

# ADVENTURE

## Hannagan Meadow A peaceful eastern getaway

By Ellie Moon

There is no ringing, buzzing, fussing or stressing allowed at Hannagan Meadow.

The resort, set at an altitude of 9,100 feet in the White Mountains of far eastern Arizona, is a tribute to low-tech simplicity.

The entertainment includes snowshoeing, hiking, horseback riding and wildlife watching—not to mention naps, fireside snuggling, stargazing and board games.

The lodge is homey and comfortable. You won't find a TV at Hannagan Meadow. There's rumored to be a computer, phone and fax in the office, but they're well hidden from guests. Anyone foolhardy enough to ask about in-room Internet connections will be met with a pitying smile.

The property sits in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, in the wilderness of Blue Range Primitive Area. It lies along the Coronado Trail, Route 191. The road is named after the Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez del Coronado, who in 1540 searched for the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola because some historians believe Coronado's expedition came through the Hannagan area.

Hannagan Meadow is named after Robert Hannagan, a Nevada miner who came to the area in the late 1890s and raised cattle. The Meadow across the highway from the Lodge was given his name after a coin toss with another area rancher, Toles Cosper. Had the coin landed the other way, the place might be called

Cosper Meadow Lodge.

The lodge is a friendly place, and visitors are instantly included in the Meadow family. It's kind of like that family's house on the block where you're always welcome to

Photos by Ryan Mastlock



stay for dinner and the night, too.

Nick Ramon, who calls himself the Outdoor Guy, chats at diners' tables inside the lodge's restaurant. He's friendly, interesting and offhandedly proud of the three mountain lion claws he wears on a necklace. He strolls through the grounds with a foot-long knife swinging from his belt.

As the outdoor guide, general fix-it man and waiter, Ramon's deadpan delivery may take some guests by surprise.

Dinner at the lodge was exquisite, and included a choice of desserts, including an intriguing item called Fruit of the Forest pie. "What's this?" diners ask.

"Oh, you know," he says. "Chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons."

It was really a delicious mix of berries

and rhubarb.

There are two ways to enjoy a night's stay at the lodge; in one of eight large bed-and-breakfast-style rooms inside the lodge, or in one of eight family-sized cabins.

There are fireplaces in the dining room and a smaller sitting room off the lodge's main entry. Both are carved with the Hannagan Lodge logo and scenes of mountains and wildlife.

One of the lodge's mysteries is the tale that John Wayne autographed the wall behind the fireplace mantle in the sitting room—but no one knows for sure, because it can't be checked without tearing out the new mantle.

Tonya Banks spent the weekend at the lodge celebrating her first wedding anniversary with husband Shawn. The couple is from

Queen Creek, southeast of Phoenix.

"Honey, it went too fast!" she says, yawning over her plate of bacon and eggs Sunday morning. "Hit the replay button."

She loves how easy it is to relax at the Meadow.

"It's so quiet here," Banks marvels, tasting the peace.

Trees at this high altitude rise to fairy-tale heights with branches that look too skinny to make much difference. Bare aspens cascade down steep mountainsides like a waterfall of white. Vegetation includes oak, ash, maple, aspen, pine, fir, spruce and juniper.

While the lodge is scenic, it's also a haven to wildlife—sometimes a little

more than city folks are used to.

Innkeeper Craig Service says he generally sees bears once a week in the summer, and mountain lions are frequent visitors.

The wolves from the nearby Mexican Grey Wolf Recovery Program cause the least problems, Service says. "They'll follow you around like a puppy."

Ramon has seen plenty of wild creatures.

"One night, there was 50 deer out there," he says, describing his backyard on the lodge property. "The next night, 30. They come right up here. Last year, there was a mountain lion in Cabin 3 just sunning himself on the front porch."

"A lot of people come up just for the animals—deer, elk, bighorn (sheep), mountain lions, bears. We've got it all." ■



If you go...

**From Flagstaff**, the trip is 225 miles. Take I-40 east through Winslow to Holbrook, then SR-77 south to Show Low. Take US-60 east through Springerville and Eagar, and US-191 south through Alpine. Hannagan Meadow is about 22 miles past Alpine on the west side of the highway, near mile marker 232.

For more information, call (928) 428-2225 or visit [www.hannaganmeadow.com](http://www.hannaganmeadow.com).

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