

# INUOVO



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# KORS



## WESTERN HOSPITALITY

Sorrel River Ranch Resort & Spa.

by Cameron Johnson

Location, legend has it, is everything.

That's certainly the case when it comes to resorts. Unless you opt never to leave the room—which, in some places, is definitely an option—the surrounding environs play as much a part of the experience as the in-room amenities.

The Sorrel River Ranch Resort & Spa excels at both. Located just north of Moab, Utah, it is a four-hour drive from Salt Lake City, although there is service from the airport in Colorado's Grand Junction (about an 80-minute drive) as well as Moab's small airport.

Perched on the banks of the Colorado River, opposite a towering red cliff and with massive mesas spotting the surrounding landscape, the 160-acre property is altogether dramatic. Adding to the scene are the impossibly lush green alfalfa fields (made possible by use of the ranch's water rights) that emanate out toward the main road and provide a buffet for the ranch's stable of horses. It's a veritable oasis in the rocky Utah desert.

*Rustic-luxe* may not be a common term for resorts, but it's a pretty apt description of the Sorrel River Ranch, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World. The guest lodges line the Colorado River and feature, as expected, an Old West aesthetic. The rooms have high, log-beamed ceilings, and are adorned with ranch-themed decor including horseshoes and antlers. Wooden porches with rocking chairs add to the charm, as does the option of sitting with your morning cup of coffee and watching the eddies and churning of the Colorado River.

The main lodge includes a casual dining room, a fine-dining restaurant, and an outside patio with a view of the river. The seasonal menus feature a variety of local ingredients, including some grown

in the resort's own garden. The hearts of palm salad is a must-try, and count yourself lucky if the chef has fresh fruit for dessert; the blackberry shortcake is divine.

Aside from the requisite relaxation, the property offers all manner of activities from photography workshops and lectures on the area's history with a local archaeologist and geologist to campfires under the night sky. There's even an artist-in-residence who gives lessons, helping guests create personal pieces of watercolour art to take home with them.

As thorough as the on-site activities are, the surrounding area also commands a visit. This part of Utah is known for mountain biking and off-road ATVing, but there are also many ways to see the area on your own two legs. Or on four legs; the Sorrel River Ranch offers a number of horseback riding and hiking trips led by guides well familiar with the geography and history of the land.

And this, indeed, is the meat and potatoes of a trip to the area: just getting out in the desert, walking around, taking in the sights. There is simply no feeling quite like being out in the sun, or perhaps in the shade of a mesa, hearing nothing but the wind and the occasional chirp of a bird. Trails to the Fisher Towers and Rubik's Cube rock formations are hiker favourites, but you could basically set out in any direction and come across incredible scenery. Guides talk of movie sets hidden amongst the hills and mesas of the area (the whole area was a favourite filming location for John Wayne-era Westerns), which would be an intriguing find, but look, the whole area resembles a movie set. Balancing rocks, towering arches, and red soil punctuate the equally vibrant green grass; some views are so incredible that they look slightly less than real, more like a matte painting than a real vista.

The nearby Arches National Park is definitely worth a visit, with its menagerie of odd rock formations; Delicate Arch is the most famous due to its prominence on the Utah license plate. And the cheerily named Dead Horse Point State Park has a view that rivals the Grand Canyon (which it doubled as during the final scene of the film *Thelma & Louise*).

No matter how much you enjoy the outdoor activities, there will be a time at the end of the day, the hot sun sinking toward the horizon, when you'll be ready to sit on the porch and watch the river flow by. That the breathtaking views of the landscape are matched by the service and accommodations at the Sorrel River Ranch says a great deal about the resort's commitment to quality. ☉



ABOVE: Castle Rock trail ride. RIGHT: View from a Sorrel River Ranch spa suite, looking out over the Colorado River.