

Kansas and Oklahoma – where everyday life mirrors the cowboy myth!

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With seemingly endless horizons, always breezy, and typical of the Great Plains (the prairie between the Mississippi Valley and the Rocky Mountains) Kansas and Oklahoma sit at the very centre of America, amidst a sea of grass. The two states present themselves modestly. They never show off, yet they are - authentically - a remarkable holiday destination. Here, in the heartlands of the US, cowboys and indians are not a myth, but a reality!

The cowboy, like no other character, has shaped the American West. In Kansas and Oklahoma cowboys, cattle drives and cow towns are more than just part of a legendary Wild West image. Here, cowboy culture - the hats and boots, the ropes and chaps, the spurs and saddles, are all part of everyday life for many. The bold cow punchers, who drove more than 20 million, mostly longhorn, cattle from Texas to the north between the 1860's and 1880's, heading for the emerging railroad stations of Kansas, shaped this image. Their legendary cattle trails, like the Chisholm Trail and the Great Western Cattle Trail, can still be followed today.

Sustainable ranching and holistic management of cattle are common in Kansas and Oklahoma. Longhorns are still being bred and even bison have returned to the vast grasslands of the prairie. Here Cowboy and Native American culture is easy to experience - during rodeo and pow-wow season (May to September) and its many events; in country & western music districts, and at hundreds of BBQ joints and steakhouses. If your dream is to become a cowboy or cowgirl for a short period of time – this is the place to live it!

In Kansas and Oklahoma working cattle ranches offer unique ranch vacations, where guests are allowed - even expected - to be active. Choose to stay a few days as part of your fly-drive holiday, or immerse yourself in the ranch lifestyle for a few weeks at the Island Guest Ranch (north of Oklahoma City, OK), the Flying W Ranch in Kansas' Flint Hills (north of Wichita) or the Moore Ranch (south of Dodge City, KS). Guests are instantly considered part of the 'outfit' - the extended ranch family and the cowboys.

Typical everyday activities on a ranch can include anything from moving cattle to branding and vaccinating them; weaning horses to roping and training them. Luxury isn't common on such ranches, but accommodations are very comfortable, the food is delicious and the personal interaction with the people and place can be life changing.

So-called dude or guest ranches are generally operations without their own cattle. Most important at this type of ranch is rest & recreation, experiencing nature & wildlife, horseback riding, and a broad range of outdoor activities. Such guest ranches include the Circle S Guest Ranch & Country Inn in Lawrence, KS, and the Haverstreng Guest Ranch (south of Oklahoma City, OK), and they are also perfect for a family holidays.

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