

37,000 ACRES IN BIG SKY COUNTRY, THE RESORT AT PAWS UP IS A HORSE'S, AND HORSE LOVER'S, DREAM

HORSE CRAZY

STORY **DARLA WORDEN** PHOTOS **STUART THURLKILL**

The Blackfoot River flows for ten miles through The Resort At Paws Up providing a relaxing spot to take a break after a day on the trails.



When my daughter was a young girl growing up in Wyoming, she loved horses. She spent her free time taking

riding lessons, going on trail rides with friends, playing with her Breyer miniature plastic models and reading horse-centric books. Then, as she grew older, her interests migrated to other activities that didn't leave time for her horse pursuits. Now living in New York City, she hadn't been in a saddle in many years, so I wasn't sure how she would respond when I invited her to join me at The Resort at Paws Up in Greenough, Montana, for riding, fly-fishing, rafting and spa treatments. But her response was an enthusiastic "yes!"

Located on 37,000 acres, The Resort at Paws Up is the size of some small countries. The terrain combines cattle pastures, mountain forests and river land. In addition to being a resort, it remains a working cattle ranch, and for those who watch the TV series "Yellowstone" (like me), it provides an opportunity to experience the ranch lifestyle—from learning to cut cattle from a herd and participate in a cattle drive to the leisurely pursuit of forest trail riding. >>

The size of some small countries, the 37,000 acres of The Resort at Paws Up is the definition of wide open spaces.

Some guests spend their entire visit at Paws Up centered around the horse program, in private lessons, group rides and horse-care lessons. Each guest is matched with a horse based on their ability, ranging from responsive beginner-friendly steeds to those capable of executing more complicated maneuvers under advanced riders. The Paws Up's Saddle Club, the largest private equestrian center in Montana, with a 29,000-square-foot riding arena, is at the center of the horse program, where wranglers work horses throughout the winter and the resort hosts arena lessons and roping clinics, as well as a place for local 4-H kids to learn about horsemanship.

After arriving at the barn, my daughter and I were matched with our horses and set out on a trail ride through an "experimental forest" managed by Montana State University where scientific research is conducted around growing trees. The trek was relaxing, the only sounds the horse hooves on the trail and birds singing in the trees. At the end of our ride, tired and dusty, we retired to a luxurious spa treatment where a masseuse worked our stiff muscles in a glamping tent reminiscent of "Out of Africa," with the front flap tied open to take in a view stretching across miles of open country. >>

Horses are the stars at The Resort at Paws Up. The ranch herd includes domestic horses and rescued wild mustangs that are trained for guest interactions. Each horse is matched to a rider's ability from beginner to expert.



THE SCOOP

HISTORY The land was once a transportation corridor for the Nez Percé, Flathead and Blackfeet, then later for fur trappers, miners and loggers. The Native Americans called the river Cokalahishkit, which means “the river of the road to the buffalo.” In 1806, Captain Meriwether Lewis followed the trail along the Big Blackfoot in July, returning from the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and it is believed that he climbed a tall rock formation for a vantage point to see the trail ahead.

A young man named Paul Greenough acquired four homesteads on the land in 1915, and along with the purchase of additional land, formed the first 3,800-acre ranch, then called the Sunset Valley Ranch. Greenough’s father, Thomas L. Greenough of Missoula, made his fortune in mining and timber. The son didn’t want to follow his father’s footsteps but instead began his career in ranching.

Greenough stocked his pastures with sheep in addition to cattle and horses, with woolies painted with a giant green O on their wool. The ranch and the surrounding area also became known as Greenough. Greenough died of leukemia at the age of 41, but the Greenough name carried on.

The ranch went through many owners over the next seven decades. Then in 1997, the ranch that had grown to 10,000 deeded acres and 27,000 leased acres was purchased by the Lipson family. The Lipsons moved from Colorado, bringing a herd of superior horses and the goal of building a first-class Black Angus seed stock operation. They named the ranch “Paws Up,” a name inspired by “those over-friendly, wriggling dogs that greet visitors by putting their paws up in the air while their tails thump the floor a mile a minute.” >>



The village at Paws Up is home to Tank, a full-service cocktail bar, plus casual fine dining at Trough, and fine dining at Pomp. Guests reach the village by driving a short distance from their cabins or by requesting transportation through the Paws Up app.

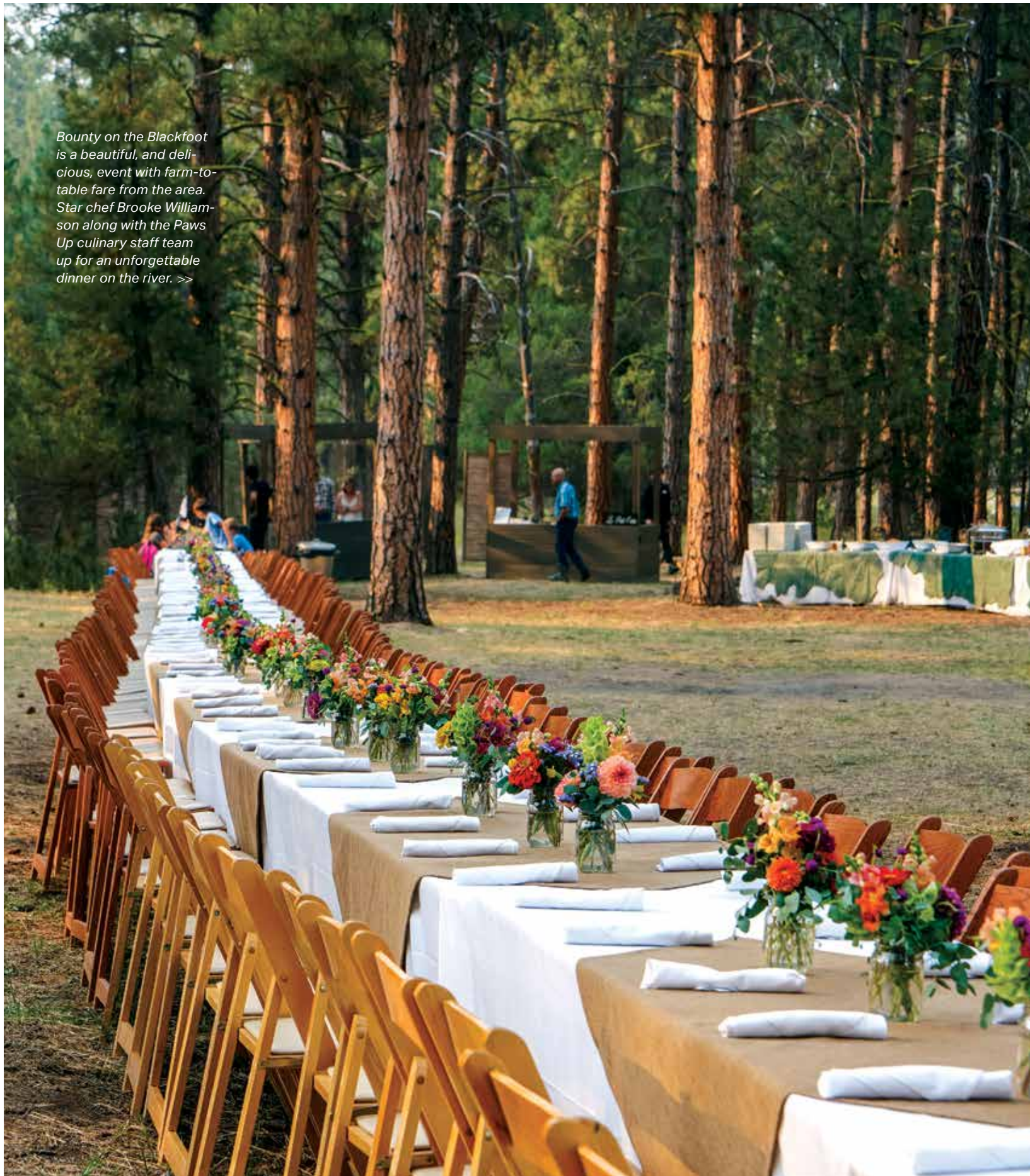
Dinner that evening was Bounty on the Blackfoot, a beautiful farm-to-table experience along the banks of the Blackfoot River, joining other guests to enjoy dishes by celebrity chef Brooke Williamson and the Paws Up culinary crew. Food is something the resort prides itself on, offering dining options at three restaurants—informal dining at the Shed, fine dining at Pomp and casual fine dining at Trough—plus multiple opportunities with guest chefs and special food-focused weekends.

After dinner that night, we sat on the porch of our cabin, watching as dark clouds approached. Soon rain pounded on the porch roof like a thundering herd of horses. It washed the land clean, then moved on. As we sat quietly enjoying the fresh scent of the land after a rainstorm, my daughter said, “Next time, Mom, let’s come for a week!” >>

An unbeatable view from the spa—miles of pasture and a distant mountain range. Spa Town is a colony of pristine white tents stitched together by a wooden boardwalk nestled in a pine forest.



Bounty on the Blackfoot is a beautiful, and delicious, event with farm-to-table fare from the area. Star chef Brooke Williamson along with the Paws Up culinary staff team up for an unforgettable dinner on the river. >>





In addition to private cabins, The Resort at Paws Up offers luxury camping featuring six camps with safari-style luxury tents that cater to families, couples and groups. Luxury glamping camps come with their own butlers.

THE SCOOP

LOCATION The ranch is located in the heart of the picturesque Blackfoot River Valley, 35 miles north-east of Missoula, in Greenough, Montana.

GETTING THERE

Commercial Air Guests fly into Bozeman International Airport, serviced by Allegiant Air, Delta, Alaska, United and American.

Private Jet Service XO provides on-demand jet service to and from Missoula International Airport.

TRANSPORTATION TO THE RANCH A Paws Up driver meets guests at the airport.

GETTING AROUND THE RANCH Guests are assigned their own Lexus at check-in to make getting around the 37,000 acres easy. And for those who don't want to drive, no problem—just call the transportation center for a ride and a car will pick you up.

ACCOMMODATIONS 27 private vacation homes amid forestland, overlooking rolling meadows, rivers, pastoral creeks and mountain panoramas. **Glamping Tents** From mid-May through mid-October, The Resort at Paws Up features six camps with safari-style luxury tents that cater to families, couples and groups, redefining the phrase "roughing it."

ACTIVITIES Although horses are a key component of the Paws Up experience, the resort offers more recreational experiences than will fit in this small column, including fly-fishing, rafting and floating to name a few. You'll find information about the many adventures and activities on the Paws Up website.

THE PAWS UP APP Before you arrive, download the Paws Up travel app. You'll use the app for dinner reservations, calling for transportation, and convenient communication with the concierge and booking activities. It displays an itinerary of your activities for the day and includes all the information you need while staying at the resort. ○