

OUR NATIONAL FORESTS

Department Conducted by W. J. DERRICK

Trail Riders of the National Forests

By R. F. HAMMATT

A NEW ORGANIZATION, this. Hardly a year old, but with a very successful season to its credit. And with prospects which presage a phenomenal growth for the summer of 1934.

Sponsored by the American Forestry Association, the objective of "Trail Riders of the National Forests" is to make available, to all who may desire them, interesting, worthwhile, inspirational saddle and pack-horse trips into little known "back country" in the National Forests. And, if 1933 be any criterion, these personally conducted trips may now be enjoyed by the American citizen of average means.

The Forest Service in Region One is intensely interested; so much so that it has offered a very definite plan of cooperation to help meet this objective and the policy adopted to attain it.

Why this interest?

Because in the National Forests in Montana, alone, there are some five to six million acres of "back country," so-called. Because this back country, with low or negligible commercial values (for timber or grazing, for example), but highly important as a source within which erosion and silting must be prevented, is not now adequately used despite the fact that it offers every advantage for certain types of recreation. Because one of the major objectives of the Forest Service is to secure use—adequate and planned—of all National Forest resources, recreation included. And finally because, since the National Forests belong to all the people of the United States, we believe the man, woman and family of moderate means should also "get a run for his money." And this the "Trail Riders" bids fair to make possible.

Trips similar to those planned by "Trail Riders of the National Forests" are not new. They have been conducted for years, and thousands of people have enjoyed them. But by and large those thousands have been people who could afford accommodations and services which, although justified, ran from 15 to 30 dollars per day per person. Those charges have included, most of them, a delightful stay of a week or a month at a wonderful summer resort or a dude ranch; a stay which has, as is universally testified, been more than worth while—for those who could afford it.

But the urge typified by Horace Greeley's clarion call to "Go West, young man," is not confined to people who can spend 15 dollars or more per day for a mountain vacation of

one or two months; or for a shorter period, either. What, then, to do about it?

The answer has been found, it would seem, by the American Forestry Association. For the "Trail Rider" parties offered, last year, saddle and pack-horse trips into the wilds of Montana for an all-inclusive price—from rail head to rail head—of less than ten dollars per day per person! Just think—automobile travel from town to the road's end (and back), saddle and pack stock, guides, packers, grub, and a night at a dude ranch—all these, plus days along forest trails in a country untouched by roads, uninhabited by man, teeming with trout, abounding in deer, elk and bear—for a price such as this!

To our centers of population, the West is far-distant and glamorous, still. Of this there is no doubt. For out there are the wide-open spaces; prairies and deserts with their silences and solitudes; mighty mountain masses and spark-

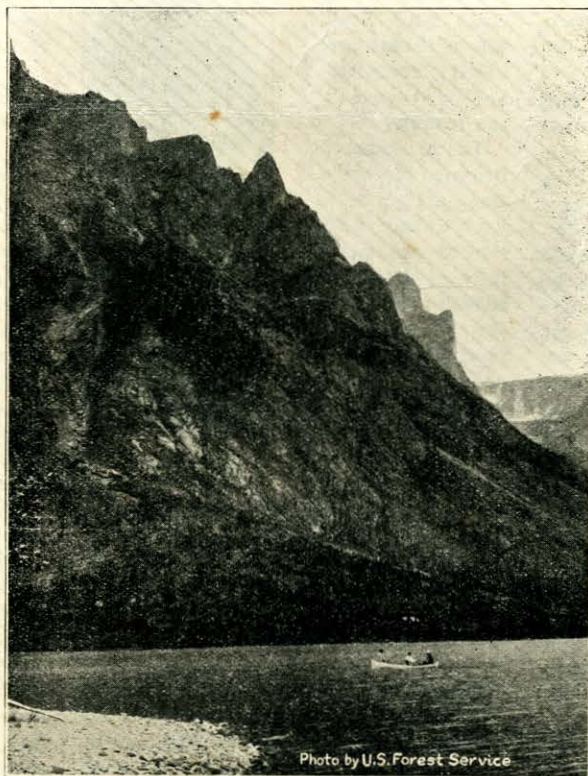
ling streams; far-flung forests of pine, cedar, fir and redwood within which big game abounds. In this West are lofty peaks and glaciers, lonely lakes and mountain meadows; roads that wander alluringly; trails that disappear into far distant back country where roads are unknown, where men of the West act as guides and their sure-footed horses furnish transportation; where camp fires gleam in wilderness areas far from the haunts of man. It is amid such surroundings that Trail Rider trips are now available to the man, the woman and the family of moderate means.

There are, of course, many ways to go West, these days: by airplane in a day from Atlantic to Pacific, a glorious, exhilarating dash; by train, motor bus or automobile; in one's own car, in that of friends, or hitch-hiking, as does the adventurous youth who, without other means, manages to see and enjoy country which to him is new and inspiring.

Among these methods may be found one to fit every purse. And with recent improvements in automobiles and roads, the lowering of railroad rates, dis-

appearance of Pullman surcharges, the distinct "life" from long days of mental and financial depression and the new increase in leisure time, the urge to travel and to reach the West may now be gratified by a far larger number of people than has ever before been possible.

This—and the fact that carefully planned and personally conducted trips of from eight to thirteen days in the saddle are possible at an over-all cost of less (Turn to Page 14)



One of the many interesting scenes along the trails of the Trail Riders.

Trail Riders of the National Forests

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than ten dollars per day—is what leads to the belief that “Trail Riders of the National Forests” may experience a wonderful growth, indeed, during 1934.

For anyone coming West, the method of coming, and the place or places to stay are, as I have said, matters of preference and of pocketbook. But of all the West, the National Forests are most popular. More than 7,850,000 people visited and used some portion of their 160-odd million acres in 1932!

On some of those forests, in some western state, will be found what is most desired: the modern resort, with servants, afternoon tea, golf, tennis, and other city conveniences in a new and charming mountain setting; a moderately priced hotel with excellent meals, swimming, boating, fishing and an invigorating, piney tang to the air; the neatest, cleanest, and most attractive of cabins, equipped for housekeeping or not, at \$2 to \$3 per day per couple; forested public campgrounds, free as the mountain air, on beautiful streams and lakes. And fully equipped, these campgrounds, with toilets, garbage pits, and individual camp stoves or fireplaces.

It is all a matter of preference and of pocketbook; you make your choice, pay or do not pay (if campground be that choice), and if first choice be not satisfactory, you explore new country for a second or a third, wandering at will through the National Forests, YOUR National Forests—in the West.

Let us suppose that what you want most next summer is a trip into the back country. Country which is as primitive now (except for a lookout perched atop his peak, a telephone line hung to trees, and trails leading, perhaps, to the lonely cabin of a forest ranger who must, perforce, watch for fires which may be set by careless campers) as it was in Horace Greeley's day. It's a saddle and pack trip that you're looking for, over mountain trails with camps beside flower-filled meadows; sleeping and living in the open; smelling the wood smoke of the evening fire; listening at night for bells on hobbled horses; devouring, with never

a worry or pain, bacon and eggs, hot cakes, syrup, and coffee in the cool, clear, morning air; topping your horse, then glimpsing the flash of deer or elk and the sheen of leaping mountain trout as you ride the silent, forest-fringed trails.

Suppose, as I say, this is what YOU want next summer.

If so, come to Montana—to the land of the dude ranch and the “Trail Riders of the National Forests.” Penetrate with friends and companions, with guides, packers and cooks, some of the primitive areas in the Northern Rockies. Explore the Crazies; ride for miles under the thousand-foot perpendicular China Wall; sit your saddle horse atop the Continental Divide and watch the packstring cross from the headwaters of the Missouri to those of the Columbia; follow that string to the South Fork of the Flathead and tarry for fishing you never will forget. Camp beside Big Salmon Lake, or—but why continue? Come—to a dude ranch if you will, with a “Trail Rider” party otherwise, but come—and enjoy to the utmost each perfect day.

Plans, with definite itineraries, routes, points of departure from railroads and from the end of roads, will be announced within the next few months. Recommendations have been made, and I can assure you that more trips and better trips than was the case in 1933 are included in those recommendations.

Those people who took the “Trail Rider” trips in 1933 may not believe that “better” ones are possible. For they certainly enjoyed themselves last year, as is indicated by the record of Miss Angela Janszen, a member of the pioneer “Trail Rider” party.

“For years,” she writes, “I have dreamed of ‘roughing it’ in the mountains of the Northwest, sleeping under the stars, eating beside a thundering stream—living as did the pioneers. The ‘Trail Riders of the National Forests’ took us into the wilderness of the South Fork Primitive Area in the Flathead National Forest and made my dream come true.

“Being ‘dudes’ from the East who had never experienced such a life, we knew not what to expect. When our train pulled into Missoula, Montana, on July 10, we were met by a representative of the U. S. Forest Service on whose broad shoulders was the giant task of looking after our comfort and safety. He escorted us to the hotel where all members of the party were made acquainted and given final instructions.

“After a good night's rest, we got up bright and early to start on our great adventure. By bus the party made the sixty-two mile trip to Monture Creek where we were met by Joe Murphy, guide and packer. Our cook, ‘Wild’ Bill Keegan with his right-hand man, Whitey, had lunch ready for us by the side of the clear, rushing mountain stream.

“It didn't take long to eat, make our

choice of a horse and get started on the way. The trail to Burned Cabin, our destination for the night, led through a burned-over forest area which was pitiful—just acres and acres of tall trunks blackened by fire and silvered by age and weather—a ghostly sight, indeed. It was too tragic a thought to dwell upon so we kept our eyes uplifted to the snow-clad peaks in the distance. They seemed so high and far away, but, we were told, on the morrow we would reach them.

"Evening found us at the Ranger Station, tired and hungry. Later, that magical cook, 'Wild Bill,' had real grub on the way and we hungry mortals were filled to overflowing.

"Before darkness overtook us there was much ado about finding the softest spot on which to lay our bed rolls. This accomplished, there were ghost stories and tales of the West, around the campfire, which sent us shivering to bed. For a time the tinkling of the bells on the pack horses kept us awake. Horses and mules were grazing all over the place and one wondered just how long it would be before a warm nose would be poked in one's face. This fear was, however, soon vanquished by slumber.

"'Gracious, what was that, an earthquake?' A terrific noise had broken the stillness; it was Whitey vigorously 'tapping' the under side of the dishpan with a spoon to remind us it was six bells and a new day had dawned. In half an hour there was a wild scramble in answer to the call 'Come and get it.' And did we get a feast: of fruit, cereal, ham and—, to say nothing of flap jacks fit for a king.

"By 8:15 we were in the saddle and ready to be off. Our trail took us through forests of stately pines and spruce, then above the timber line through snowfields to a barren knob on which stands the Foolhen Lookout Station. All around us were snow-capped ranges. With such a view on which to feast our eyes, we ate our lunch. After a rest and an explanation of the duties of a lookout, a snow battle was staged with no casualties. This ended, we began the descent to Danaher where we spent the night.

"We awoke to a clear, frosty morning and made our way beside Danaher Creek, through meadows filled with wild flowers of all kinds. The flame of the Indian Paintbrush was made more brilliant by its surroundings of purple lupine and yellow heather. Then there was the creamy Mariposa lily with the blue harebells and wild flax, with a host of other flowers to make a gorgeous carpet covering this valley at the foot of the mountains. As darkness settled over the valley we gathered around the campfire and with songs and stories the hours quickly melted into bedtime.

"The ride next day was a short one, bringing us into Murphy's Camp about noon. As this river abounds in mountain trout, the anglers were soon at their fav-

orite sport. But for the dreamers it was glorious to bask in the warm sun or sit in the shade of a giant ponderosa pine beside the stream, watching the march of white, billowy clouds along mountain tops. It was a chance to commune with Nature and push civilization into the recesses of consciousness. We were startled out of our reverie when the supper call rent the air. It was Nancy's birthday and there was a birthday cake and many cherry pies. 'Bill' didn't need a modern electric stove nor we a table with napkins!

"As the red and gold of the sunset painted the spires of the pines on the nearby peaks we gathered, as usual, around the fire, though not for long, since the following day was to be a difficult climb toward the divide. 'Goodnights' were said and we were soon wrapped in sleep under the stately pines that stood in such bold relief against the moonlit sky.

"Next morning, before old Sol had traveled far, we were in the saddle, eager for more adventure. We took noonday rest and lunch beside beautiful Big Salmon Lake where our faithful fishermen were rewarded with an unusually large catch; a feast in store for us that night when 'Wild Bill' would again be in his glory! Those of us who were less ambitious just lounged around and drank in the beauties of mirror-like lake, ragged shore line, pine and spruce-covered mountains.

"During the afternoon we were again thankful for the expert guidance of Joe Murphy, for we rode through a beautiful forest with underbrush so dense we could barely discern the trail. Camp was set that night beside rushing, roaring Tango Creek and space for bedrolls had to be cleared of brush and down logs.

"We were reluctant to leave, next morning. It meant the beginning of the end of our dream, for this was to be our last

day in the wilderness. What a day it was. Up we climbed, through fields of forget-me-nots, patches of snow and meadows with glacier lilies and buttercups. The stop for lunch was beside a waterfall and then up again to Gordon Pass, at an altitude of 10,000 feet, where we tarried, looking back with regret at the South Fork country. Regrets were short-lived, however, when the panorama on the opposite side of the mountain met our gaze. For here was a lovely valley dotted with crystal lakes, at the foot of the snow-capped Mission Range. The descent to Holland Lake was over a trail with seventy or more switchbacks, and a drop of nearly one mile in six!

"It was with sadness in our hearts that we dismounted at Holland Lake Lodge and said farewell to Joe, the boys, and our horses. We spent the night with 'Cap' Laird at his beautiful lodge on Lindbergh Lake. Next morning, after a breakfast with table linen and silver again, we boarded the bus for Missoula.

"What a changed group we were. Those days in the forest had bound a party of strangers together as brothers. We were all 'lovers of the wilderness,' with a common aim: that of preserving such areas as had cradled us for many happy days."

Is this what you want? Then start planning now and come, next summer, to four National Forests—in Montana.

