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TRAVEL

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Wildcatter Ranch and Resort

Rough it in the wilderness—if a spa and an infinity pool counts as roughing it.

D**A****YS OF OLD:** Visiting the 1,500-acre **Wildcatter Ranch and Resort**, 90 miles northwest of Fort Worth, is like taking a step back in time. Life slows down a little, and things become a bit simpler. Walk into your room, and try not to forget what year it is. Each suite has its own historical theme, so you'll not only get a history lesson, you'll feel like you're a part of it. **HIT THE TRAILS:** Although you won't be doing much work at the ranch, there are plenty of opportunities to get out, stretch your legs, and breathe in some fresh air. Sign up for one of the many activities

offered at Wildcatter. From riding horses through the 25 miles of trails and petting **Big Boy**—a longhorn whose horns are 98 inches across—to canoeing, fishing, or hiking, the ranch has just about anything you need for outdoor adventure. Catch up with head wrangler (and bull fighter) **Jay Brewer**, or spend some time shooting clay pigeons with **Jim Budarf**, the activities director. **TAKE A STROLL:** Missing the big city? Stroll into the town of **Graham** and walk around America's largest downtown square. Visit the ladies at **BellaFord Art Gallery**, a chapel-turned-art gallery. Or check out the locally made jewelry, belts, and boots at **Welch Western Wear**. When you've

FAST FACTS

WHERE TO STAY:

Wildcatter Ranch and Resort
6062 Hwy. 16 South,
Graham, Texas. Rates
from \$129 for the hotel;
\$169 for the suites.

HOW TO GET THERE:

Hop in the car and go for a ride. Wildcatter Ranch is just a two-hour drive west of Dallas, 7 miles outside the city of Graham.



Team Building, Ranch Style

Forget icebreakers and ropes courses. Head over to Wildcatter Ranch to get to know and trust your co-workers. With a Victorian-themed hotel and conference center and nine venues equipped with all the technology you could possibly need, Wildcatter offers the traditional meeting scenario and some rather nontraditional bonding experiences. Join Jay Brewer out at the stables for some out-of-the-box methods on learning to trust one another. He may throw you and your teammates into a pen and get you to sort calves (a task you'll learn is impossible if you don't communicate), or he may make you race to dress a goat. First team to get the goat and its clothes back to the finish line wins. Or join Jim Budarf for an Amazing Race Survival Course, scavenger hunt around the ranch, or a game of Texas Hold 'Em (gambling is a great way to bond). And, bosses, to make your employees really love you, we suggest having the Wildcatter Steakhouse cater your lunches. It'll be a business trip like none other. Visit wildcatterranch.com for more information.

by chef **Bob Bratcher**. Not one to stand around and direct, Bratcher welcomes guests, suggests drinks, and even brings out the food. Ah, the glorious food. When in Rome, do as the Romans do; when at a steakhouse on a ranch in Texas, order steak. The folks at Wildcatter know how to do it right. The secret rub, applied liberally, begs you to eat more. Don't skip the appetizers. The **Snake Bites**, baby back ribs, and smoked stuffed peppers set the tone immediately. And don't forget dessert. Sample the sundae or the chocolate cake. Or try some of the apple crisp. You can't go wrong. **D**



had your fill of shopping, be sure to grab some lunch with the gals at **Gild & Nosh**, a rustic antiques store and cafe. **CALM THE WILD WEST:** Unlike when you were younger, you now appreciate the finer things in life. Which, you've come to realize, can include the simple act of sitting on the **back porch**, sipping coffee, and watching the sunrise. When you finally pull yourself out of your chair, head down to the spa for a **Swedish massage**.

If you're still sore from a long day of riding horses, slip into the hot tub or infinity pool overlooking the North Texas Hill Country. **LISTEN FOR THE DINNER BELL:** What's better after a long day on the ranch than being called home for a decadent dinner? At the **Wildcatter Steakhouse**, you'll be greeted and charmed



HOME ON THE RANGE: (clockwise from opposite) view of the ranch; trail ride; canoeing the Brazos River; Wildcatter Ranch and Resort hotel; dinner at Wildcatter Steakhouse