



## HOW TO FIND YOUR PERFECT ADVENTURE ESCAPE AT SAGUARO LAKE GUEST RANCH

Posted by Julie Diebolt Price | Oct 21, 2025 | Adventure, Family, Featured, Photo. Travel. Write., Solo Travel, United States | ★★★★★



Searching for a true Arizona ranch escape? Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch delivers desert views, Salt River adventures, and saddle time minutes from Mesa. I've photographed golden light on Stewart Mountain, logged more than a dozen guest ranch stays this past year, and write honest, field-tested guides. I ride the trails, paddle the river, and test the food and beds, then share what matters. Use my firsthand tips on horseback riding, kayaking, and sunrise shoots to plan a relaxed, photo-worthy stay at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS THAT STICK



*Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch swimming pool overlooking Stewart Mountain. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

Bush Highway bends, the cliffs glow, and the [Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch](#) lawn frames a pool with big-sky views. Cabins line sandy lanes; porch chairs invite a slow sit before you wander to the main lodge to check the day's ride times and river flows. The setting feels remote yet reachable—classic desert drama, low fuss.

## QUICK TAKE



*Driveway into Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch and historic wooden entrance sign beneath shady trees in Mesa, Arizona. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

- Vibe: Historic riverside hideaway with Old-West bones and social lodge energy.
- Best For: Families, first-time riders, paddlers, hikers, tubers, winter-sun seekers.
- Signature Moments: Golden-hour trail rides, river crossings (seasonal), neon-night paddles, firepit s'mores.
- Plan Type: American Plan, fall to spring; Bed & Breakfast summer.

## A BITE OF HISTORY



*Saguro Lake Guest Ranch overlooking Stewart Mountain Dam—desert cliffs, Salt River, and rugged Sonoran scenery in Mesa, Arizona. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

- The Ranch started as 1928 worker housing for the Stewart Mountain Dam; a fishing lodge in the 1930s capitalized on the creation of Saguro Lake; guest-ranch life followed in the late 1940s.
- Zane Grey helped romanticize this wilderness; today, you still stare at those same cliffs and saguaro-studded ridges as you experience the Old West legacy.

## WHERE YOU'LL SLEEP



*One of 20 historic cabins at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch—rustic wood exterior, shaded porch, with mountain and desert views. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

- 20 Historic Cabins: private baths, AC/heat, mini-fridge, microwave, covered porches; no TVs/phones for a true unplugging. Limited Wi-Fi improves as you get closer to the lodge.



*Colorful cabin interior at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch—bright textiles, wood accents, and cozy seating. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

- Layouts: kings; queen+twin; queen+bunks; family cabins (some two-bed/two-bath; up to six guests); a two-bedroom lodge suite.

## EAT WELL



*Dining hall in the Main Lodge at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch—rustic tables set for evening diners, warm lighting, and desert-lodge decor. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

- Fall to Spring (American Plan): Enjoy ranch breakfast, buffet lunch, and dinners in the Saguaro Room. On select weekends, they host cowboy cookouts with live music.



Saturday dinner at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch—sweet-and-savory salad, crusty artisan bread, bison meatloaf, and blueberry pound cake for dessert. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price

- Summer (B&B): hot breakfast included; boxed lunches for purchase; occasional dinners—ask before arrival.

## CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE



*Author on Patrick, the horse, along the Lower Salt River—sunrise trail ride from Saguario Lake Guest Ranch. Photo credit: SLR wrangler*

On the horse: guided 1–1.5 hr rides; sunset rides star; weight limit 220 lbs (ask if they have a draft horse—a bigger horse that can accommodate larger riders); minimum age 7. River crossings run mid-Nov to mid-Mar, conditions allowing.

On the water: seasonal self-shuttle tubing (12+), guided or self-guided kayaking on the Salt River (wild-horse sightings), lake paddles at Saguario Lake, plus glow-gear “Neon Nights” in summer.

On land: hiking and trail running in Tonto National Forest, birding, lawn games, pool with cliff views, and stargazing.

## WHO THRIVES HERE



*Lottie, the wrangler, guides guests into a single-file line on horseback for a morning ride near the Lower Salt River at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

Families and first-timers who want variety without driving all over. Riders grab sunset saddles; non-riders paddle, float, and hike. Photographers score golden light on the cliffs right from the lawn and pool deck.

## THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BOOK

- Season & Meals: American Plan Sep–May; B&B May–Sep. Some dinners (Cowboy Cookouts) are open to the public in the cooler months; lodging guests get priority.
- Connectivity: Limited Wi-Fi at the lodge; no in-room TVs/phones.
- Policies: No kitchens or on-site grilling; service animals only; photography permits required for commercial shoots.

## GETTING THERE

- Address: 13020 N. Bush Hwy, Mesa, AZ 85215
- Airports: ~30 miles to Phoenix Sky Harbor and Scottsdale airports. Rent a car because there is no shuttle service to the Ranch.

WHAT'S NEARBY (BEFORE OR AFTER YOUR STAY)



[Kneaders Bakery & Café, Mesa](#) – Try the multi-grain bread; the hazelnut bread is remarkable.

[Pita Jungle, Mesa](#) – To-go orders that include hot ingredients thoughtfully packaged separately.

[Desert Belle Tour Boat, Saguaro Lake](#) – Music tours and Narrated tours available. Take the narrated tour for your first visit.

[Petroglyph Hike](#) – Ask how to find the trail at the Front Desk.

[Superstition Mountain Museum](#) – Outdoor grounds include a labyrinth, Apacheland Movie Ranch, and the Elvis Chapel, an indoor gift shop and museum with an entrance fee.

[Goldfield Ghost Town](#) – Reconstructed mining town that captures the Arizona 1890s gold rush spirit.

[Las Sendas Golf Course, Mesa](#)– Panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and Phoenix. Great perch for watching the sunset.

[Salt River wild horses](#) – Descendants of Spanish horses brought to North America by the 16th-century explorers. Protected and managed by the State of Arizona, the horses graze by the riverbanks and wade in the river water.

## **PACK LIKE A WRANGLER (CHECKLIST)**

Broken-in boots for rides, water shoes or sandals with a heel strap for launches, quick-dry layers, a brimmed hat with stampede string, polarized sunglasses, reef-safe sunscreen, hydration, a dry bag for phone, and a compact camera. Ask for loaner boots and hats at the stable.

Learn about dude ranches for adventurers [here](#).

Want to know what to wear for a dude ranch vacation? [Read about it here](#).

## ACCESSIBILITY & COMFORT NOTES



*Wrangler gives a final in-saddle adjustment to a rider before the sunset trail ride at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

Ask for an accessible cabin if you need it; request mounting help at the stables and shorter stirrups if you need them like I do (the wranglers are very attentive and work hard to make sure everyone is comfortable on their mounts); limited Wi-Fi (it's stronger at the office and lounge) and no TVs/phones help you unplug—plan downloads before you arrive.

## WHAT I LIKED BEST



*Riders travel in single file on a morning trail at Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch; a sturdy draft horse leads directly in front of the author, with cottonwoods and desert hills in soft light. Photo credit: Julie Diebolt Price*

- The morning horseback ride along the river, watching the cliff jumping daredevils get their recreation.
- The swimming pool with a stunning view of Stewart Mountain.
- The incredibly delicious bison meatloaf for Saturday dinner.
- The crackling fire with all the makings for s'mores.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch seamlessly blends river life and saddle time, making your day uncomplicated. Ride at sunset, paddle at dawn, then linger on your porch while the cliffs light up or while having your morning coffee. If you want an easy base with classic Arizona scenery and flexible play, this Ranch delivers.