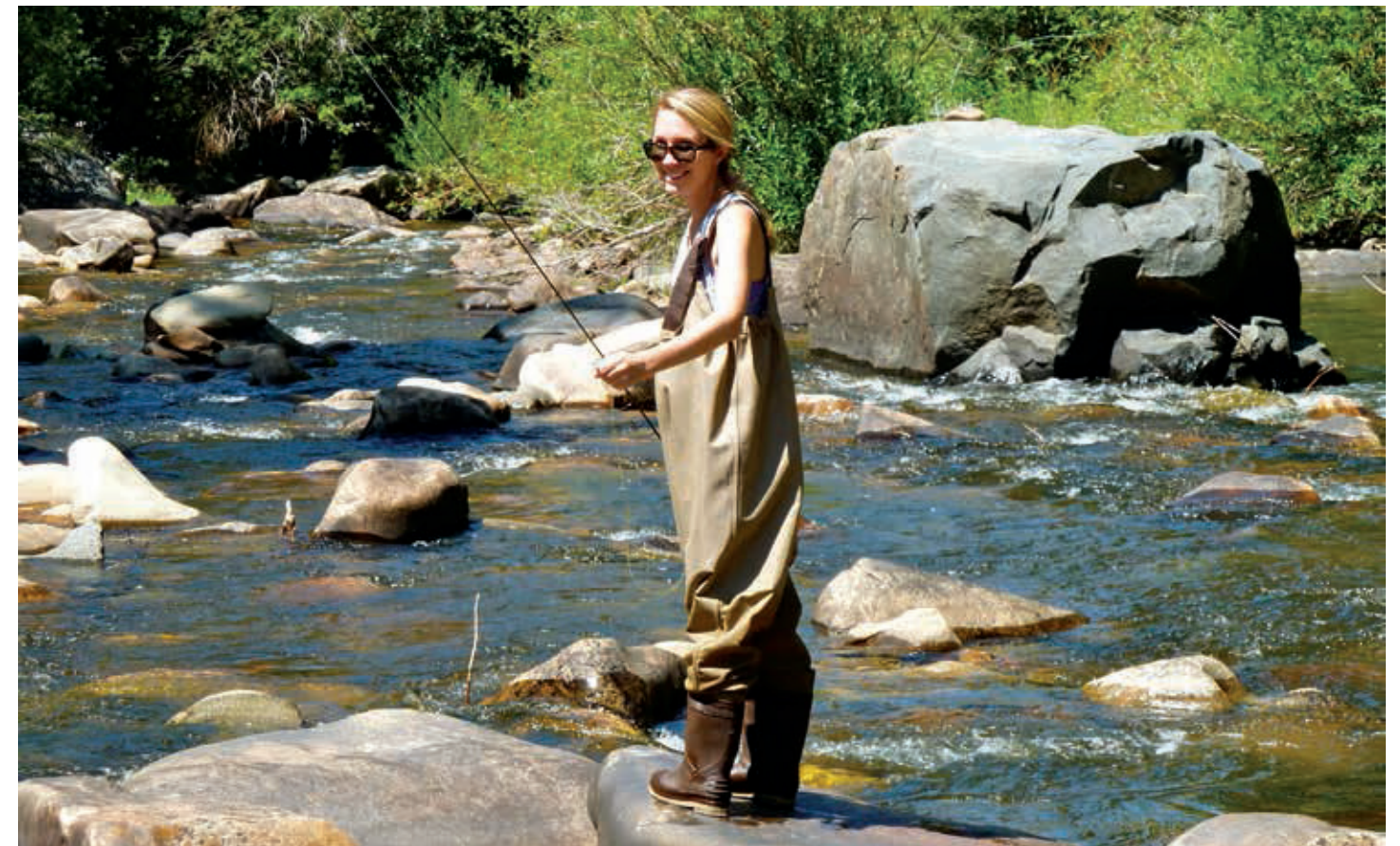
The Woods and Shaughnessy Families Took a Step Back in Time at the A Bar A Ranch in Wyoming!

Written by Katy Woods

After entering the Howdy gate, the only way into A Bar A Ranch located in the picturesque Medicine Bow Mountains of Wyoming, the drive down to the ranch wraps alongside 26 miles of the North Platte River and fields full of horses and cattle. Up ahead, the ranch sits in a mini Garden of Eden. It is the perfect family trip: no cell phones, barely any Internet, and no television. Instead, you spend time with your family horseback riding, skeet shooting, hiking, or fishing.

The Woods family and Shaughnessy family picked A Bar A for this reason. In a society filled with technology, it is hard to find a place where you can completely relax. We discovered A Bar A after the Woods older daughter Clarkie worked as a server in the restaurant last year. This year, Clarkie is back at A Bar A working as a children's counselor in the Gopher Hole and as an assistant for expeditions to the wilderness on horseback.

Staying in a traditional Western style cabin, the two families took full advantage of all A Bar A had to offer including the wonderful breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The first morning consisted of fly-fishing (well, attempting to fly fish) with our fearless fish guide Rettie Duke. After catching two Rainbow Trout, we enjoyed a relaxing afternoon, taking in the breathtaking scenery, which includes nearly 100,000 acres of mountains and high plains. Normally, Friday nights everyone rides up on horseback or takes an old fire truck to one of the highest mountains on the ranch called "Slim's Draw" for a family picnic. Unfortunately, the picnic was rained out, but horseback riding in the valley was still an option. On "push button" horses, we went through small creeks and fields of wildflowers. At night, Alice Shaughnessy and Katy Woods experienced a staff party—a makeshift wedding with a bride, groom, blind grandpa and all. Clarkie went as the "aunt's" toddler, while Alice and Katy were "party crashers." It was a clean version of Dirty Dancing.



The following day, some of us fished with expedition guide Benjy Duke (Rettie Duke's brother), while the rest of us hiked or rode horses. Benjy's new job as expedition guide is the dream job for anyone: as a full time employee, he acts as personal guide to families who want to have a more private experience. During the day, he is fishing guide, wrangler, hiking guide, or any other activity leader the family would like him to be. At night, he is the family's personal chef. We all say he is the luckiest guy in the workforce!

In the afternoon, John Woods went on a second fishing adventure at an adjacent Big Creek Cattle Ranch with his new best friend Benjy. The women of the trip (Susan and Alice Shaughnessy and Leigh, Clarkie, and Katy Woods) walked around Big Creek then headed back to A Bar A for a nap. Lots of "Moscow Mules" later, we headed to our final dinner. Our last morning, we went on a family hike up to the cross at the top of a mountain, a hike that is as vertical as it gets to possibly walk.

Every night of the trip we concluded our day in the Round Room, a large gathering room with a fireplace and bar. The last night was extra special: 12 grandchildren sang "You Are So Beautiful" by Frank Sinatra to their grandparents. With tears streaming down all the women's faces (yes, we really did tear up), we could not believe our trip had come to an end. With goodbyes and many hugs to Clarkie, we hit the road... back into the Internet and cell phone world.

Imagine...

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