

The Blue Ridge's Best Kept Secret

Escape to this secluded ranch, tucked into the Virginia mountains.

By Cassandra M. Vanhooser / Photography Scott Suchman



Guests relax with a picnic lunch.

"We're Marriott's best kept secret," says Lanier Cate, general manager of the Marriott Ranch in Hume, Virginia, about 60 miles west of Washington, D.C.

You'd expect to find hotels, resorts, and restaurants under the Marriott International corporate banner. But a small bed-and-breakfast within a 4,200-acre working cattle ranch?

Founder J. Willard Marriott, Sr., bought the secluded spread in 1951 and rode these hills until his death in 1985. It's now used primarily for corporate retreats, special events, and weddings. Leisure travelers come to relax at the homey Inn at Fairfield Farm, ride horses, and appreciate the joys of country living.

Guests can choose from 10 rooms at the inn, 4 of which are in the James Marshall Manor House. The redbrick house features high ceilings and windows with expansive views of the rolling hills. The Carriage House offers three rooms for those expecting a more Marriott-like experience, while the Baroness Cottage boasts a Western feel.

Lanier estimates that some 6,000 guests come through the gates each year just to ride horses. The ranch stables 45 horses and offers regularly scheduled trail rides. Special equestrian events range from twilight dinner rides to three-day Western adventures. Guests can also fulfill their City Slickers fantasies during a daylong longhorn cattle drive.



Guided trail rides through the Blue Ridge foothills rank as the most popular activity at Marriott Ranch in Hume, Virginia.



If horseback riding is not your thing, don't worry. The ranch staff will take you Jeep trekking instead.

At a Glance

- **Marriott Ranch:** Located 60 miles west of D.C. at 5305 Marriott Lane, Hume, VA 22639; (540) 364-2627, toll-free 1-877-324-7344, or www.marriotttranch.com.
- **The Inn at Fairfield Farm:** Guests can choose from rooms at James Marshall Manor House, Carriage House, or Baroness Cottage. **Rates:** \$125-\$195.
- **Riding the Blue Ridge:** The ranch schedules rides at 10 a.m., noon, and 2 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. **Rates:** \$32-\$36 per person.

"Hidden in the Blue Ridge" is from the July 2006 issue of *Southern Living*. Because prices, dates, and other specifics are subject to change, please check all information to make sure it's still current before making your travel plans.