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MORE ECO ADVENTURES
By Stephen Camelio

LODGE AT SUN RANCH



There's a new pick for the United States' best eco-lodge, and fittingly, it is a recycled version of the old choice. Formerly Papoose Creek, which was established in 1998, the Lodge at Sun Ranch in Cameron, Montana reopened in May with a new name, but with an even more environmentally friendly focus than the one that had made it's predecessor one of *Conde Nast Traveler's* top five eco-lodges in the world. "We decided that a pre-existing structure would be more eco-friendly than building an entirely new building," says the Lodge's general manager Lara Morris of the recent changes. "And we have been very resourceful in reusing many materials during the renovation." By using recycled resources to transform a private residence on this working 26,000-acre sustainable cattle ranch into accommodations, the Lodge can now handle 16 visitors at a time, double its old capacity. The new location also means less pollution because guests can access the Lodge's top-notch activities like hiking, horseback riding, birding and archaeological trails by foot, not car. Though you can also fly fish the property's casting ponds, anglers will probably want to grab a guide and drive to one of the blue-ribbon trout rivers in the area. And if it seems incongruous to have an eco-lodge situated on a working cattle farm, think again. Though the ranch works anywhere from 1,000 to 2,400 head of cattle at a time, the owners take care to protect local wildlife through managed grazing practices and the use of barbless, drop-down fencing. This close connection to the land is also apparent in the Lodge's world-class restaurant that serves local grass-fed meat produced from nearby farmers and all-natural cheese, produced in state. The concepts of "eating local" or "buying local" are big parts of the green movement and Morris believes vacationing local can have its benefits as well. "Many travelers think that they have to go to foreign countries such as Costa Rica or Thailand to experience a natural, unspoiled setting," Morris says, "but the Lodge is much closer to home and offers an eye-opening experience to beauty and grandeur of the American West." Three-night stay, from \$900 per person including all meals; sunranchlodge.com

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COUNTRY FEELING SURFBOARDS



Because surfers as a whole are known for their earth-friendly ethos, it's surprising that manufacturing a surfboard has always been a toxic process, heavy on chemicals and harmful fumes. Enter North Shore shapers Jeff Bushman and Kyle Bernhardt of Country Feeling Surfboards who are bringing green surfboards to Hawaii's crystal blue waters. "It's about a surfer's relationship with the ocean," says Bushman of the company's eco-business practices. "The ocean gives us so much enjoyment, and we're just trying to give a little back." To do so, Country Feeling replaces synthetic blanks with soy- and sugar-based foams for their boards' cores and a third of the fiberglass used in the deck inlays is replaced by durable hemp. Also, Bushman and Bernhardt let the sun catalyze the outer coatings of their creations, thereby allowing 70 percent less volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from escaping into the atmosphere than if they had employed the commonly used a noxious catalyst that sets the resin while emitting harmful gases. Through a trial and error process the Country Feeling team, which counts singer-activist Jack Johnson as a convert, has developed a line of eco-boards that features seven surf styles and two stand-up designs. Obviously the North Shore is a surfing Mecca with plenty of famous breaks, but for those looking to get a special feel for a Country Feeling product, the company offers stand-up paddleboard rentals/lessons (\$50 for a half-day) and tours (\$150 for the day) on the nearby waters. The tour gives locals and visitors alike a close-up view of the area's unspoiled beauty, including marine life like sea turtles, reef fish and dolphins. To make sure the Bay and surrounding landscape remains unspoiled, a portion of the tour fees are donated to the North Shore Community Land Trust. You can keep track of Country Feeling's green initiatives and their ongoing search for greener building techniques on their blog (<http://gardener.bigfolioblog.com>). "It's a learning process," Bushman says of making eco-boards. "We're taking baby steps, but they are steps in the right direction." countryfeelingsurfboards.com

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