

TOP TRAIL PICKS OF  
THE TRAILMEISTER

FACEBOOK POSTS  
FROM OUR READERS

GAIT-WAYS TO  
GREAT GETAWAYS

# trailBLAZER

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# *Gait-Ways to Great* GETAWAYS!

NO FOOLING—APRIL  
BRINGS MORE THAN  
SPRING SHOWERS:  
IT'S TIME FOR A  
GRAPE GETAWAY  
TO REIN IN SOME  
GREAT RIDING IN  
UNEXPECTED PLACES!

BY PAT BARNHART

Once again, the diversity of America shines brightly, reflected in our Great Getaways destinations this month. We are heading south—you may think “Southern France,” so classy and enchanting are our specially selected hosts—but you’d be wrong.

South is not only a direction, or a collection of quaint states, it is a place of historical significance, and a state of mind. The South, y’all, embodies all the good things of life—family, friends, good food, love of animals, hospitality and horsemanship. The deeper you travel into the South, the more you are enveloped by the mystique, the soft cloak of moist warm breezes and the tug of history, pulling you back into times gone by. You’ll find some unique cultures borne of our mixed heritage (West Indian, Caribbean, Cajun, Creole, African and even Latin American), and the cuisines that evoke those long-ago settlers. From rice with black-eyed peas, to red beans and rice, black beans and rice, or Dirty Rice, you’ll discover a taste to love. So now that you’re hungry for more...

**L**aissez les bons temps rouler ~ Let the good times roll!

And so, we begin this Great Getaway in Bush, Louisiana at **Splendor Farms Bed & Breakfast**. This 75-acre working farm is situated only one hour from the famous French Quarter of New Orleans (with its legendary blues, biscuits, bouillabaisse, and beignets); a place to have a good—make that great—time with your hosts, Kelly and Albert Bensabat

**CONTACT INFO:**

► 27329 Mill Creek Road  
Bush, LA 70431

► 866-543-2767  
or 985-630-8960

► [www.splendorfarms.com](http://www.splendorfarms.com)

► [Kelly@splendorfarms.com](mailto:Kelly@splendorfarms.com)

and their menagerie of critters. Here at the aptly named Splendor Farms, your room rate will include horseback riding, a delicious full breakfast, access to hiking trails and even fishing equipment (including bait, but you'll have to bait your own dang hook).

Accommodations range from a bunkhouse (that sleeps up to eight) to guest rooms, and even a 40-ft RV. The RV offers privacy and is tricked out with satellite TV, a library of books and videos, a queen-sized bed, full kitchen and all the accoutrements you'll need to "camp" in style and comfort. Your view: the horses!

Lawns, a patio, swimming pool, horses, adorable dogs,

all set in the countryside of St. Tammany Parish (what other states call counties), add up to an authentic, idyllic getaway. Kids will love the petting zoo (even if their age says they're not kids anymore), home to chickens, turkeys, pigs, sheep, goats, alpacas and ponies. Kelly and Al breed miniature dachshunds so be prepared to smile a lot. They are just too cute for words.

Horseback riding takes place at the farm's stables, and you'll head out to the nearby Bogue Chitto River; if you're not riding, feel free to pet puppies, go fishing, swim in the pool, play horseshoes or bash a volleyball into submission. You can even come for the day; it's not necessary to spend the night. And when the timing is right, you can help harvest, plant, collect fresh eggs or pick veggies from the garden. If you're an urbanite and crave some country living and a little dirt under your nails, this is your invitation to become a farm gal or guy for a day or a week. Take a nap in the hammock or go tubing on the river when your work is done. As Scarlet O'Hara would say, "Tomorrow is another day."

This is a getaway that allows you to enjoy the farm life but still only be an hour from the airport or the nightlife of N'awleans, y'all.

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Splendor Farms

*Gait-Ways to Great*  
**GETAWAYS!**

Gaits in the Grapes



Gaits in the Grapes



**F**rom southern Louisiana, we swerve overland to southern California...and ride among the vineyards with **Gaits in the Grapes**.

You've always heard that red wine goes with meat and white wine goes with chicken. Well then, what kind of wine goes with horseback riding? The answer is: whatever you choose!

If sittin' in the saddle and sippin' fine wine (not simultaneously, please) is your idea of heaven, you will hear a chorus of angels singing when you grab your friends or loved ones, load up your best-behaved horses and

**CONTACT INFO:**  
 ▶ Temecula, CA 92592  
 ▶ 951-515-9964  
 ▶ jkoth@dslextreme.com  
 ▶ gaitsinthegrapes.com

head to Southern California's Temecula Wine Country. But wait: Not

so fast. Before you go, Scott and Juanita Koth, your guides and hosts, want to know more about you. They're not nosey and will never share your personal information, they just want to carefully plan your getaway and make it unique and special just for you (and maybe your honey bunny).

This no cookie-cutter, one size fits all riding experience, as you'll soon discover. It all begins with a detailed question-



Gaits in the Grapes

naire, designed to personalize your ride and elicit your wants, needs, experience level, length of time you can spend, your horse's level of training and much more. The more you tell them, the better your wine country ride can be tailored to you. It can be adventurous, leisurely, exhilarating or romantic. Pair

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*Gait-Ways to Great*  
**GETAWAYS!**



Rowse's



Rowse's

your ride with a Winery Tour, Trail Picnic, Wine Tasting or Gourmet Winery Meal. You can even bring along your saddle pals and split the guide fee. In fact, most rides only average out to be \$10-\$20 per hour for an indelible, incredible memory.

**Gaits In the Grapes (GIG)** is a family-owned equestrian trail guide service and ranch located in the heart of Temecula Wine Country. Scott and Juanita have been riding the local trails for years and decided to share this wonderful area with other riders, lending their expertise to those who may not be familiar with wine country. You will get the insider's scoop on everything! The Koths have built a professional relationship based on trust and safety, with many of the area's finest wineries, thus gaining exclusive access to some of the most beautiful, scenic, private vineyards and Wine Country Trails Network. If you love riding and have always been intrigued by vineyards, this is your chance to experience both.

Rides often last from one to five hours, customized for you, and take you right to the winery, where you can experience wine tastings, fascinating winery tours, gourmet meals, well-stocked gift shops, restrooms or your own picnic lunch. While you're away, the guide will be horse-sitting, allowing you peace of mind. This is a wine and horse lover's dream come true, bringing together two elements of the good life. It can also be very budget friendly.

This might also be a great change of pace for your horse,

*"Gaits In the Grapes (GIG) is a family-owned equestrian trail guide service and ranch located in the heart of Temecula Wine Country. Scott and Juanita have been riding the local trails for years and decided to share this wonderful area with other riders, lending their expertise to those who may not be familiar with wine country."*

with new vistas to explore, away from the usual trails, arenas or pasture rides. Remember, they don't rent horses. Everything is planned for you, your saddle buddies, and your own horses.

If you are traveling to wine country from afar, the folks at GIG can hook you up with horse boarding, feed and supplies, farrier and veterinary care, hotel rooms, restaurants, a carriage ride or a quaint B&B. They know the area well and won't rein you wrong, and you also won't be far from the beach. Pair your ride with picking up your membership at the winery, and keep in mind that this is not a "one and done" ride—there are lots of options so you'll want to ride, rinse (your horse) and repeat as needed!

Is this GIG for you? Give them a call, or simply fill out the questionnaire on the website, and let the fun begin (more pictures on their Facebook page). Cheers. Or should we say, "Bottoms up, into the saddle?"

**O**kay, okay, I get it. You want a real cowboy adventure. No fancy wine country and no Frenchy French Quarter hoopla, just some ridin' and ropin'. Here you go:

For not just a taste but a big honkin' bite of the Old West, and a chance to experience ranch life "for real," let's head to Nebraska, where time may not stand still, but you'll wish it could. What's that, you say? Never been to Nebraska? Didn't know Nebraska was cowboy country? Well, you bet your corn-fed steak it is! Betcha never saw that comin'!

So let's get our giddy-up on and discover some of the best fly-over territory you'll ever experience. This vast and amazing

**CONTACT INFO:**

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Burwell, NE 68823

▶ 308-346-5530

▶ tammy@1plus1ranch.com

▶ www.1plus1ranch.com

country many call home is just filled with treasures waiting to be uncovered.

At award winning **Rowse's 1+1 Ranch**, you will get plenty of saddle time, the pleasures are simple and straightforward and the hospitality is cowboy style: genuine and honest. Rowse's is a family-run working ranch and guests don't stay guests for long; they quickly become part of the ranch operation and members of the family. Jerry and Tammy Rouse can't wait to help you put a smile on the face of your inner cowboy, especially if it's lots of riding you're after.

You will work cattle (rope, brand, drive and sort), ride the range and be amazed by your well-trained, ranch-raised Quarter horse. In Nebraska, the spaces are wide open to the horizon—no crowds, no city noise, no neon lights or jangling cell phones with their constant demands for attention. The door's always open and the coffee's always on. It's just butt, saddle, cattle from dawn to dusk, with occasional breaks for grippin' and grinnin'.

Our nation's Western heritage is highly respected here; the Rowse family (including son Kyle, a 7th generation rancher) treats each season with reverence and excitement for what it brings. Spring means calves and foals being born, summer's sun shines with long rides to check on fences and cattle, team roping and penning events, and cowboy socials. Fall is roundup time, and guess what? More long cattle drives, team roping and team penning. It's just a bit cooler.

Your hard work is rewarded (after taking care of your horse and luxuriating in a hot shower) by a hearty home-cooked meal that Tammy will prepare personally. Expect lots of beef; you're in cattle country. You will also no doubt be regaled with stories told by your hosts, sometimes with tongue firmly planted in cheek. When you are full and relaxed, head out to the campfire for more conversation and coffee or a cold drink.

Lots of awards and accolades assure you've made a great choice; they've even been named "Best US Cowboy Experi-

continued next page

# Gait-Ways to Great GETAWAYS!

Rowse's



ence” two years in a row by Rustic Vacations, and are a “Top 50 Ranch” pick.

What’s missing on this 7,000-acre ranch? Head-to-tail trail rides, quiche, fake anything, powder puffs and massages. Located near Burwell in the heart of the amazing Sand Hills (North America’s largest sand dune formation), the area is a tribute to the independent, indomitable spirit of our forefathers and those intrepid settlers who dared to leave the “comforts” of the eastern seaboard and head west. You will enjoy reading about the history and lore of the land and the ranch on their website (see p. 83).

What’s not missing? Comfort! In the Main Lodge with its thematic Western décor, you’ll find the dining room, laundry facilities, satellite TV and wireless internet. Yeah, you can bring your dang laptop. Geez,



don’t panic. You’ll get a good night’s sleep in either a log bunkhouse or the lodge; either way you’ll get a kick out of the comfy authentic décor. Tammy made the headboards herself!

When it comes to an authentic Western experience, the correct answer is: 1+1 equals too great a time to pass up.



Former Paso Fino ranch owner/trainer and avid trail rider Pat Barnhart has traded her years in the saddle for a career that now centers around writing, book editing and travel. She has authored two novels (Vanderville and Throwing Bones) and lives in central Florida with Belle the Basset Hound, who runs a tight ship.

Gaitways to Great Getaways would like to encourage you to explore America, and don’t only associate a great riding vacation with the traditionally Western states. Horse lovers have made the entire US “Horse Country.” Thinking out of the box this time means considering a trip to a state that’s not square, may not be on the left or right coast, but has great riding, delicious regional cuisine, warm hosts, and hidden treasures. Okay, class dismissed. Put your boots on, grab a map and go explore! See you on the trails.

## STATS *from our trailBLAZER readers*

**52%** are considering staying at an equestrian vacation spot in 2013.



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