

## Equestrian Destinations: A View to Die For

### The Red Rock Ride

By Terri Folks

If you are looking for that once in a lifetime adventure full of scenic splendor – seeing it all from the back of a horse – look no further than the Red Rock Ride. Proprietors Pete and Keela Mangum have been guiding riders through Zion, Bryce and the Grand Canyon National Parks for more than 30 years.

With a herd of horses numbering more than 300 and dozens of sure-footed mules, the Mangums want their visitors to have the ultimate riding experience by traveling through three of the largest national parks in the United States. These vistas are only available through multiple days of riding and sleeping at camp (with all of the modern conveniences, of course!) Those who want to bring their own horses can make those arrangements with the owners when booking the trip.

This seven-day adventure involves riding off of the beaten path – going to old trails made famous by cattle rustlers, notorious outlaws like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and Texas Ranger Elijah More. Red Rock's experienced guides are charged with the riders' safety as well as educating them as they ride along the trail. Guests will view Indian Petroglyphs (ancient carvings on the rocks) and incredible sunsets.

Pristine slot canyons (narrow canyons formed by the wear of water rushing through rocks), creeks that are crystal clear and natural rock formations delight those who ride through this wild and remote country. Each day, guests ride through a different area – no two days are the same scenery.

Most visitors fly into Las Vegas and the Red Rock hosts pick them up and transport them to Zion National Park. Guests meet up with the wranglers who take them out for a ride in the park. Red Rock recommends that guests be familiar with horseback riding. Due to the intensity of the riding, this is no ride for beginners. Hours in the saddle vary each day from three to nine hours.

As Utah's first national park, Zion offers massive canyons walls ascending towards a brilliant blue sky. The unique cliffs, made of sandstone, range in color from cream to pink to red. Park visitors describe the cliffs as looking like sand castles.

The next day, riders head to Bryce Canyon. Bryce transcends 2,000 feet of elevation and exists in three distinct climatic zones: spruce/fir forest, Ponderosa Pine forest and Pinyon Pine/juniper forest. Bryce Canyon, famous for very unique geology, consists of a series of horseshoe-shaped amphitheaters carved from the eastern edge of the Paunsaugunt Plateau in southern Utah. Visitors will enjoy the red, pink and orange colors of the limestone. These famous spires, called "hoodoos," are formed when ice and rainwater wear away the weak limestone that makes up the Claron Formation.

Next up is riding along the ridges of Red Canyon – Bryce Canyon's "little brother" to view vermilion-colored rock formations dotted with trees through the Dixie National Forest to the head of Red Canyon. While riding, you might catch a glimpse of the native species that live in the Forest such as the cougar, bobcat, blue grouse, golden eagle, cottontail rabbit, wild turkey, antelope and the Utah prairie dog.

In Panguitch, Utah, riders will experience the trail Butch rode to escape Panguitch's Sheriff Haycock, after a bar room fight. The trail winds up a red rock draw to the flat

lands and then back down the Casto Canyon through pine forests and past the incredibly vivid and colorful rock formations of Red Canyon.

Get ready to knock your socks off when riding through the 30-mile spectacular trail down the Box of the Paria. Nationally known for its beauty, the Paria Canyon has towering walls streaked with desert varnish, huge red rock amphitheaters, sandstone arches, wooded terraces and hanging gardens. Deer and desert bighorn sheep inhabit the area.

The final ride of the vacation brings Red Rock guests to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon Roaring Springs Trail. Visitors get to enjoy the Grand Canyon Lodge and the view points in the morning. They depart at the North Kaibab Trail on the half day ride down the Supai Tunnel and then back to the North Rim Corral.

When riders enter camp for the evening, they can enjoy hot showers with abundant hot water, a full course dinner prepared by master chuckwagon chefs, Robert and Daylean Houston, and comfy cots to sleep on.

The Houstons have operated a restaurant and catering business for more than 30 years. When the two families aligned, this combination of extreme trail riding and fantastic dining was a match made in the stars. Their cuisine is top notch and no matter the weather – 20 degrees to 127 in the shade, the Houstons' fine food is ready to fill trail riders' empty stomachs when they ride in after a long day on the trail. Before you spend all day in the saddle, a complete breakfast is served to fulfill any appetite. Lunch is served out on the trail. No one leaves the Red Rock Ride hungry!

In the evening, the trail guides turn into entertainers – singing those favorite cowboy songs around the campfire. Each trail guide is dedicated to customer service and ensuring that each guest has a memorable time.

Unfortunately, the trail riding adventure comes to a conclusion and you must travel back to the present time. You dream of your next travels by horseback in some of the United States most beautiful parks.

Red Rock Adventures, Inc. is based in Tropic, Utah. The cost per person is \$1,995 for six days and seven nights. All 2007 rides are full, so book early for 2008 spring and fall rides. For more information, call 435-679-8665 or visit the web site at [www.redrockride.com](http://www.redrockride.com)