



Rounding Up Resources to Grow Ranch Tourism

Intelligence: who's in the corral

Wanderin' the Web:

www.albertafrontiershootists.ca

www.canadiancowboy.ca

www.wildcatterranch.com

www.champetrecounty.com



In winter 2005-06 Canadian Cowboy Country magazine surveyed 450 readers and trade show booth attendees. Some interesting results arose when asked about planning a vacation and their interest in cowboy heritage activities.

The top 5 cowboy heritage experiences indicating a strong to medium interest level were:

- Cowboy action shooting (49%)*
- Spa ranch (48%)
- Working guest ranch (33%)
- Shopping for cowboy art/craft/clothing (32%)
- Cattle ranch tours (32%)

Hard on their heels were cattle drives, wagon/carriage treks, and horse pack trips all tied with just under 30% interest. With present participation rates between 5 – 16% , there appear to be

opportunities here to satisfy a growing demand.

These top five cowboy heritage entertainments ranked strong to medium interest level:

- Square dance (66%)
- Western themed group picnics/retreats (49%)
- Barn dance (44%)
- Western dance (37%)
- Old west film fest (35%)

Present participation rates were all between 9% and 11% indicating substantial room to grow.

When you compare interest (I) and participation (P) rates in cowboy heritage events you see growth potential in the following areas:

- Rodeo school (59% I) & (8% P)

- Horsemanship clinics (40% I) & (17% P)
- Senior rodeo (38% I) & (12% P)
- Chuckwagon cookouts (37% I) & (7% P)
- Western BBQ (35% I) & (14% P)

What can you add to your operation or who can you partner with to appeal to a wider audience and offer a new experience that caters to the interest of cowboy enthusiasts?

* **Did you know?** The Alberta Frontier Shootists have a cowboy action shooting range just west of Rocky Mountain House where the emphasis is placed on fun, costumes and props like a rocking stagecoach.

www.albertafrontiershootists.ca

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Inspiration: howdy partner

Working together to create a bigger impression can often be more effective at reaching your market. Giving people choices around a common product theme is like the successful “power centre” shopping concept or car dealer “auto-mile” approach. It’s all about clustering together to offer

customer convenience.

Congrats to the crew at Canadian Cowboy Country magazine for pulling it all together and providing a page from the February edition, dedicated to 9 different rejuvenating ranch opportunities targeted for the

female market. Entitled Chicks in the Sticks – Women Only Western Retreats, they highlight a women’s wildflower weekend, a leather and lace weekend, a sisters in the saddle experience, and even a wild west spa escape.

Make it convenient!

www.canadiancowboy.ca

Aussi disponible en français

RENEWAL.

Innovation: expand your horizons

Near Saskatoon in a place called Champetre County they claim they have perfected the art of hosting corporate parties. I like the way they talk to you on their web site:

"It's hard to plan a party for your staff. You want it to be unique and interesting; something that will stand out from staff parties past, somewhere that your co-workers will enjoy themselves and want to come back. We can build a custom package for your group, anything from Buffalo Steaks to Blackpowder Shooting Demonstration. Our job is to make sure you have everything you need (and a little bit extra) so that your party will be talked about for years to come."

"Each bedroom has its own balcony: one greets the rising sun, and the other says farewell to the gorgeous prairie sunsets."



They really grabbed me as an event organizer and I'm curious – *"stand out from parties past, customized, everything you need (and a little bit extra)."*

Reading on you find out they have something called the *Lost Corral Maze™* and a western relay game that is trademarked. Whoa! These people are creative.

They don't fool around when it comes to providing what appeals to their customer. Their operation is successful by listening to their customer requests. Here's an activity sampling:

- Learn to make jam or pie from scratch.
- Take a guided night hike and

enjoy incredible starscapes.

- Learn traditional survival skills of the Native peoples.
- Try your hand at making a dreamcatcher.

Did you also notice how Champetre uses an antique car as an innovative photo back drop and supplies hats to their customers for a great souvenir memory? The only thing they are missing is their name on the top of the car as an easy identifier when people are sharing their images with friends back home.

Are you listening to your customer's suggestions and are you open to customizing their precious time with you?

www.champetrecounty.com

Ideas: feed bag

Creative room theming (combined with a fantastic stay) can really help to build word of mouth promotion. A certain Texas ranch really excels at this with 16 different rooms all boasting unique furnishings that fit the historical theme. Check out www.wildcatterranch.com to read the rooms' detailed history and to see photos of their interiors. Here's a sampling of the room names:

- Cattle Raisers
- Oil Boom
- Famous Chiefs
- Warren Wagon train

- Butterfield Stage
- Fort Belknap



The Goodnight – Loving theme room I'll leave up to you to explore!

They have also themed their workshops the "Signature Series" offering a range from dutch oven cooking, to leather tooling, to blacksmith forging, to native Texas landscaping. Local heritage

pervades and they even make a point of mentioning that they have sourced their hand made soap from a Texas company.

Keep it local and look for theming opportunities!

If you have ever tried to theme rooms successfully (or not) and would like to share your story with other ranch tourism folks, drop me a line (see contact info on the front).

By the way—Have you ever checked out the neat Gene Autry room at the Bluebird Motel in Claresholm?

