



Mission Ranch Lodge: A Unique Montana Getaway



Located at the base of the Absaroka mountain range across from Sheep Mountain and just 10 miles east of Livingston, is the Mission Ranch, a 4,500 acre working cattle ranch with a reputation for raising high-quality, all natural, certified Black Angus beef.

Their big brown barn, easily visible from I-90, sits like a landmark with “Mission Ranch” in big white letters and their trademark W quarter circle brand painted below. Those familiar with the ranch and the

family know that the “W” is for Almon Walborn, the patriarch, who homesteaded in the 1920s, establishing himself as a successful rancher during the hard years of the depression. His original ranch, located outside of Hardin, MT, was too far away from town. Wanting his wife and children to be closer to the conveniences and social offerings of a municipality, Almon purchased the Mission Ranch in 1948. It’s been in the family ever since.

The ranch was taken over by Almon’s daughter, Zena, in 1990. Having been raised on the ranch, she instilled in her three children -- Rob Stephens, Darcy LaBeau, and Zena Dell Lowe -- a deep and profound appreciation of the rich legacy they had inherited. It had always been their mother’s dream to have the ranch continue in the family. Realizing that her children were not going to become ranchers, Zena came up with the idea of building a lodge to supplement ranch income and open up their vast heritage to the public.

Sadly, Zena passed away from colon cancer way too early, and the task of running the ranch fell to the three siblings.

With busy, independent careers of their own, they were fortunate to have an excellent ranch manager, Rich Phillips, already handling the beef side of the operations. However, to help financially





support their cattle business, the siblings decided to pursue completing the lodge their mother had built prior to her illness and subsequent death. One of the children, Darcy, an interior designer from Billings who owns My Montana Interior Design, used her expertise to transform the place from a mere dream into a dream vacation rental. Under her care and guidance, the Mission Ranch Lodge has truly become one of the best vacation destinations in the greater Yellowstone area.

“When I was thinking through how to decorate the lodge, I wanted the inside to feel like an extension of the

outside, so I brought the colors of the surroundings into the lodge itself,” Darcy says. “I wanted it to reflect our ranching heritage, but also embody all of the modern luxuries that people desire.”

Not only does the lodge have state of the art technology and comforts such as wi-fi, cable, flat screen TVs, laundry facilities, full kitchen, cozy down comforters and pillows, etc., but it also incorporates the rustic elements of their western legacy, like Montana custom-made furniture from reclaimed wood, Almon’s old cowboy chaps, some original branding irons, and other family heirlooms. With 5 bedrooms and 5 private bathrooms, Mission Ranch Lodge can easily accommodate 14 people. For larger groups, the Lodge offers overflow for 8 additional guests in their refurbished turn of the century Old Ranch House.

In addition, Mission Ranch Lodge offers exclusive access to the 4,500 private acres of ranch land where guests can enjoy trophy white-tail deer, antelope, and bird hunting, as well as premium fly-fishing on the Yellowstone River, the Mission Creek, and their own private spring creek fishery, all teeming with monster trout. Visitors young and old will find themselves enchanted with the abundance of wildlife, the beautiful horses and the open range cattle roaming the ranch, as well as the vast collection of blue ribbon exotic chickens acquired by the ranch manager’s son, Wyatt. And don’t be surprised if you find an arrowhead or see an old teepee ring from the days of the “Wild West,” as Mission Ranch was the site of the first Crow Indian Agency. The adventures and historical discoveries are endless!

The Mission Ranch Lodge is a great place for family getaways, reunions, executive retreats, weddings, and other special events. For more information about the Mission Ranch Lodge or to find out how you can book the lodge for your next vacation rental, visit their website at www.missionranchlodge.com, or call Darcy at 406.690.3535.

