



# healthytravel

FALL 2013

## *Great Escapes*

ST. BARTH | BIG SKY COUNTRY | SEDONA

*plus*

A MOTHER-  
DAUGHTER  
GETAWAY

KEY WEST  
WELLNESS

ROMANCE  
IN TENNESSEE

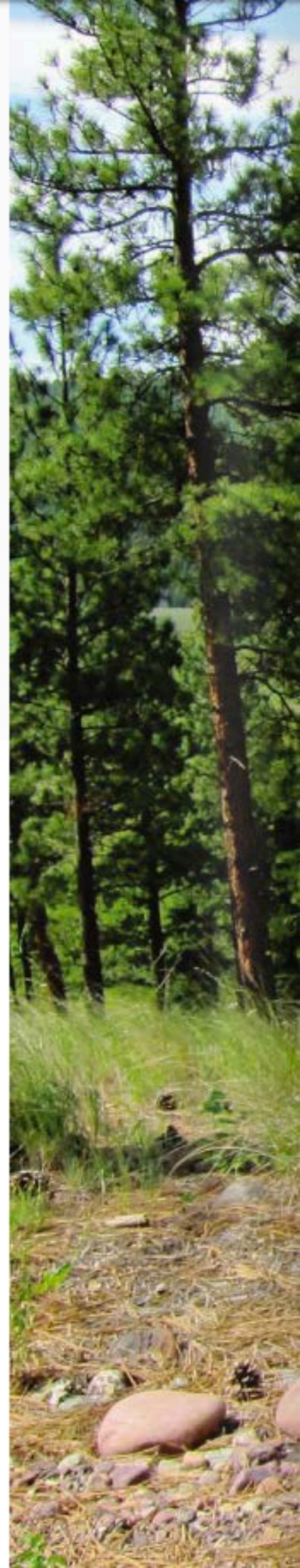


# ADVENTURES IN BIG SKY COUNTRY



*Recharge your workout and M.O. in the rugged outdoors  
of Montana at the luxurious Resort at Paws Up*

*By* NINA KOKOTAS HAHN







Wax nostalgic and Old West at the sporting clays shooting range.



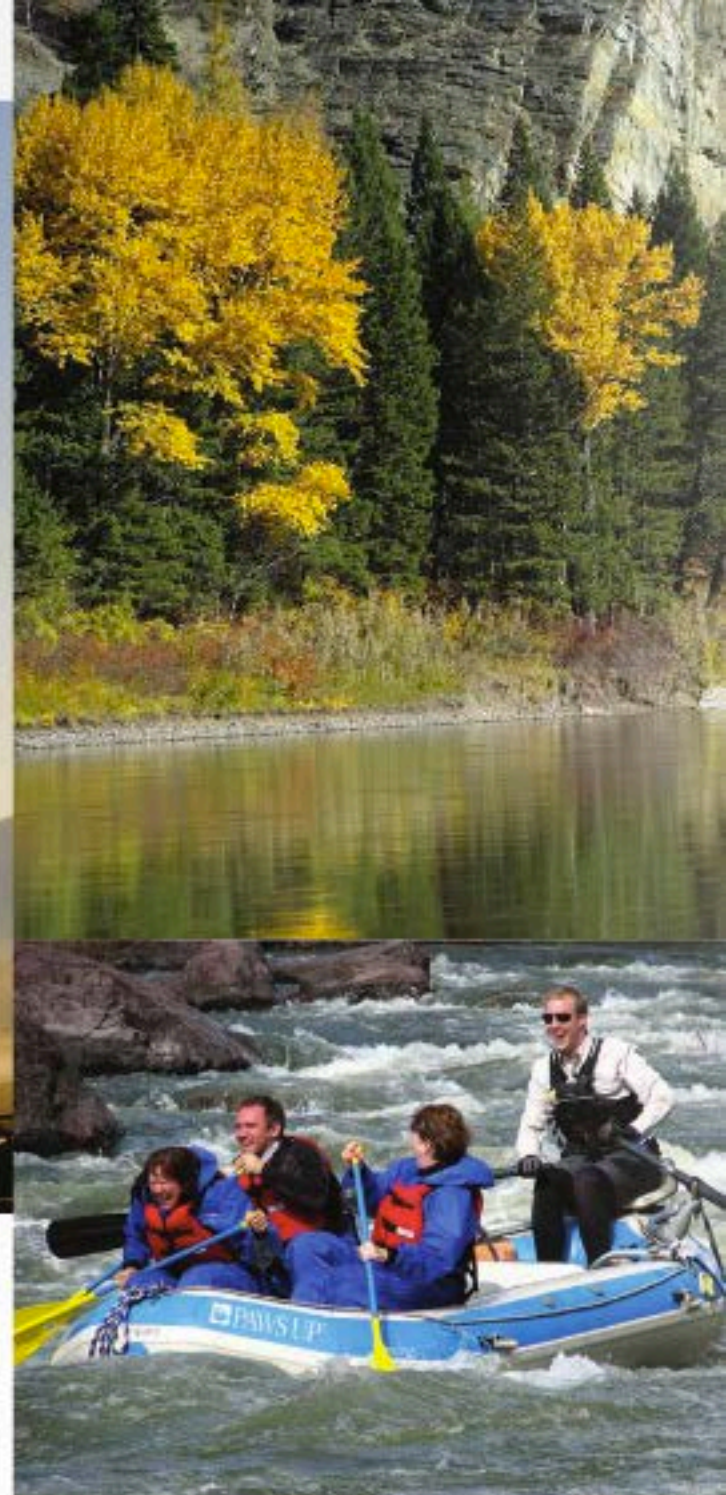


An early evening ritual, the horses at Paws Up gallop out to pasture for the night.





Set off on a hot air balloon ride at Paws Up for majestic views of the Blackfoot Valley and surrounding Montana landscapes. Float down the rushing Blackfoot River—as in Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*—on a guided river trip. *Below* Traversing legendary stretches of Lewis & Clark territory, the Blackfoot River winds through some 10 miles of the resort.



*It was late afternoon* as the horses were being led to a corral in front of the Wilderness Outpost, or the WO (pronounced "whoa"), the central hub from which guests at the 37,000-acre Resort at Paws Up ventured out on countless outdoor adventures. From here, rolling hills and monochromatic swards of green stretched out in every direction, an animated sea of ponderosa pines and gray-green sage bushes popping and flickering across a breezy landscape, while the snow-capped Swan Mountains peaked in the distance.

I had come to this luxury Western-style ranch in Greenough, Montana, to escape mundane fitness rituals and the burdens of "working out" in lieu of something more inspired. With 100 miles of trails and activities from fly-fishing and kayaking to rappelling and ATV tours, Paws Up had delivered in magical doses.

In the middle of the corral, I spotted Cherokee, a tall quarter-horse painted with large patches of black and white







The backdrop of Paws Up is surreal in its beauty, capturing a rare and breathtaking scene of nature and vast wilderness. Arguably the world's luckiest horses and their guest riders do better than a trail ride in Big Sky Country.



and the same horse I had ridden during the morning cattle drive. Only moments after I'd hopped on his back, Cherokee and I had been put to the test. He a little stubborn and me perhaps too eager, we set off on the three-hour drive in the company of our ranch hands and five other riders to gather, trail and corral Corriente cattle, a spritely rodeo breed distinguished by long horns.

This was not easy work. The cows often escaped, which meant one of us had to chase after the cow without chasing the cow away, while the other riders tried to keep the rest of the herd together. Still, we managed to keep these escape artists in a group as we moved across pastures and through stands of trees to a working corral. There, we sorted the boys from the girls in mock rodeo competitions. Never mind the sweat, I was herding cattle from atop a horse and the sky was as big and as blue as they say it is in Montana. I could do this all day long.

Cherokee swished his tail from the middle of the corral and barely glanced my way. No hurt feelings on my part; he was off the clock and, technically, so was I. I'd recognized that feeling most on a float down the legendary Blackfoot River, of which some 10 miles weave through Paws Up country. This same river, made famous by Lewis & Clark and Norman Maclean and Brad Pitt in *A River Runs Through It*,







*clockwise, from left* Stay in the new Cliffside Camp for views like this of the Blackfoot. A guest takes on the sporting clays range with direction from a guide at Paws Up. Local ingredients shine in dishes at Paws Up, such as the Trout mienneure served with lemon brown butter and caper, and this salad with tomatoes from Missoula's Farmer's Market, marinated in verjus, avocado and Thai basil oil.



had swept away the burdens of email, errands and work, and left a simpler demand in its place: Look ahead and paddle. The flowing river turned occasionally to rapids, which required a more primitive response: Pay attention or get tossed. Some two-and-a-half hours later (and 625-plus calories unwittingly burned), our guide landed our raft on a small beach for a gourmet picnic.

I found myself always eager for more at Paws Up, where I also took on the thrill of sporting clays, a target game that simulates field hunting against a sweeping valley. The gun was heavy and my arms shook at first, but adrenaline kicked in and, with four out of six shots nailed, I was hooked. In the morning, a friend joined me for runs on rocky trails that traversed open plans, sparse forests and the banks of the Blackfoot. What's next, I wondered wishfully.

Later that night, while lying in a plush bed inside of my luxurious safari-style "glamping" tent at the new Cliffside Camp, I listened to the rushing river as it thrashed through

the small gorge below. It was a tremendous sound—loud yet calming, powerful yet peaceful.

Cherokee disappeared into the herd as the last of the horses entered the corral. Some sipped water from the trough while others rolled around in the dirt, scratching and shaking off the day's work. Two horses played tug of war with a plastic bowl. One proud gelding trotted around neighing and snorting.

I was so enthralled by the horses that I hardly noticed that the ranch hands had been lining up a string of gates across the main road. They were creating a safe passage for the horses to cross over to an endless pasture, where they typically spent the night. This seemed so foreign and free to me (no barn?!). The horses had worked, fed on hay, cavorted in the corral and now waited, ears perked up and restless for the gate to open. Once it did, they took off like mustangs, galloping at full speed into the great wide open.

(800) 473-0601; [pawsup.com](http://pawsup.com)



Luxurious camping at Paws Up, more commonly known as "glamping," looks like this: plush linens, full bathrooms with heated floors, design that nods to the Wild West, even a campsite butler.



## GO NOW!

Crisp, sunny days and cool nights perfect for a campfire make fall an ideal time to visit Paws Up. You'll also find the best shoulder season rates now; choose from luxury tents (available through September 30) and a range of wilderness homes, some of which also include a luxury tent.