

ENTREEE

AN UNCOMPROMISING AND
CONFIDENTIAL TRAVELERS
NEWSLETTER • PUBLISHED
MONTHLY • AN INSIDER'S LOOK
AT HOTELS, RESTAURANTS &
TRAVEL AROUND THE WORLD

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VERY FEW OF US WILL EVER OWN 6800 acres of beautiful *Montana* ranchland, meadows, high ridges, alpine lakes and four miles of pristine river frontage. To say nothing of 50 horses, pure trout streams and a meticulously maintained resort. Luckily for us, *Jim Manley*, a *New York* investment banker who searched a lifetime for his dream property, does, and we can all be the beneficiaries by visiting and escaping to his peaceful *Ranch at Rock Creek*. The Ranch represents Jim Manley's ideal of the perfect ranch universe. With elevations to 5400 feet and no grizzlies and no poisonous snakes, it is safe for all. Lush and forested, flowers like bitterroot and wild daisies pop in abundance everywhere. Imagine being 30-50 miles from any real evidence of civilization yet at the same time in a place where Mr. Manley and his attentive young staff have thought of everything to enhance your ranch experience-deliriously comfortable Western guest rooms and cabins, gourmet dining, a rejuvenating spa and an authentic saloon (the *Silver Dollar* where an upright piano and karaoke await late night revelers). This, plus great hiking, personally-fitted mountain bikes, a vintage stagecoach shuttle, *Mercantile* store (loaded



with high end boots, clothing and jewelry), stables, pool tables, sporting clays, paint ball, a four lane bowling alley and archery. What doesn't the Ranch at Rock Creek have? There are no televisions in the rooms (there is a large flat screen in a common living room) and no smoking (outdoors only). ENTREE has been at many dude ranches and frankly the problem we've had is that most have been rough around the edges. Ranch life does not have to mean giving up life's indulgences. You will not be deprived of anything at The Ranch at Rock Creek. The linens are five-star, the beds are as comfortable as any *Four Seasons* could offer, and chef Josh can hold his own with the very best. The Ranch at Rock Creek is a one-hour drive from the *Missoula* airport (they will send a car to collect you, cost \$300 round trip per room). The moment guests arrive, heart rates slow down. You have stepped back in time and off the beaten path. The décor is a blend of deep, chocolate brown leather chairs, geometric Indian carpets, Western sculptures, bentwood tables, antler chandeliers, twig lamps, chaps, spurs, vintage black and white photos and old books—just the kind of clutter you'd expect to find in the home of a wealthy rancher. Cowboy hats and slickers are hung everywhere. In the dining room always warmed by a crackling fire, an old sled sits in a corner, an ancient dial telephone awaits a call that never comes. It could be 1920. A guest need not bring anything to the Ranch but a willingness to enjoy life. A devoted, enthusiastic and totally knowledgeable young group of employees looks after every detail. The Ranch provides the highest quality boots, fishing tackle, shotguns, skis (skiing is just minutes away), parkas, waders, hiking shoes and guides for all guests. Horses are well trained and in excellent shape. At the heart of the property is a finely tuned hotel where careful thought has been given to anticipating every need and dream a guest might have and then exceeding their expectations. One example: in each room there is a basket chock full of toothbrushes, razors, shaving cream, and other thoughtful bath amenities. Menus are tailored each day to satisfy both the discriminating gourmet and the hearty eater, young and old. We ate eggs benedict at breakfast, crunchy chicken salad at lunch and Georges Bank Sea scallops, white shrimp and saffron risotto at dinner. All wines and cocktails are included and the deep no charge wine list is elysian: *Gevrey-Chambertin*, *Drouhin Chablis*, *Stag's Leap Cabernet*, *Antinori Chianti Classico*, *Penfold's*—all for the asking. A Reserve wine list has ever rarer selections like *Romanee Conti* at a surcharge. The Ranch feels like it has been there forever and harkens back to a sweeter, gentler, more innocent time of authenticity. Things here are what they should be. No smoke and mirrors, just pure fun and honest living. Special places are so few and far between. This is an ideal place for families to connect with goodness and each other. If you hanker to vamoose from the ranch, the colorful and turn of the century sleepy mining town of *Philipsburg* is

just a half hour away. But no one wants to leave. There is something ravishing and intoxicating about being deep in nature, far away from all you know, yet enjoying the best wines, the freshest foods, the softest beds while cattle moo, horses whinny and a tall solitary cowboy strums the guitar and sings by the fire. We felt this at *explora Lodge* in *Chile* and at *Bushmans Kloof* in *South Africa*—this yin and yang of total peace and pleasure in a wild setting—and we felt it here at The Ranch at Rock Creek. Accommodations in the 9-room *Granite Lodge* and in a variety of houses and cabins including luxury riverside canvas cabins, all appointed in Western antiques and custom furniture, start at \$800 per person daily, all inclusive. *The Ranch at Rock Creek, 79 Carriage House Lane, Philipsburg, Montana, (888) 757-2624, www.theranchatrockcreek.com.*

DINNER STARTED WITH MUSHROOM AND QUAIL EGG CROUSTADE WITH Hollandaise sauce...tiand of Cornish crab with creamy gazpacho dressing...then *Anglesey* line-caught sea bass with pea and broad bean fricasse, crab and crayfish tortelloni with baby onion and dill confit...then ballottine of guinea fowl with mashed potatoes, buttered spring greens, baby carrots and Seville orange jus...all accompanied buy *Lanson Noble Cuvee Brut 1999 Champagne, Saint-Aubin 1er Cru Les Cortons 2007 white Burgundy, Chateau Giscours 2002, 3eme Grand Cru Classe Margaux* and *Warre's 1992 Colbeita Tawny Port* with the Four cheeses, a Rougette, Shropshire Blue, Banon and Cheddar...*Per Se? Daniel?* Nope, this was dinner aboard *British Airways* flight 278 First Class to *London* where we were surrounded by white roses, leather and exquisite burl wood details. British Airways puts the glamour back into flying with crisp English politesse, fantastic lounges for pre-flight snacking and drinking, first rate films (we watched *Avatar*), flat beds made up with full size pillow and fluffy duvet (plus smart soft sleeping suit), and cocooning compartments that feel like your own mini-apartment. All this plus dining in the air that is based on menus derived from seasonal ingredients laid out on an elegantly dressed dining table or informally on a side table. BA celebrates the art of flying based on both traditions and rituals but innovation, also. Our flights were bang on time always, planes were never anything but sparkling clean and every flight was pure joy. Lastly, our *First Class* amenity kit was brimming with goodies from *D.H. Harris Pharmacy*, London's premier pharmacy for over 200 years. Despair not if you cannot spring for First Class BA tickets. We also flew in true style in *Business Class* with them and can highly recommend it. As for Coach, we hear it's just fine and better than most. Visit www.britishairways.com.