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GREENOUGH, Mont. — “Don’t let Traveler eat,” my wrangler guide instructed me after I’d mounted a white horse that could double as the Lone Ranger’s Silver. “Especially when we go through this next pasture. The tall grasses are like a candy store.”

Traveler and I definitely had the same problem: We both wanted to eat everything in sight because everything tasted so good. Huckleberry pies, bison steaks as big as your head, grass-fed burgers, plump morel mushrooms tossed with pappardelle pasta, s’mores — I needed a wrangler of my own during my recent stay at [the Resort at Paws Up](#), a 37,000-acre working cattle ranch and luxury wilderness resort an hour northeast of Missoula, Mont.

Traveler and I and a dozen other guests had set out on a half-day cattle drive to help herd 70 black Angus cattle from one pasture to another nearly a mile away. When a quick series of ice-cold rain showers rolled through, we ducked under a stand of tall firs for cover.

As the charcoal clouds cleared, the whole valley seemed to take a long, deep breath. Even the wildflowers cocked their tiny heads toward the sun and exhaled. Traveler dipped his head low to chomp off a thick wedge of grass candy. I looked the other way, pretending not to notice.

It was easy to fall for this place. To our right: tall pines and wiry grasses. To our left: a double rainbow, weathered fence lines and endless views.



Even the full-service spa takes on a cowboy camping theme at the Montana resort. (Michael Hiller/Special Contributor)

Thirteen years ago, the owners of this former working cattle ranch set out to create an escape for wealthy city folks who would gladly pay for the chance to play urban cowboy for a few days.

They promoted the experience as glamping — a fancy-sounding portmanteau of glamorous and camping. If potential customers were imagining kerosene lamps and sleeping bags, this would not be the place for them. Their target market: guests who are more likely to embrace the Four Seasons than the four seasons.

“People say they want to camp in the wild, but they still want all the comforts of a luxury hotel,” says Paws Up spokeswoman Anna McKean. “And that’s what we try to deliver.”

Even with current daily rates beginning at \$1,060, demand for one of the tented semi-permanent cabins is high. And what hotels call “shoulder season” — right now through October, as summer shifts into fall and the trees shed their summery greens for sprays of crimson and goldenrod — is when Paws Up really sparkles.



Arranged as small campsites around a communal dining area and fire pit, the Resort at Paws Up offers a top-tier glamping experience. (Michael Hiller/Special Contributor)

The rooms Forget yurts, mandals and those African safari tents that kick-started glamping. At Paws Up, the insulated tents are more like canvas-lined summer cottages with chandeliers, ceiling fans and attached bathrooms with running water and heated floors. The tents also come tricked out with electricity, air conditioning and heat, armchairs, wood dressers and king beds

dressed with cotton linens — but no snacks or mini-fridge. “Food attracts bears,” my butler cautioned me on arrival. “And this part of Montana has bears.” The tents are arranged in clusters, called base camps, mostly along the banks of the Blackfoot River. Each base camp has a permanent, sheltered dining room with a cocktail bar, fireplace, chef’s kitchen, 24-hour snacks and comfy furniture. For those who want a wilderness experience but prefer a sturdier barrier to the wild, a secluded section of resort contains 26 fully furnished traditional homes that can be booked in lieu of the tented cabins.



Like every other element at The Resort at Paws Up, the food reflects the site's wild location. (Michael Hiller/Special Contributor)

The food

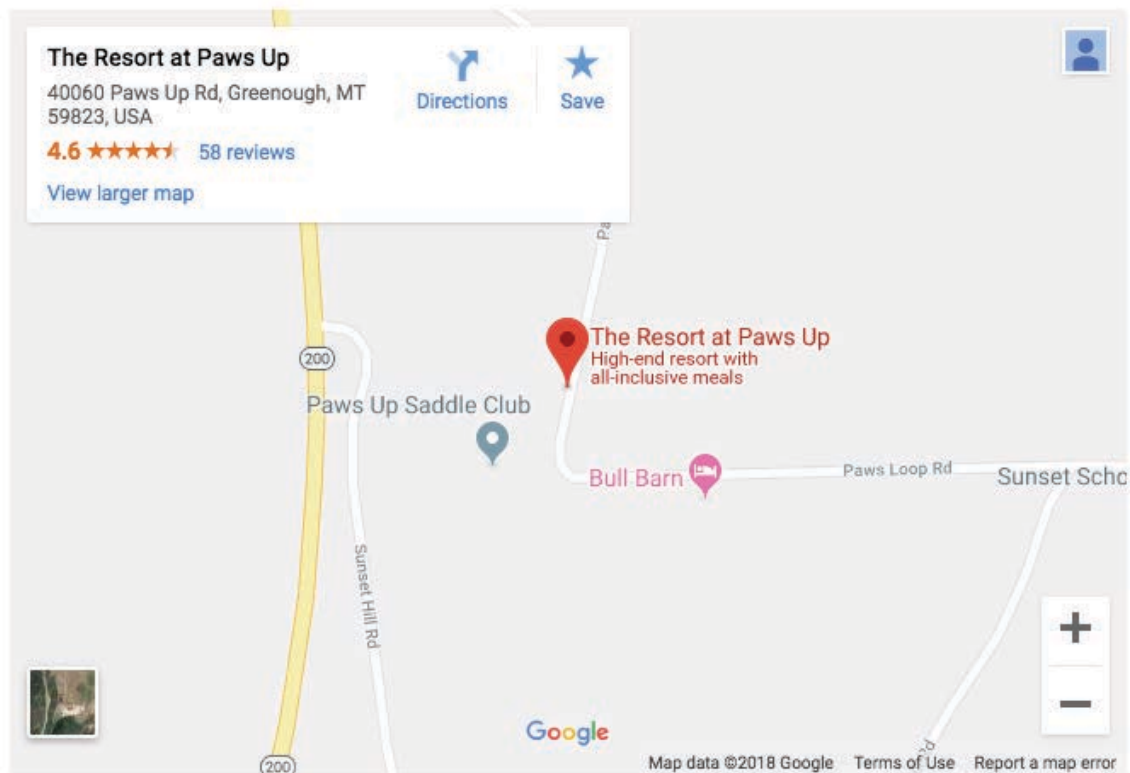
A lot of fuss is made over food at Paws Up. Fresh, local ingredients are featured prominently at each meal (elk and venison breakfast sausage, dry-aged bison, fresh produce). Though meals and round-the-clock snacks are included in the room price, the level of quality varies widely (skip the buffets and order lunch and dinner from the a la carte menus). Breakfasts are cooked to order at each base camp and were uniformly excellent.

The nicest touch was an unannounced pop-up dinner prepared by Beau MacMillan, a guest chef from Phoenix. Several times each season, Paws Up flies in nationally acclaimed chefs to cook surprise pop-up wine dinners at no additional charge to guests; luminaries this year included MacMillan, *Top Chef* contestant Brooke Williamson, barbecue pitmaster Wayne Mueller and Dallas chefs Dean Fearing and Tim Byres.

Diversions

Plenty of guests choose to do absolutely nothing to quicken their pulse beyond campfire coffee or sunset cocktails. Those seeking adventure can take advantage of well-marked hiking and biking trails that weave through the property, which sits on the southern edge of the Flathead National Forest.

Exceptional activities offered at additional cost include spa treatments, equestrian outings, hot-air balloon rides, guided fly fishing and off-road ATV excursions to an abandoned mining town. Guests also seemed to adore the resort's "s'moresologist," an alchemist whose campfire toolbox is filled with house-made marshmallows, graham crackers, candied fruits, decadent sauces and gourmet chocolates.



Details

Current rates at the Resort at Paws Up start at \$1,060. 40060 Paws Up Road, Greenough, Mont., 59823. 877-580-6343. pawsup.com.

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