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MONTANA

The Resort at Paws Up

Written by Maddy Pasqualini

To say The Resort at Paws Up is magical would be an understatement. Stretching across 37,000 acres of unspoiled Montana wilderness, trust me when I tell you, this luxury ranch resort is a must visit. I arrived at the tiny and taxidermy filled Missoula airport, and was greeted by my wonderful driver who took me on the beautifully scenic drive to the resort. The span of the resort is truly remarkable, and difficult to grasp with just one, or ten, laps around it. There are endless spans of unimaginably beautiful scenery lined with tall lush pines, flowing crystal clear rocky rivers, and valleys boasting expansive mountain views. Every turn you take reveals another stunning scene that seems too majestic to be real. Special thanks to Ariat for outfitting me and keeping me warm on this amazing journey.



Accommodations

Just as incredible as the scenery at Paws Up, is the lodging.

Accommodating up to 250 guests, the resort's lodging options are split between 28 luxury homes and 36 glamping tents. Each home and tent is individually decorated with warm, elegant, and rustically chic furnishings that elevate the guests ultimate luxury stay. I am incredibly picky about hotel beds, and I can safely say that my bed at Paws Up was the most comfortable bed I have ever slept in. With its evenly weighted down duvet and perfectly plush pillows, it is referred to as "The Last Best Bed", and I couldn't agree more. In addition to the bed I never wanted to leave, each home boasts heated floors, a kitchen, dining table and chairs, a large flat screen TV, a hot tub, and a laundry room with a full washer and dryer.



There are three different types of homes to choose from; the Wilderness Estates, Big Timber Homes, and the Meadow Homes, along with the Morris Ranch House, and the Blackfoot River Lodge, both of which are one of a kind. The 10 **Big Timber Homes** offer accommodations featuring three, two, and one bedroom homes sleeping eight to four guests. Measuring 2,430-square-feet - 1,440-square-feet, these exquisitely decorated homes feature all the above amenities plus a fireplace or wood stove and a full-length private deck overlooking Paws Up vast meadows. The six **Meadow Homes** feature 1,100-square-feet of living space perfectly sized for four guests. The home is spread between two bedrooms and two baths, a full living room and kitchen, and spacious decks with a hot tub and views of the surrounding meadows and mountains. I had the privilege of staying in a Wilderness Estate named "Council Bluff". There are 10 **Wilderness Estates** to choose from, all of which are spectacular. In addition to all the amenities above, the 3,250-square-foot home can sleep up to eight guests and features three large suites each with an en suite master bathroom, a full kitchen, an enormous private deck with a spectacular view, a magnificent Montana-sized stone fireplace, and a game room.

Open in the fall, spring, and summer are the luxury safari style tents. Paws Up quite literally coined the term "glamping", so you can be assured that these tents are the best of the best. There are six different camps to choose from, each with their own unique location, vibe, and amenities.

Moonlight Camp, River Camp, Creekside Camp, Pinnacle Camp, Cliffside Camp, and North Bank Camp are all equipped with large luxury tents from one to three bedrooms featuring en suite bathrooms, electricity, cushy beds, chic decor, and private decks. All camps also have an onsite "camping butler", private chef, and dining pavilion. On-camp entertainment includes the best of old fashioned family games like beanbag toss, horseshoes, soccer, football, and complimentary mountain bikes for exploring. Glamping at Paws Up offers a unique experience where the guest is able to immerse themselves in the best of Montana's nature while immersing themselves in the most decadent of feather beds, it's an experience not to be missed.

Dining

Adding to an already remarkable experience at Paws Up is the food. Did I gain weight eating everything in sight? Yes. Was it worth it? Also, yes. Executive Chef Sunny Jin brings his imaginative culinary perspective to create rustic ranch cuisine that blends sophistication with the freshest meats, produce, and ingredients foraged right on property. Mouthwatering offerings change with the seasons based on availability of the best and freshest ingredients. There are three different dining experiences to choose from on property.

Pomp is the resort's gourmet restaurant which offers continental cuisine with a Western flare for dinner. At Pomp I had one of the best meals of my life featuring lobster ragoon, warm spinach salad with compressed pear and blue cheese, seared halibut with Montana crimson lentil ragu and romesco, elk tenderloin with a locally foraged juniper berry reduction and red wine bordelaise, and a chocolate tart with toasted meringue and blood orange granite to top it all off. Eating every night at Pomp was a true culinary experience, and I enjoyed every last bite of it. **Tank & Trough** offers a more casual menu and atmosphere for breakfast and lunch. The home-cooked rustic flavors are comforting while being refined. Expect menu items like Eggs Benedict with perfectly sliced ham and brussel sprouts, the famous Huckleberry pancakes, and a to-die-for grilled cheese with the best sweet potato fries I've ever had. Open during the warmer months of the year, the **Chuck Wagon** combines the best of an authentic Old West dinner with gourmet flavors and classic entertainment. An old-fashioned horse-drawn wagon will pick you up and take you on a scenic ride ending at the banks of the Blackfoot River, where you'll enjoy your meal. Offerings from Angus prime rib, all-natural chicken, fresh corn, and fresh-fruit cobbler are all prepared before your eyes. If eating out isn't your style, **in-home dining** is available in any of the luxury home accommodations.



Spa

Sitting on the edge of a meadow, made up of a small series of white tents stitched together by a wooden boardwalk, the spa at Paws Up is magically peaceful. To make your spa day even more luxurious, each tent features a full bath and heated massage table. Services include massages, full-body treatments, wellness classes, yoga offered in a room with walls of glass, and even children's treatments. During the chilly winter months the spa moves into the stunning Morris Ranch House with all services still available.



Outdoor Adventures

Arguably the best part of a stay at Paws Up are the outdoor adventures. With 37,000 acres and more than 100 miles of trails at your disposal, the outdoor adventures are unlimited. Activities differ from warmer months to snowy ones, but regardless of the season you choose to visit, there is endless fun to be had. Warmer weather activities include **archery**, **ATV tours** around the massive property, **boating** down the famous Blackfoot River, **cattle drives**, **fly-fishing** in some of the most sought after locations, **go-karts**, **hiking**, **horseback riding**, **paintball**, a **private island adventure** on your own lake, **rappelling** down the famed Lookout Rock, **ropes courses**, **sporting clays**, **whitewater rafting**, and **wildlife watching** where you can spot elk, whitetail deer, moose, bears, mountain goats, bald eagles, golden eagles, and many more.

Winter activities are just as thrilling, and my stay was in February so I was able to take full advantage of them. Cold weather adventures feature **snowmobiling** thru endless trails and terrains with some of the most majestic views you'll ever witness, **snowshoeing** along the Blackfoot River, skiing both cross country and downhill, **dogsledding** thru the woods and along the river, **skijoring** (skiing while pulled by a horse), **ice skating**, **sporting clays**, **horse drawn sleigh rides** around the property pulled by the sweetest set of Fjords named Pete and Repeat, the Back Country Triathlon, **downhill sledding** with staff onsite handing out hot chocolate and snowmobile rides back to the top of the hill, **horse croquet** (learning to work cows in the arena), and horseback riding along stunning snowy trails. Every one of these experiences was unforgettable. From riding my sturdy Friesian cross along the snow covered Blackfoot river, to racing down a trail on my snowmobile while the Paws Up bison herd ran along beside me, winter is beyond magical at the resort.

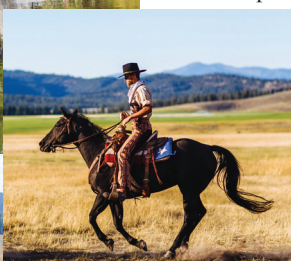


Everything Equestrian

The entire equestrian program at Paws Up would make any horse lovers heart beat a little faster. Riding around the property is a genuinely spectacular experience. There is an incredible peace the rider finds while gazing at the endless meadows, mountains, and rivers of Montana on the back of one of Paws Up trusted horses. The equestrian program is managed by Jackie Kecskes, an experienced equestrian who has created an impressive and varied program perfect for any level of rider. The 72,000-square-foot Saddle Club boasts a 29,000-square-foot arena, a VIP Sky Box suite with a fully stocked bar, a 52 stall barn, equestrian showers, a tack room that can seat 20 people for private dinners, and acres of outdoor pasture. Equestrian activities range from numerous **trail rides** thru meadows,

rivers, and mountains, **cattle drives**, **cow croquet**, **arena lessons** for kids, **instructional trail rides** to work on your horsemanship skills, **all day trail rides** with a lunch stop included, **"horse whispering 101"** designed to build mutual trust between yourself and the horse, early morning horse wrangling where guests are able to gather the ranch's herd to work for the day, **wagon team driving**, a **junior wrangler program**, and **pony rides** for the little ones.

Adding to the already impressive equestrian program is the brand new **Mustang Rescue Program**. Early last year Jackie rescued five mustangs from the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program to train and integrate into the Paws Up herd. She works with these new members of her family using techniques based on the vaquero tradition, which is designed to work with the horse's nature in order to gain ultimate trust and union between horse and human. Jackie hopes to rescue four new mustangs every year to expand the program. If you're anything like me, and are fascinated by all things mustangs, the resort offers a **"mustang mindfulness demo"** where guests are able to watch and learn as Jackie works with one of the rescues. Guests will be able to witness how the horse responds to her every move and pitch, in a demonstration of true horsemanship.



Special Events

Believe it or not, there are even more incredible experiences to be had at Paws Up. Each season the resort's calendar is packed with exciting special events that are undeniably once in a lifetime. I was lucky enough to experience one of the installments of the **song writer series** where some of the biggest names in songwriting come to the resort for intimate workshops and performances. As a guest you'll get to witness these artists perform some of their favorites and tell the stories that inspired them. Sitting in Tank with the fire roaring, a drink in my hand, and three of Nashville's best songwriters storytelling and singing, felt like one of those perfect nights with best friends that leaves you with the warmest feeling.

Events range from culinary to artistic to active, making it near impossible to find one that you aren't excited about. Highlights from the upcoming seasons include a **Spring Wine Weekend with Round Pond Estate**, **The Wonder Women of Food and Wine** with some of the best female chefs and restaurateurs, **The Cowgirl Spring Roundup** where honorees from the Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame showcase their talents and lead trail rides and cattle drives,

the **James Beard Foundation Chef Tour Dinner**, **Campfire Stars** featuring some of the best musicians playing right at your own campfire, **Montana Long Tables** throughout the year featuring extraordinary chefs serving up the freshest food in the most remarkable locations, **Wildlife Painting**, **S'mores Weekend** (a weekend I cannot and will not miss), and the **Cowboy Experience** where guests get to ride along side ProRodeo Hall of Famers. What sets events at Paws Up apart from others is the intimacy. Special guests are at the resort for a once in a lifetime experience, just like you. You'll find yourself on a trail ride with a Top Chef winner or having an incredible conversation with a famed songwriter at Tank. There are no packed rooms here teeming with admirers. The gatherings are intimate and authentic, truly making these events like no others.

Final Thoughts

The Resort at Paws Up brings something to the table that no other resort has achieved: the experiences you have feel, and are, authentic. Every interaction with fellow guests, staff, tour guides, etc. is a great one. You'll find yourself having the most wonderful conversations with your server or swapping horse stories with your trail guide. Nothing feels forced, every person you meet is genuinely happy to be there and it shows. Yes, this is a five star luxury resort, but the air of stuffiness is gone. Everyone is able to let their guard down and just be real, something that is surprisingly difficult to find. Maybe it's something in the fresh Montana air or all those spiked hot chocolates I had, but I've never felt so relaxed on a vacation.

Rates, Booking, And General Info

Paws Up is located at:
40060 Paws Up Road
Greenough, Montana 59832

Rates are seasonal - nightly rates for each accommodation include three meals per day for two adults including soft drinks, house wine, beer and liquor, airport transfers, on-property transportation, snacks, and amenities.

Please visit www.pawsup.com or call 406-244-5200 or 800-473-0601 for more information and reservation specialists.

You can follow The Resort at Paws Up on Instagram @theresortatpawsup and on Twitter @Paws_Up