

# SOPHISTICATED LIVING

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Mar/Apr 2016



33

on the cover:

Off the Cuff

From Piaget - bracelet in 18K pink gold with marquise-cut diamonds, turquoise beads and brilliant-cut diamonds; and necklace in 18K pink gold with cushion-cut emerald, marquise-cut diamonds, turquoise beads and brilliant-cut diamonds.

44

Power Trip

Satisfy your hunger for haute horsepower with the latest super cars.  
*Koenigsegg Regera, pricing from \$1,890,000. (koenigsegg.com).*



- 19 Lynne Ambrosini and the Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh Exhibit
- 27 St. Ursula's Lelia Keefe Kramer
- 33 Of Note... Green is Good
- 36 Bibliotaph... Color Stories
- 38 Park City
- 42 Curating a Lifestyle:  
More Than Face Value
- 44 Power Trip
- 50 The Classic Dessert Wine - Tokaji Aszú
- 52 Off the Cuff
- 58 A Big Time in Big Sky County
- 66 Feathering a New Nest
- 77 Molly Wellmann's Myrtle's Punch House
- 89 Ellen Flannery and CancerFree Kids
- 94 Society Calendar
- 95 Open Your Heart Dinner
- 96 Touchdown for HOPE
- 97 Mezibov Pop-Up Store
- 100 Mardi Gras for Homeless Children
- 102 Hearts for Hope Gala
- 104 Good Samaritan's Gala





# A BIG TIME IN BIG SKY COUNTY

The Resort at Paws Up

*Written by Bridget Williams*

Some of my earliest childhood memories involve camping; paramount in my brain's treasured cache is an epic grade school road trip "out west," that cemented my perpetual fondness for that part of the country. While I'm apt to say that I am just as happy in a tent deep in the woods as in a posh hotel suite, truth be told, the older I get the more I appreciate creature comforts. Satisfying this recreational dichotomy is not as difficult as one would imagine as I discovered last fall on a visit to The Resort at Paws Up, a vast 37,000-acre ranch in the heart of Montana Big Sky Country.

Let's start with scenery: it's the kind that inspires slow panning in epic movies; the kind whose grandness puts self-importance into perspective, a reminder of being a small player on a very vast stage; the kind that inspires you to breathe deeply, chuck the Smartphone and feel like a kid again; the kind that reminds you how good it feels to be in the outdoors; and, the kind that inspires a feeling of wonderment certainly shared by Captain Meriwether Lewis in 1806 as he climbed atop Sentinel Rock on the property looking for the Marias River. As someone who has trouble sitting still for five minutes, I could have easily spent an eternity watching sunlight flit across the surface of the famed Blackfoot River as the swiftly running current gradually honed the pebbled riverbed to a smooth polish.

Located just 35 miles from the Missoula International Airport, the resort came about organically, beginning with scattered guest houses erected on the owners' favorite spots. Formerly a working ranch, snow-capped mountain peaks ring the acreage, offering excellent seasonal skiing within a two-hour drive. Officially opened in June 2005, The Resort at Paws Up offers accommodations for up to 250 guests in 28 rustic-chic vacation homes and 30 "glamping" tents.

The circa 1915 farmhouse residence of property owners Dave and Nadine Lipson overlooks the heart of the resort, a roughly 600-acre "village" where livestock barns and sales facilities have been meticulously converted into a state-of-the-art conference center, reception building, dining house and high-end trading post (just in case you forgot to pack your Stetson). In the old bull barn, now a 10,000-square-foot conference center, original floorboards creak underfoot; their rustic nature is an interesting contrast to the art glass and gleaming chandeliers that also inhabit the space. One could easily imagine a Ralph Lauren ad campaign photo shoot being staged in the chic environs. Dave is the architecture buff, while Nadine oversees all of the interior design. One of the most interesting buildings in the village is a functioning one-room schoolhouse with a current enrollment of four pupils.



In the "village", livestock barns and sales facilities have been converted into a conference center, reception building, and restaurants.



One of 28 Big Timber homes



Setup for a Montana Long Table dinner.

A short gander from the reception building, a brand new 11,000-square-foot activities barn next to the stables serves as a centralized jumping off point for the plethora of available activities. Dually rugged and refined, high-tech interior accoutrements are camouflaged behind upholstered leather walls, galvanized metal and stone. Clever windows in the kids' retail section of the Wilderness Outpost, the "WO," allow curious horses to peek their heads in for a look and a pet on the nose. The small high-end retail boutique opens into a soaring-ceilinged space reminiscent of a contemporary cathedral.

Tented accommodations are arranged into a series of fully supported camps a short distance ride from the village. The Moonlight, River, Creekside, Pinnacle and Cliffside camps are far enough removed to lend the impression of a backcountry adventure without the hassle of actually trekking into the wilderness. One- and two-bedroom tents, ranging in size from 565 to 1,030-square-feet, are clustered around an alfresco dining pavilion with a long communal table, living room with fireplace and bar where guests enjoy a chef-prepared hearty breakfast (the French toast made with local Rockport Hutterite Colony banana bread and banana caramel sauce is a must try) and seasonally-inspired dinner (think fresh fish, grilled beef

tenderloin, chestnut soup, grilled romaine with maple-walnut dressing and warm bread pudding served in a mason jar). A pair of on-site Camping Butlers assigned to each camp ensures guests' needs are amply and quickly met.

The canvas tents, erected on dedicated wooden platforms, are anything but primitive, with electricity, feather king-sized beds, western chic furniture, copper or jetted soaking tubs in the en-suite bathroom, and a private deck.

Seven of the 28 Big Timber homes have a glamping tent in their backyard, an ideal solution for a house divided on which accommodation style to choose. Each home is assigned a zippy bright green Kia Soul for getting around the resort. Ranging in size from one-to-four bedrooms (1,600-3,300 square-feet), each luxurious home boasts original artwork, cozy wood-burning fireplaces, a fully equipped kitchen and laundry room, and cowboy chic furnishings. Repeat guests may be surprised to spy a photo from their previous sojourn in a frame on the nightstand; it's just one example of innumerable small gestures that combine to create a truly unique experience. Amply spaced for privacy but not far enough to feel isolated, the site placement of the homes is ideal for large groups or extended families traveling en masse.





Eagle Cliff Tent at Cliffside Camp



Buffalo Jump at Cliffside Camp



Wilderness Estates

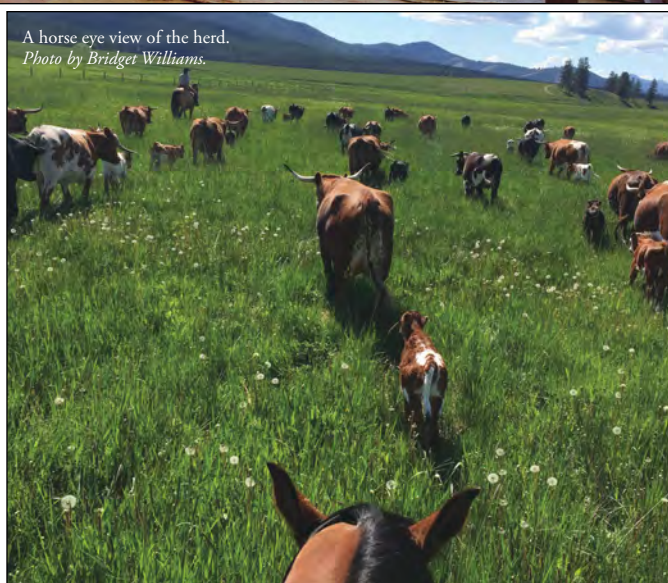




Changing facilities at Spa Town.



Husband-and-wife wranglers lead the cattle driving activities.  
Photo by Bridget Williams.



A horse eye view of the herd.  
Photo by Bridget Williams.

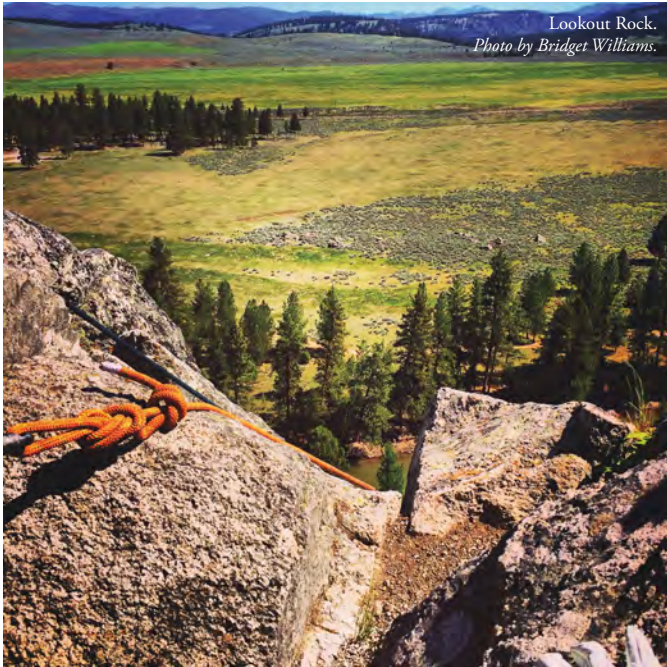
Ringed the edge of a picturesque meadow where horses languidly snack on prairie grasses a short walk from the Big Timber homes is “Spa Town,” comprised of 11 stand-alone treatment tents (in colder months treatments are conducted in an adjacent cabin). Spa Manager Laura Russell makes salt and sugar body scrubs from herbs and flowers picked on property and Montana-made honey. Unique treatments include the heavenly 120-minute “Last Best Massage,” in-home “Suite Dreams” massages, children’s treatments and night massages, where a hand-held lantern illuminates the path to your treatment tent and the rhythmic concert of crickets and a glimpse of the starry, starry sky all but guarantees a state of blissful relaxation. Group yoga is offered several days a week.

When it came time to select from the menu of available late fall activities, I decided to go way out of my comfort zone, choosing cattle driving and rappelling (in addition to becoming a regular at the spa and lacing up my trail running shoes daily to explore sections of more than 25-miles of hiking trails).

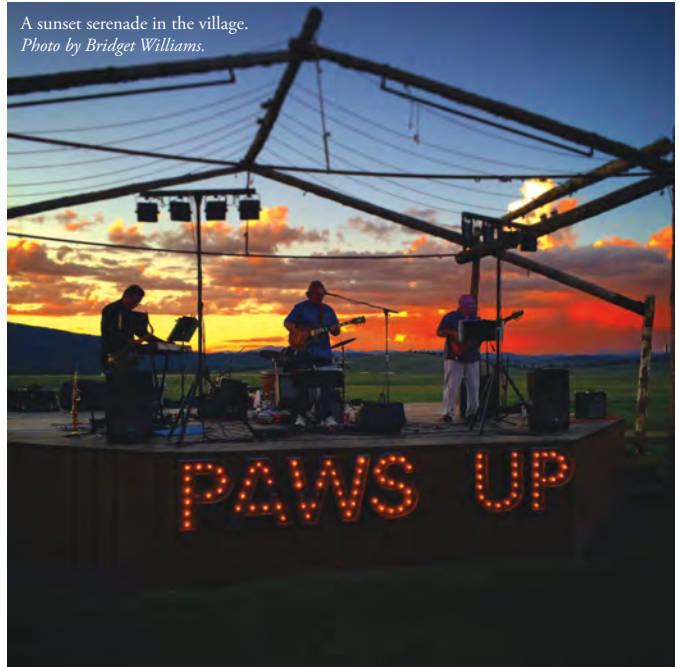
Adventure and autonomy are recurring themes that have always drawn colorful characters to the American West. Paws Up is no exception. Most notable among the infinitely fascinating staff is poetry-reciting, epic mustache-wearing, draft horse-driving Cowboy Steve. Adding to the already colorful cast of characters are artists, artisans, musicians, and experts in yoga, horsemanship and outdoor skills who are brought in for special programs throughout the year.

For this inexperienced equestrienne, driving cattle was a pinnacle experience. I saddled up with a Stetson on my head and a resolute pounding in my heart, wondering how the motley crew of “city folk” united for the day’s adventure could possibly convince a few hundred head of cattle to move across two vast pastures. Although being a cowgirl is definitely not in my future (I was chided on more than one occasion for “splitting the herd,” as I was enamored with riding through the middle of the pack of bulky bovines), the experience of seeing a six-hour-old calf make the trek alongside its mother and speeding up to a sprightly gallop to help round up a wayward member of the herd was exhilarating.





Lookout Rock.  
Photo by Bridget Williams.



A sunset serenade in the village.  
Photo by Bridget Williams.



Treehouse at the kids camp.  
Photo by Bridget Williams.



Fitness cabin in Spa Town.  
Photo by Bridget Williams.

Equally heart-pounding for obviously different reasons was rappelling off a rock face the equivalent of a 17-story building perched on a bluff another 100-feet above the river. I put a lot of faith in the knots and know-how of our guide as I shouted out a few expletives before taking my first big step back. Near the halfway point, I spied a massive nest with a dozing bald eagle in it, which allowed me to temporarily relax my death grip on the rope and savor the descent.

Other notable seasonal activities include guided wildlife viewing tours; horseback riding on 120-miles of trails, sporting clay shooting; access to the 72,000-square-foot Saddle Club at Paws Up; ATV tours, fly-fishing in the Blackfoot River (of *A River Runs Through It* fame) and in the “Bob” on the blue-ribbon

South Fork of the Flathead River; summer swimming, boating, waterskiing, kayaking and jet skiing, and use of the Paw’s Up private lake house on Seeley Lake; winter snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, dog-sledding, ice fishing, skiing and sleigh rides.

Children with seemingly boundless energy can recreate to their hearts content as part of the robust “Kids Corps of Discovery” program. A nanny is available for infants up to three months; full and half-day programs are available with a ratio of one counselor for every five children for older children and teens. “We always strive to look for teachable moments and provide a lot of tactile activities,” said Jackie Kecskes, Youth Programs director.





Far from roughing it for dinner in a tent camp dining pavilion.





Dining Pavilion at Cliffside Camp

A typical day for children ages six-to-12 may include pony or horseback rides, spending time with animals in the petting zoo, archery, arts and crafts, a field trip to a nearby authentic ghost town (note: it's a fun day trip for adults too), mining for gems in the sapphire-rich dirt and fashioning finds into jewelry. I was enamored with the kiddywampus tree house and the endless adventures, both real and imagined launched from within its walls. Teens can rappel, raft, canoe and fish, among other peer-centric pursuits. A new evening children's program and available after-hour care ensures "everyone gets exactly the vacation they want," said Kecskes.

Fresh air and jam-packed days inspire Montana-sized appetites, and the Lipson's are staunchly committed to supporting local farmers as well as providing top-notch dining experiences, frequently recruiting winemakers, sommeliers and guest chefs from

top restaurants around the country for unique culinary programs. Several times a year a table for 225 is set for a themed Montana Long Table Dinner; prior to breaking bread attendees can stroll and sample from a pop-up farmer's market. Hearty culinary offerings across the board range from rustic to refined, always highlighting the next of what's in season.

In the introduction to their 2016 program guide, the Lipson's ideally summed up the appeal of The Resort at Paw's Up: "In a world stressed by an endless supply of complex problems and overtaxed by technology, it's comforting to know that there's still a place where you can experience a pristine land that time forgot."

Nightly rates (from \$464/person) include three meals per day, airport transfer, on-property transportation, snacks and amenities in the accommodation. Spa services and guided activities are available separately for purchase. For more information visit [pawsup.com](http://pawsup.com). 