

AUGUST 2022

Horse & Rider's

TRAIL RIDING

MONTHLY

In this issue...

TRAIL SOUND

**RIDE IN THE
THEODORE
ROOSEVELT
NATIONAL
PARK**

**THE
HISTORICAL
CANADIAN
ROCKIES**



Brought to you by



HorseandRider.com

WANTED



GREASE-FREE FLY SPRAY WITH KILLER INSTINCT

MADE IN THE U.S.A.



★ REWARD ★

NON-OILY PROTECTION THAT WON'T QUIT.

LEARN MORE AT [ABSORBINE.COM](http://absorbine.com)

© 2022 W.F. YOUNG, INC.

A man wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and a tan cowboy hat is riding a brown horse. The horse is in motion, possibly trotting or cantering, across a grassy field. The background features rolling hills under a cloudy sky. The text "TRAIL-SOUND" is overlaid in large white letters across the middle of the image.

TRAIL-SOUND

Be sure your next trail horse is sound enough
for his job with these tips.

To become the trustworthy, reliable, and dependable trail horse you count on in the backcountry, your horse has to be used. In the process, he'll rack up some scrapes, bumps, and cosmetic issues. A few cosmetic issues are OK, but when you're in the market to buy a trail horse, you need him to be more than reliable. You need him to be sound.

Here I'll explain common health-history, appearance, and movement issues that can indicate future soundness issues that could influence your horse's usability on the trail. With each soundness consideration, I'll give you the green light to go ahead, yellow to proceed with caution, and red light—which you know means don't go further with the horse purchase. These clues will help you buy with confidence, ensuring that your horse isn't just reliable, but trail-sound.

Issues in Health History

A horse's history demonstrates how much he's been used and how sound he's likely to be in the future. Though many great horses have issues as the result of being used and becoming a great horse in the process, some are too much to manage and become non-negotiable for a trail rider in the market to buy.

● **Arthritis:** Yellow light.

Proceed with caution and know how you'll primarily ride before you buy. Though arthritis can be managed with joint supplements, NSAIDs, and cold and heat therapy, it'll never go away. Heavier riders, such as large men; those interested in difficult backcountry riding; or a rider who'll use the horse more than five times per week will struggle to manage worsening arthritis. Even with the best management, a flare-up can stop a ride prematurely if your horse is in too much pain to go on. If, however, you're a physically light rider, such as a youth, smaller adult, or someone who only plans to ride lightly in easier terrain, you can look past mild arthritis.

● **Bowed and/or Strained Tendons and Ligaments:** Yellow light.

Proceed with caution unless you have the experience and patience to help your horse fully recover from this type of injury. Once a horse strains his tendon past what it's accustomed to, it doesn't just affect his ability to pack into the mountains; it also impacts his soundness in the arena. Proper recovery is key, and it's not unusual for injuries like this to take six to eight months to fully heal. Though the same exact location is unlikely to reinjure after it's correctly rehabbed, heavy, long backcountry travel is demanding on your horse's structure, especially if he's predisposed to this type of issue. Get a thorough veterinary exam before you purchase.

● **Navicular:** Red light.

In the past, navicular was a career-ending diagnosis for a horse. While it's more manageable now, it's not curable and will eventually cause unsoundness in your horse. A youth rider or someone who's interested in light riding may be able to manage pre-existing navicular with corrective shoeing and other therapies. If the case is severe or you're a serious trail rider, steer clear all together.

● **Stifle Injury:** Red light.

Injuries to the stifle joint are temperamental. If a prospect has a pre-existing issue that you know about, pass on him unless you're positive that he's been safely and slowly rehabilitated without subsequent flare-ups and issues. Know that he'll need to be more carefully con-



A horse's feet are his base. Small chips, cracks, and other issues aren't deal-breakers. But, you have to know how much care is required to get his feet back to trail riding shape, and if you have the patience for it.

ditioned for the rest of his life to avoid problems. If you don't know the sellers well and aren't sure about his rehabilitation success, it's best to pass. With this type of joint injury, it can worsen to the point that he's no longer sound to ride at all—not even for light riding.

● **Stringhalt:** Red light.

Any irregularity in a horse's gait in the hind end is a deal-breaker for me. It could be due to a neurological issue or caused by an injury. Often this occurs in a trail horse if he gets his leg stuck in deep mud and pulls it. This stretches the tendon farther than its natural range, causing this issue. Like a stifle issue, it can be rehabbed to some extent, but it's difficult to manage, even after it's healed and he's properly conditioned.

● **Stone Bruising and Sore Feet:**

Green light.

A horse with sore feet or stone bruising likely lives in an area with few rocks, so he has sore feet. Ride on soft ground and give him time to heal, and he'll be ready to go. If you plan to ride in difficult terrain where he's likely to re-bruise, his feet will need to become conditioned. Hard, rocky ground toughens feet, which results in fewer stone bruises on the trail. Let him get conditioned in his natural environment by not trying to protect him from hard ground, and then have him shod before your next rocky ride. Always watch where you ride and choose the least harsh option.

● **Quarter Cracks:** Yellow light.

Cracks are fixable, and like poor feet, he

needs feed, conditioning, farrier care, and patience to get his feet back into shape. This comes at a cost though, so consider your budget and timeframe before purchasing a foot project.

Issues in Appearance

A non-show horse doesn't need to be a showstopper if he has the experience and temperament for trail riding. But he does need to have attractive structure. → Unappealing structure typically means abnormalities that cause inefficient movement. Over time, poor movement strains his body, and especially his joints, causing soundness issues.

● **Poor Body Condition:** Green light.

Don't shy away from a skinny, poorly conditioned horse just because he



A horse doesn't have to have perfect conformation or be fully conditioned in order to be a great trail prospect. He does need to be generally structurally correct and sturdy enough for the demands of your riding.

Know Your Why Before You Buy

When you're in the market to buy, the most dangerous approach to horse shopping is to have no approach—or plan—at all. Ask yourself these questions to help you determine the type of rider you are and what soundness issues you can overlook.

How much do I want to spend? Rehabbing an injury or conditioning and feeding a horse to fitness takes time and money. Work this into your buying budget so you don't overspend.

How much time do you have? A seasoned horse that's been there and done that is perfect for someone who doesn't have a lot of time to commit to training, rehab, and extensive care. It sometimes means you must compromise on budget if you expect your horse to be ready to go and sound.

How much experience do you have? Some pre-existing issues are more difficult to manage than others. Be sure you understand what you're facing before you take on a soundness issue or other problem.

How difficult are the trails you ride? A horse with a pre-existing condition won't be able to withstand many long, strenuous rides, and taking him on them will make him worse. Instead, look for a horse that's physically capable to ride the way you want to.

doesn't look attractive. He won't have a nice, sleek coat or appear muscled and ready to ride, but so long as he's structurally correct, doesn't have major soundness issues, and has the experience you need, he'll still be a great trail horse. With feed, exercise, and time, even a poorly conditioned horse is a great fit. *Caveat:* Be sure his condition isn't due to a chronic illness or disease.

● **Weak Muscular Structure:**

Red light.

Unlike poor body score, which indicates that he hasn't been well cared for, weak muscular structure is an issue with the base. A horse without a solid base won't be ready for difficult riding, even with the most expensive feeding program and rigorous riding schedule. This is because he either has a muscle disorder or simply is too slight in build to support the type of riding you plan to do.

● **Angular Irregularities:** Yellow light.

While slight irregularities in pastern and hoof angle are manageable with shoeing, a horse with noticeable abnormalities, such as severe toe-out or toe-in, will inevitably experience issues. He'll develop bony processes and arthritis, which is manageable for a light, inactive rider, but non-negotiable for a serious trail rider.

If you don't plan to use him for high-level performance, slight structural angular issues aren't deal-breakers. A horse that's slightly toed-in or out, has too steep shoulders and hips, a long back, or sickle hocks will work for recreational and less strenuous trail riding. Seek out the help of a good farrier who'll shoe and trim to your horse's structure to manage the abnormalities, keeping him sound and staving off long-term issues, such as arthritis.

● **Poor Feet:** Green light.

Shelly, soft feet intimidate riders because good feet are such a necessity for all riding, but especially if you ride outside of the arena. Don't let poor feet

scare you away from a prospect though. A good feeding program, supplements, conditioning, and regular trimming and farrier care will improve a horse's feet in time. Even if he never has great feet, they'll be strong enough and conditioned for trail terrain. You can also consider using hoof boots to help compensate for lack of hoof strength.

Issues in Movement

If a horse doesn't move well and he doesn't have any apparent structural issues, it's either an undisclosed pre-existing issue or a sign that there's one on the way. Don't just look at a prospect and ask about his history; watch him go and look for indications of unsoundness.

● **Rough Gait:** Green light.

If he stabs the ground with his toes or trips in his front end often, it's usually not a sign of injury. He either needs a trim or is lazy, which are both solvable issues. Tripping in an exposed area can mean serious injury, so you'll want to be sure to solve these problems at home before you head out on the trail. Have him trimmed or shod and encourage him to pick up his feet with drills and exercises. Work him over obstacles, such as trail poles in your arena. If he continues to walk lazily, know that he can be a safety hazard in the backcountry.

● **Head Bobbing:** Red light.

Head bobbing is always a sign of lameness. If you see that he has a hitch in his gait and the seller hasn't shared any lameness, move on. He or she isn't being honest with you. If the lameness is new, work with the seller to enlist a veterinarian for a soundness check to discover the root cause before you invest in more vet care. If the owners balk at the suggestion, keep shopping. It's possible there are other undisclosed issues.

● **Stiff Flexion:** Yellow light.

Before you invest in a vet check, do some pre-screening of your own with



If a horse is stiff in his neck, shoulders, or elsewhere and it's not related to lack of training, it's an indication of an issue. Flexibility is just as important for a trail horse as a performance prospect, so bend and flex when you try him.

a flexion test. Hold him flexed at each joint, flexing his fetlocks, hocks, and shoulders, and then trot him off after each flexion test. If he comes off of the static hold stiff, he'll need a vet check to determine the root cause. The stiffness can be from an injury or the beginning of a long-term condition, such as arthritis. If he's an older horse that's been off for a while, it's possible that he's stiff from inactivity. Joint supplements and progressive conditioning should get him back in shape.

● **General Stiffness:** Yellow light. If as you ride, or as you watch the horse

go, you notice stiffness in his movement that's not related to training, beware. If he carries his head funny, is unable to stride out, or can't bend and flex his neck, it could be due to an injury that hasn't been well managed in his shoulders, back, or elsewhere. He'll need additional vet screening or body work before he's ready for you.

● **Hind-End Irregularity:** Red light. Funny, irregular, or weak movement in the back end often indicates a back issue. If he's out of shape, it might be that he lacks the strength to properly carry himself. While the appearance of his topline will improve with conditioning, back issues themselves aren't solvable with exercise. Saddle fit and pad selection will also be more difficult for a horse like this. It's best to pass and keep looking.

● **Winging Out or Paddling:** Red light. A horse that flares his legs out when he moves has a joint deviation at his knees or fetlocks. This movement causes strain to the joint every time he moves and is exacerbated with difficult riding. If you're the type of trail rider who enjoys difficult trails, multi-day trips, or who rides frequently, know that even if a horse doesn't have visible issues now, he will later, and most likely it'll be arthritis. To check for the source of the winging or paddling, start with his knee. Fully bend his knee and look at his leg. If it flares out or in from his knee, rather than aligning straight, the knee is the abnormality. To check the fetlock, bend his fetlock and watch whether it arches straight or off to either side. If it doesn't align straight, his fetlock is the issue. ★

MORE FLEX PER SCOOP GUARANTEED

Compared to the leading competitor.

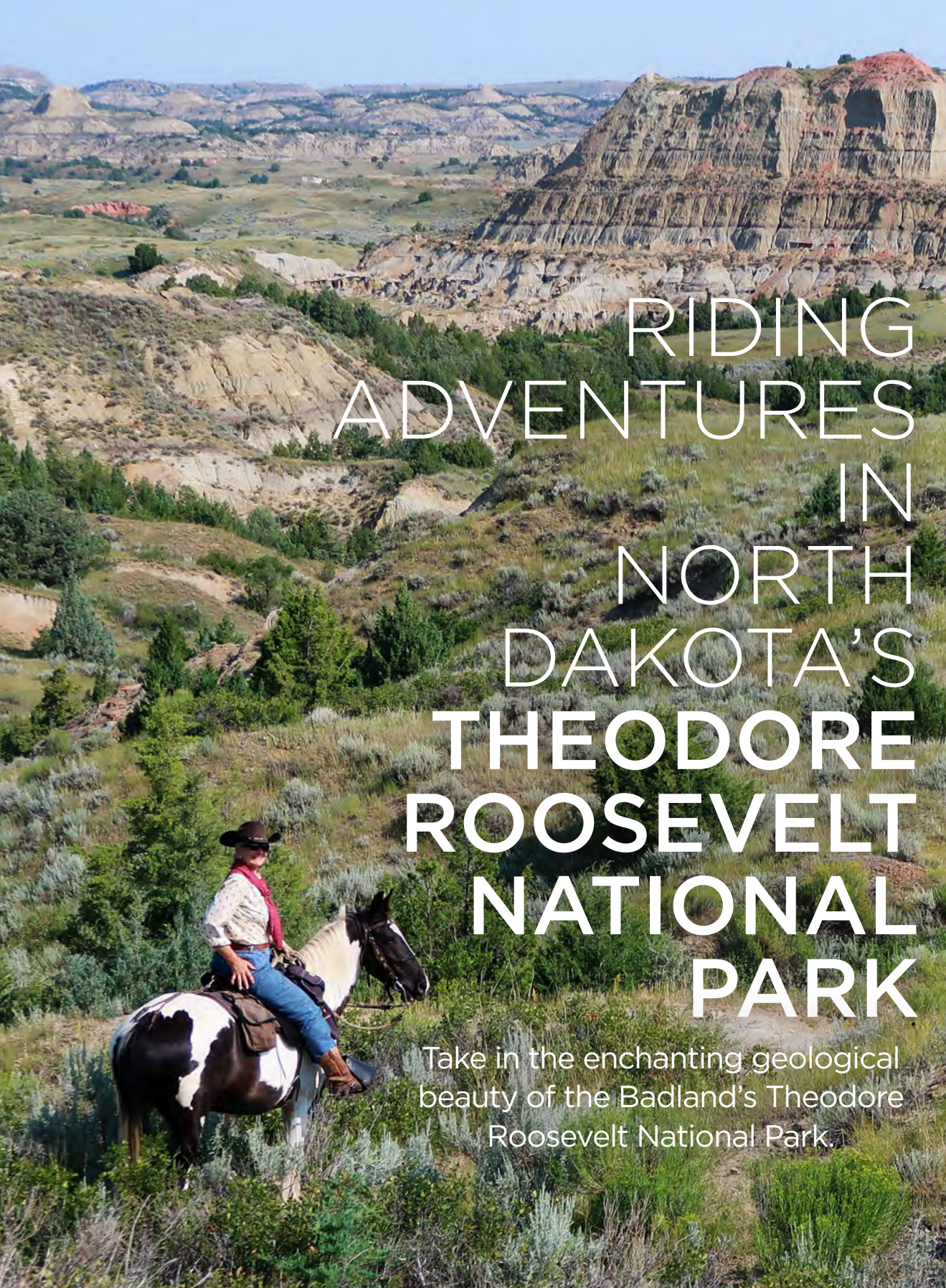


WHAT'S IN THOSE PELLETS?

FLEX means a more powerful combination of key ingredients for comprehensive joint, cartilage and inflammation care. **MAX** means more nutrients per scoop and better bioavailability so all that good stuff ends up where it's needed and not in your horse's bedding. Plus, there's no loading dose so your horse gets maximum joint health support every day - from the very first scoop.

Take joint health to the max. + FlexPlusMax.com





RIDING ADVENTURES IN NORTH DAKOTA'S THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK

Take in the enchanting geological beauty of the Badland's Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Theodore Roosevelt National Park has all the elements needed for a true-blue Western riding adventure. The scenery is breathtaking, as well as lonesome and foreboding. One can ride trails or cross-country and most likely encounter bison herds, deer, elk, prairie dogs, bighorn sheep, and a multitude of bird life. This has been one of our favorite riding destinations, and we would like to share it with you.

THE BACKGROUND

Theodore Roosevelt spent some years in North Dakota's Badlands following the deaths of his wife and mother, both of whom died on the same day. He came here in 1883 to hunt, ranch, and have a "mental escape" from his personal problems. It worked. He fell in love with this singular landscape, calling it the "romance of my life." He said

that if it were not for his experiences in the Badlands, he could never have become president.

The Badlands is a unique geological phenomenon. The horizontal layers that can be seen in the park are made up of sediments that were deposited between 55 and 60 million years ago in lakes, ponds, and swamps. The petrified trees we see today are from the sequoia and bald cypress trees that once grew in the swampy regions. Over time, decomposing plant life became coal beds, sediments turned into sandstone, and volcanic ash became bentonite clay.

Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) has three separate units: the north unit, located 52 miles north of Interstate 94 on US Highway 85; the south unit, located along Interstate 94; and the Elkhorn Ranch site, located

approximately midway between the two along the Little Missouri River. These three sites comprise 110 square miles of visually stunning Badlands.

The south unit has the visitor center and contains information on the history and geology of this region. All of our riding was done here in the south unit. Maps are available at the visitor center to help plan your riding. Inquire about trail conditions and trail closures. Camping information can be found here as well. There's an entrance fee to enter the park, and certified weed-free hay is required.

An adventure, by definition, is hazardous. So before heading into the hills, take time to think and plan for you and your equine partners. Take plenty of water, food, sunscreen, a map, a multipurpose tool, and a cellphone—which may or may not work. Have an extra jacket in case you need it. →



1



2



3



4

1. The Medora Musical is a Broadway quality show held in an outside amphitheater under the big Badlands sky.
2. The North Dakota Hall of Fame is located in Medora. Explore the 15,000-square-foot museum dedicated to ranching, cowboy life, and early-day life on the northern plains.
3. Charlene with a statue of Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt worked and lived in this area in the 1880s. The national park is named after him. He said he couldn't have been president if it hadn't been for his experiences in North Dakota.
4. Theodore Roosevelt's Maltese Cabin is located at the national park visitor center in Medora. Roosevelt actually lived, worked, and wrote in this cabin during his days in the Badlands.



Kent and Cowboy stand by a column with a petrified tree stump. Over time the ground eroded away around the stump leaving the pinnacle with a stump on top. Notice several other petrified stumps clinging to the side hill.

EYE OF THE NEEDLE RIDE

One of our favorite rides in TRNP is one we refer to as the “Eye of the Needle” because of an unusual rock formation that one can ride under. On this ride, Charlene was riding her 6-year-old Spotted Saddle Horse, Jake, and Kent was mounted on his trusty Missouri Fox Trotter, Cowboy.

We began this approximately 12-mile loop at the Jones Creek Trailhead, which is about 1 mile north of Peaceful Valley horse concession in the south unit. We rode back to Peaceful Valley on a connecting trail, then turned east and followed the Lower Paddock Creek Trail.

Shortly after starting the Lower Paddock Trail, we began hearing guttural grunts and groans. As we rounded a bend, we saw before us clumps of very large bison, butting heads and seemingly threatening one another in growling utterances. Bison mating season, also known as rutting, begins around July and continues into September. Quickly, we angled our horses through wide spaces in the herd keeping as far as possible from each bison. This part of the ride was definitely an “adventure!”

Several miles later, on our left, we came

to a rock formation that we refer to as the Eye of the Needle. This unusual formation isn’t readily seen from the trail, but is more easily seen after you pass by it. Keep looking to your left. The “eye” is about a quarter mile from the main trail and is a small rock arch large enough to ride a horse through. It’s well worth the time to photograph members of your party riding through the “eye.”

About 4.4 miles from Peaceful Valley, the Lower Paddock Creek Trail connects with a park road. Turn left and follow the road for roughly half a mile. When the road turns right, look to the valley on your left. Work your way up this valley and find a trail with trail markers. Within a mile or so, that trail will connect with the Lower Talkington Creek Trail. Turn left, and in 3.5 miles you’ll arrive back where you started.

On the ride back, keep an eye open for petrified tree stumps and piles of petrified rock that look like freshly chopped wood.

PAINTED CANYON RIDE

Portions of this ride were cross-country, but that’s part of the thrill of riding here. You may ride trails only, cross-country

for part of the ride, or figure out an entire ride on your own.

For this ride we trailered to the Painted Canyon portion of the park located a few miles east of Medora on I-94. Painted Canyon has a visitor center and beautiful views of a small, but colorful, version of the Grand Canyon. Because we were here in mid-September, cottonwoods were turning a brilliant gold and slashes of scarlet foliage added to the profusion of color.

We rode our horses across the parking lot and a short distance east to where the trail drops over the edge and descends into the canyon. The trail gently winds past pockets of timber and eroded buttes, finally reaching the canyon floor.

In the canyon, we could see remains of past eras. Twisted, mangled fingers of rock protruded from the earth. Each fingertip held what looked like a saucer but turned out to be a petrified tree stump.

We halted our horses and studied these strange apparitions. The petrified tree stumps had protected the softer rock beneath them. Erosion had removed all other soil, leaving a mysterious land of hoodoos.

When we got to the junction of the Upper Paddock Creek Trail, we turned left and went cross-country in a northeasterly direction for approximately five miles before intersecting the Upper Talkington Trail. Don’t do this unless you’re comfortable going cross-country and have a GPS, a map, or a good sense of direction. It can be confusing. Kent purchased the National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map for the park at the visitor center. This helpful map lists selected waypoints of various trails and trail junctions.

The TRNP is one of the few areas in the West today where free-roaming wild horses may be readily observed. Horses were established in North America by 16th century Spanish explorers, and escaped horses became known as “mustangs” from the Spanish word “mesteno,” which means “wild.” They’re also referred to as feral horses, since

they originally came from domesticated stock. During the time period of 1600-1850, mustangs ranged throughout the Plains in vast herds numbering in the thousands. Today, there are roughly 70 to 140 mustangs in the park.

Should you be fortunate enough to encounter wild horses while riding in the park, take time to study their behavior. Generally, they're in bands of five to 15 animals, consisting of a dominant stallion, his mares, and their offspring. Frequently a subdominant stallion will "run second" to the leader. Stallions guard their mares by extending their heads and necks low to the ground in a threatening gesture known as "snaking." When a band is in flight, a dominant mare will take the lead, and the stallion will guard the rear of the herd. Watching a band of horses run wild and free is exhilarating!

MAAH DAAH HEY TRAIL

This is a 96-mile multi-use trail which stretches throughout the Badlands. It's open to bicycles, hikers, and horseback riders. Administered by the U.S. Forest Service, it became a reality in 1998 after nearly three decades of vision and planning. This trail traverses the rustic, rugged Badlands and is considered a premier backpacking trail, an epic mountain biking trail, and unforgettable horseback adventure.

The name "Maah Daah Hey" comes from the Native American language of the Mandan Hidatsa Indians. It means "grandfather, long-lasting" and is used to describe an area that has been or will be

around for a long time and is deserving of respect.

Mileage for this 96-mile-long trail is marked on trail posts that are branded with a turtle shell, the Lakota Sioux Indian symbol for patience, determination, and steadfastness; characteristics that bicyclists, hikers, and horseback riders will need in order to complete the entire trail. Mile 0 is located at the southern end of the trail, 1.5 miles south of the quaint town of Medora at Sully Creek State Park. Milepost 96 is at the U.S. Forest Service CCC Camp near the north unit of the TRNP.

LONE TREE LOOP TRAIL

This 10-mile loop ride was our last ride here. We began this ride behind Peaceful Valley Ranch and almost immediately crossed the Little Missouri River, which was murky, but shallow.

On this ride we saw many prairie dog towns, and we enjoyed listening to them bark warnings to their family and friends as we rode by. Also, we encountered bison, lots of bison. This time, we ended up doing a 45-minute detour around them because the bison were too close together to pass through. Even though bison may seem lethargic and tame, don't underestimate them, particularly if they have calves. Horses have been gored by them.

There are some creek crossings on this loop. For safety's sake, try to cross where others have obviously crossed. There's quicksand in this park, but you won't have a problem with it as long as

you cross where others have been. This loop may also be extended by taking the Petrified Forest Loop Trail and returning via the Maah Daah Hey Trail.

CAMPING OUT

If you're coming here with friends or family, you may want to reserve Roundup Horse Camp. Reserve this through Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Roundup Horse Camp is an extremely nice camp in a beautiful setting. It has four spacious corrals, a loop drive, several picnic tables, and a large, covered kitchen area. Charlene commented on how heavy-duty the metal was in the horse corrals, and Kent countered with, "It's not to keep the horses in. It's to keep the bison out!"

From Roundup Horse Camp, you may ride northwest to the Little Missouri River, or south and west across the Little Missouri River to the Maah Daah Hey Trail and the Petrified Forest Loop Trail. You may also ride east, back, and across Road 702 to the Roundup Camp Trail that eventually intersects the Jones Creek Trail. Enjoy plentiful riding and sunsets from this well-positioned camp.

END OF THE TRAIL

No doubt about it! This is a great place to have a riding adventure! You can ride here for years yet discover something new every time you come. In addition to riding, we would suggest a visit or two to Medora where there's much to be learned about this area and a great deal to be enjoyed. ★



PRAIRIE DOGS

There are five species of prairie dogs in North America but only the black-tailed prairie dog lives in TRNP. The 1- to 3-pound rodents are referred to as "dogs" because of the bark-like sound they use in communicating with one another.

These small, short-tailed animals have eyes and ears set back on their heads so they can spot potential predators quickly. They live in closely spaced burrows with an elaborate labyrinth of underground tunnels. Several hundred inhabitants may live together in the same area, and as you ride by, you'll see the little critters standing at the entrance to their burrow, ready to bark an alert should it be needed.

As horseback riders, we find their holes in the ground to be annoying and potentially dangerous. However, the prairie dogs provide two valuable services to the wildlife community. First of all, prairie dog towns modify the surrounding forage so that it attracts bison and pronghorns. These little creatures vary their diet of grasses and flowering plants in such a way that the surrounding forage becomes more nutritional for the large herbivores. Secondly, the prairie dogs only live 5 to 7 years. During their short life span many of them, unwittingly, provide food for badgers, coyotes, fox, bobcats, and different birds of prey.

DON'T LET THIS RIDE STOP THE NEXT

Keep your horse comfortable and ready to ride with Magic Cushion®.

You can't always control the footing, but you can help undo its impact. Proven to reduce heat and calm inflammation, Magic Cushion® hoof packing provides fast-acting, long-lasting relief to hooves and legs. So your horse recovers from this ride in time for the next.

Save on Magic Cushion® at Absorbine.com.

©2019 W.F. Young, Inc.



BREATHTAKING BANFF

RIDE the jewel of the Canadian Rockies with our insider guide to three top outfitters ready to take you into the vast Banff National Park.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFF TRAIL RIDERS

Snowcapped mountains. Expansive green valleys. A sparkling, glacier-fed lake. This is Banff, Alberta. Banff National Park—part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, a UNESCO World Heritage Site—is a jewel in Canada's crown.

Avid trail riders wishing to experience the park's breathtaking beauty have a variety of options from which to choose. To help you plan your trip, we've gotten the inside scoop from three top area outfitters: Banff Trail Riders, Banff Adventures Unlimited, and Brewster Adventures.

BANFF TRAIL RIDERS

About the outfitter: Banff Trail Riders melds history, exploring, and modern-day amenities, carrying on the long tradition of horseback riding in Banff National Park. Banff Trail Riders' guides will skillfully take you into a wilderness that has fascinated travelers since the 1800s, following trails blazed in the 1920s and stopping at historic log cabins along the way.

Horse details: Trail mounts are hand-picked to suit each rider, says Amanda Markey, office manager for Banff Trail Riders. She also notes that each horse has years of experience negotiating the area's mountainous terrain and emphasizes the abundance of care each horse receives.

"What is truly special about our herd is the care and attention that we have for each one of our boys," Markey relates. "Our herd is all geldings, and

each one has his own name, personality, tack, and breeding. Each member of our team has their favorites, and we always look forward to Christmas when previous riders send their equine friends presents from Santa. Truly, our horses are family."

Most popular attraction: Trail rides with Banff Trail Riders range in duration from one hour to six days, with a wide array of departure times, so you're sure to find a ride that suits you. "The shorter rides are perfect for those without a lot of time or who are keen to experience the amazing equine world for the first time," Markey says. "The longer rides fully immerse riders into the remote wilderness with cozy accommodations."

Can't-miss sight: Each ride has its own special feature. For example, the one-hour Spray River Ride includes a river crossing, the Wilderness Tent Trips stop at Rainbow Lake, and the Backcountry Lodge Trips take you over the spectacular Allenby Pass. You'll enjoy a view of Bow River from a Carriage Ride and savor a juicy steak on the Covered Wagon Cookout.

Extra perks: Don't worry about roughing on the overnight trips, which take you on historic pack trails through the Sundance Range. On a Backcountry Lodge Trip, you'll relax in rustic luxury, with a hot shower, cozy bed, and tantalizing meals. On a Wilderness Tent Trip, you'll be pampered with well-equipped campsites, heated tents, an on-site cook, and other amenities. "Our tented camps feature outdoor hot showers, authen-

tic canvas tents, and rustic views that allow people to truly connect with their landscape," Markey says.

Despite comfortable accommodations, you'll still get a genuine feel for the Western life, she adds. "People are most surprised about the true, authentic Western experience," Markey says. "We aren't dressed up—this is what we do, and we love it, and it shows."

Planning tip: Whether you want to spend a few hours out on the trail or prefer a leisurely carriage ride, book your rides seven days in advance to guarantee your spot.

For more info: Visit horseback.com for information on rides, attractions, lodging, and vacation packages.

BANFF ADVENTURES UNLIMITED

About the outfitter: Locally owned and operated, Banff Adventures Unlimited has introduced guests to the Canadian Rockies for more than 20 years. The outfitter offers peaceful, relaxing rides for riders of all tastes and riding experience. Knowledgeable guides will lead you through the West's most spectacular scenery. "You'll cross emerald-green

LEFT: Banff Trail Rider's Backcountry Lodge Trips feature a stay at the Sundance Lodge, a 10-room log cabin set against the looming Sundance Mountain Range. CENTER: The Wilderness Tent Trips offered by Banff Trail Riders are a comfortable excursion, thanks to heated tents, fully equipped campsites, and an on-site cook. RIGHT: Experienced trail riders will enjoy the sure-footed, seasoned horses in Banff Trail Riders' herd.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BANFF TRAIL RIDERS

rivers backed by soaring peaks,” says Haylie Petrie, Banff Adventures sales and marketing coordinator. “You’ll climb up Sulphur Mountain around the Windy Knoll viewpoint.”

Horse details: For trail rides, Banff Adventures is a booking agent with Banff Trail Riders. You’ll have access to more than 300 horses suited to a wide range of riders, including experienced horsemen.

Most popular attraction: The Horseing Around package is one of Banff Adventures’ most popular packages. You’ll tackle the mighty Kicking Horse River by raft, then take in the views of the Canadian Rockies from horseback. “Enjoy a leisurely trail ride along the base of the Sulphur Mountains,” Petrie says. “Relax with a game of horseshoes, and try your hand at roping before heading back.”

The rafting trip departs at 1:30 p.m. from the Hydra river base in nearby Golden, British Columbia. The horseback rides depart on the hour from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. from the stables in Banff. You can do both adventures on the same day or on separate days.

Can’t-miss sight: If your time is limited, book the one-hour Bow River Ride or Spray River Ride. “The Bow River Ride is a one-hour horseback ride along the Bow River and past the natural sulphur hot springs flowing from the Cave & Basin—the original historic hot springs,” Petrie says. “On our one-hour Spray River Ride, our guides will lead you past roaring Bow Falls where you will cross the tranquil Spray River, followed by a partial climb up Sulphur Mountain.”

Extra perks: Other activity packages include a sightseeing gondola or a famous Norquay chairlift ride, a visit to Banff Upper Hot Springs, a big canoe tour, and an excursion to the area’s glaciers.

Planning tip: Horseback rides with Banff Adventures are offered from mid-April through mid-October.

For more info: Visit banffadventures.com to

With access to more than 300 horses, you’ll have no problem finding a horse to suit your needs.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BANFF TRAIL RIDERS

peruse the packages and options available; contact customer service to request more information and book online. You can also visit Banff Adventures Activity Booking Centre, located in downtown Banff, to chat face-to-face with a local reservation agent.

BREWSTER ADVENTURES

About the outfitter: The Brewster family, founders of Brewster Adventures, has been introducing visitors to the Canadian Rockies for more than 100 years; it's the oldest outfitter in Alberta. In the late 1880s, John Brewster established his homestead at the base of Yamnuska Mountain, which is today Kananaskis Guest Ranch. Two of Brewster's sons, William and James, became expert mountain men. When they were just 10 and 12 years old, they took their first guests on a pack trip at the request of the Banff Springs Hotel. In the 1920s, the family built the Main Lodge in Kananaskis; in 1996, the 77-room Mountain Lodge in downtown Banff was built.

Today, Janet Brewster Stanton and her husband, Kevin Stanton, have taken over the company reins. Through Brewster Mountain Pack Trains, offerings include summer trail rides, winter sleigh rides, and overnight horseback adventures out of the century-old Brewster Lake Louise Stables in Banff National Park.

Horse details: Brewster Mountain Pack Trains has a herd of seasoned horses that Kevin has worked with for years. The herd is made up of mostly Quarter Horses, plus a few draft crosses, all of which skew on the mature side, ideal for accommodating guests of all riding abilities.

"One of the first things our repeat visitors say is that the horses are amazing, and they're just sound, good old horses," says Kevin. "They're not flighty, and they're usually pretty friendly."

Most popular attractions: "In the winter, the sleigh rides that follow the lake-side trail beneath Victoria Glacier at Lake Louise are becoming a big draw," says Kevin. "You'll ride in traditionally styled sleighs with upholstered seats and blankets—a cozy, picture-perfect experience."

In the summer, half-day rides out of Lake Louise Stables to Lake Agnes Teahouse are most popular. You'll climb to an elevation of 7,000 feet through the tree line of Lake Louise, up through subalpine forests of spruce and fir that open up to a view of Lake Louise and Fairview Mountain.

When you reach the teahouse, you'll view the base of Big Beehive Mountain and Mirror Lake. Past the teahouse, you'll take in Mount St. Piran, Mount Aberdeen, and the glacial Mount Temple—the third-highest peak in Banff National Park with an elevation of 11,500 feet.

"There are amazing vistas on the way up to both teahouses," Kevin says. "Each ride has a bit of a destination, and I think that really makes a difference."

If you'd like to take a longer trip, Brewster Mountain Pack Trains offers two- and four-day riding tours through the Ghost River area beside Banff National Park. Visitors stay in rustic log cabins, which shelter from inclement weather and offer a comfortable night's sleep.

Can't-miss sight: The Plain of Six Glaciers ride is another favorite of visitors. This four-hour ride travels to the base of Victoria Glacier, which offers views of glacial fields and Mount Victoria. You'll ride beneath rock faces, through subalpine forests, and across avalanche passes along the slopes of Mount Whyte. You'll then ride to a viewpoint where you'll see the long glacier at the base of the Lower Victoria Glacier. Six more glaciers will come into view: Lower Victoria, Upper Victoria, Aberdeen, Lefroy, Upper Lefroy, and Popes. The last leg of this trip takes you to the Plain of Six Glaciers teahouse, built in 1924. Sitting at an altitude of 7,000 feet, this teahouse was built by Swiss guides employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway for the enjoyment of their guests at the Chateau Lake Louise, also built by the CPR. You'll enjoy grand views of Lake Louise and the lower valley floor as you complete your ride. →



LEFT: With Banff Adventures' Horsing Around package, you'll tackle the mighty Kicking Horse River by raft, then take in the views of the Canadian Rockies from horseback. RIGHT: You won't go hungry on a Banff Adventures trip—a cowboy cookout is fun and filling.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BANFF ADVENTURES

If there's good weather, the blue skies, the snow, and the rocks just make for an amazing experience," Kevin says.

Extra perks: If you choose to stay at the world-famous Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise—a 130-year-old luxury chateau—you can book trail rides with Brewster Mountain Pack Trains right from your hotel, as the two businesses partner for this service.

Planning tip: Kevin suggests booking ahead for all your Banff adventures. The area is increasingly popular, and some attractions may book up in the peak seasons. And plan enough time to see and do everything you'd like, he adds. "Quite often, I think people don't stay long enough, try to put too much into a smaller timeline," Stanton notes. "I like to recommend staying a week."

For more info: Visit brewsteradventures.com for summer trail ride, winter sleigh ride, and horseback vacation details, plus contact information; call or e-mail the outfitter for reservations. ★

RIGHT: When you saddle up for an overnight Backcountry Lodge Trip with Banff Trail Riders, you'll wrap up your riding day with a campfire under the stars.

EXPLORING BANFF

If you'd like to further explore the Banff area, you'll want to plan your trip armed with information. Banff and Lake Louise's official tourism website, banfflakelouise.com, is an excellent resource for where to eat, where to go, where to stay, where to park a recreational vehicle, where to set up a campsite, and more. Non-horse adventures in and around Banff include a gondola ride through the mountains, hiking, biking, canoeing on Moraine Lake, visiting world-famous Banff Hot Springs, and a helicopter or boat tour.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFF TRAIL RIDERS

