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THE RETREAT AND LINKS AT SILVIES VALLEY RANCH

Part luxury resort, part dude ranch, this frontier getaway in Eastern Oregon offers a touch of Western romance

WRITTEN BY Robert Kaufman

The Retreat and Links at Silvies Valley Ranch is located in a remote corner of Eastern Oregon. And one of its most revered employees, Bruce, is living his dream life. We instantly became friends when I arrived at the property's seven-hole McVeigh Gauntlet Golf Course, where he was quite content working for peanuts as my caddy. Let's face it, if you were a goat being fed a favorite snack, you'd be a happy laborer, too.

Bruce LeGoat heads a foursome of goat caddies, including Mike LeChevon, Peanut LeGoat, and Roundabout LaDoe, all equipped with specially-designed golf bags. As proud ambassadors for Silvies Valley Ranch, they represent the more than 2,500 American range goats that call the 140,000-acre working cattle ranch their home. But were it not for the vision of retired veterinarian Scott Campbell and his wife, Sandy, they'd all be looking for residence elsewhere.

With family genealogy dating back to 19th-century pioneer days in the Beaver State, the Campbells returned from Portland, Oregon, to their native roots. After amassing a fortune operating pet hospitals, they began investing their resources in developing and promoting the undiscovered region of Seneca, Oregon. The Campbell's ambitious efforts led to creating this destination eco-resort, equidistant between Bend, Oregon, and Boise, Idaho. The Retreat has firmly established itself as a unique getaway for guests in search of a frontier experience on an authentic Western cattle ranch.



From top: Designed as a reversible golf course, the setting sun highlights hole number two on the Craddock Course and number 16 on Hankins Course. Photo: Brian Oar | Guests from Silvies Valley Ranch enjoy the view from Egan's Hideout, one of the resort's dining options. Photo: David Zeitz | Luxury cabins overlook the pond at Silvies Valley Ranch, providing rest and reprieve. Photo: David Zeitz



Clockwise from top left: American range goats roam across Silvies Valley Ranch. Photo: David Zeitz | The interior view of a room in the Lakeside Cabins. Photo: David Zeitz | Caddie Master, Bruce LeGoat, donned his Seamus Golf caddy backpack. | Caddie Master, Bruce LeGoat | The two-bedroom cabins are plush with décor that includes a fireplace, skylights, copper bathroom sinks, rain showers, and wall-mounted TVs. Photo: David Zeitz

"We bought the land as a real estate investment since there wasn't anyone exposing the beauty of this part of the state, and I wanted to be an economic driver here," says Scott. In 2007, the couple purchased the expansive acreage in the high-desert meadow landscape where beaver were once the dominant inhabitant. "What we're attempting is to not only build out this resort with very high-end experiences, but to keep it very boutique and exclusive."

I realized my initial taste of the Campbell's objectives immediately upon driving past the entry gate onto a dirt road toward the main lodge where I traded in my car for a battery-powered ATV, a Polaris RZR, as my personal onsite transport. They handed me a two-way radio to communicate throughout the ranch. Less than 24 hours later, any sense of isolation I thought I'd feel from the outside world completely vanished. On my log cabin deck the first morning, I observed the coffee steam rise in

sync with the ascending moisture from the adjacent pond and watched antelope graze throughout an unobstructed playground. Time to unplug!

While there's no shortage of experiences to fill the day, I did manage to take advantage of a few: such as golf — including two reversible 18-hole courses — biking, target shooting, and even axe throwing. And whenever it was time to take refuge, my visit to Silvies Valley Ranch was enhanced by one of the luxurious 1,100-square-foot log cabins that can be divided into two units, one with a living room and hot tub on the patio. Plush with elaborate décor, including a fireplace, bedroom skylights, copper bathroom sinks, rain showers, and wall-mounted flat screens, these quarters would be the envy of any time-traveling pioneer.

"This area has always been used for logging and ranching, so we tried to match that in the architecture as much as possible," said

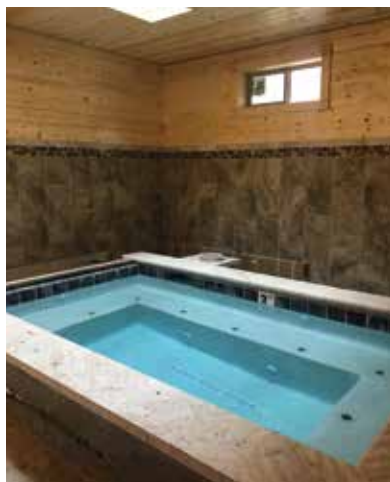




Clockwise from bottom left: Farm-to-table cuisine highlights the menus prepared by Chef Damon Jones. | The rolling green hills in Eastern Oregon offer the perfect setting for Silvie's Valley Ranch. Photo: Will Watt | The 17,000-square-foot Rocking Heart Spa features hot tubs, a half-sized Olympic lap pool, a climbing wall, and more.

Tom Holgate, a longtime friend of the Campbells and the Portland-based project architect. Holgate oversaw the renovation of eight pre-existing cabins and 24 ranch-house guest rooms. He designed the new 17,000-square-foot Rocking Heart Spa, and has a hand in the 50 to 70 vacation homes expected to be built over the next five years.

The frontier foundation will be around 'til the cows come home, but for now, the Campbell's build-it-and-they-will-come approach with Silvie's Valley Ranch is luring modern-day explorers to soak up the Western mystique on a five-star scale. ■



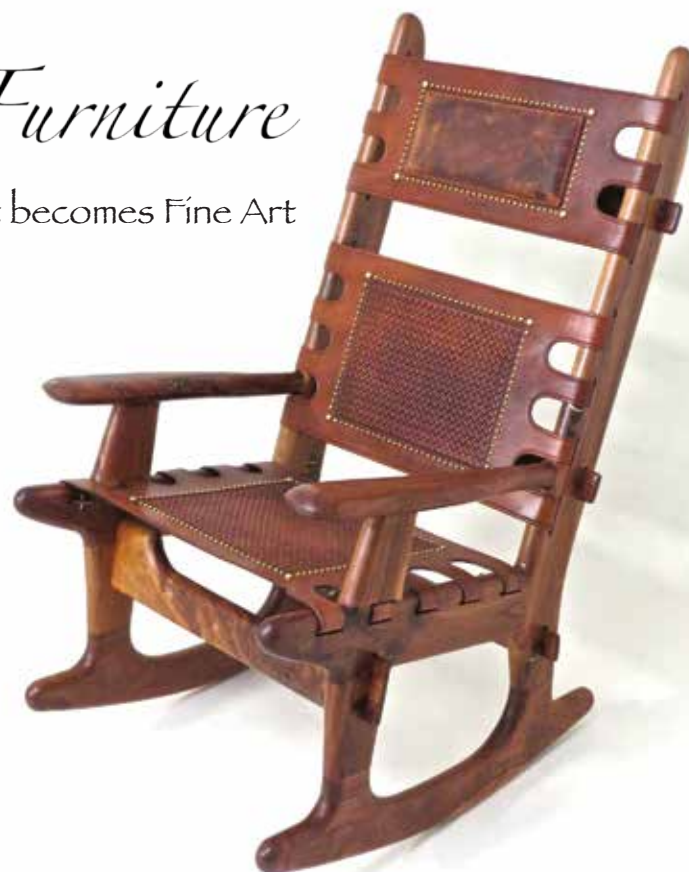
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