

Pain worth gain with Red Rock Rides

RAISE YOUR HAND

if you would find it enticing (1) to spend six days riding a horse in a hard-surfaced Western saddle and then (2) spend your nights in a sleeping bag.

The horse and nature lover in me finds it very alluring.

However, I find myself wondering if the harsh reality of spending hours in the saddle, with cramping leg and butt muscles, would be worth it.

Well, seven hardy souls from Jefferson County — with lower regions accustomed to cushy chairs and beds — did just that.

What's more, they all claimed it was the best vacation of their life — and I'm not talking about young and foolhardy souls, either.

The idea started three years ago when **Judith Hoyle** read an article in *Western Horseman* about the adventurous Red Rock Rides in Utah to Zion, Bryce Canyon and Grand Canyon national parks.

The writer spoke of exploring stunning red rock canyons in Bryce Canyon with its beautiful "hoodoo" rock formations looking like sand sculptures; the Butch Cassidy Trail, with remnants of one of his hideouts; and Thunder Mountain Trail.

Judith was mesmerized. Within a year, she had her husband and five other members of the Buckhorn Range Chapter of Backcountry Horsemen just as enthused.

The group booked the trip — which had a two-year waiting list — for the fall of 2009.

Last September, Judith, husband **Bob**, **Juelie Dalzell**, **Jeff Chapman**, **Dave Peterson**, **Kris Lenke** and **Jeanne Koester** flew to Las Vegas, where they boarded a charter bus at 6:30 a.m. — an indication that the group wasn't going to be having a slow-paced and leisurely trip — and headed to Zion National Park, where they met their mules and horses.

Their mounts were saddled and waiting along with their wranglers and guides for the week.

Then they headed off for an introductory three-hour trail ride, which Bob described as having "great views of the Virgin River

PENINSULA HORSEPLAY

Karen Griffiths



valley in Zion," and then back on the bus to Tropic, Utah, their home base for the next four nights. Bob said the wranglers —

guys and one gal — were the "real deal."

The people who watched over the group — a total of 44 riders divided into two groups — had worked with horses and mules their whole life.

The Red River Ride is an outfit owned by two families — the Mangums (horse and mule outfitters) and the Houstons (who own the restaurant and catering service).

They both served the Hollywood movie companies that used to frequently film westerns in the area.

When they stopped making movies, the Mangums bought the trail-riding concessions for Zion, Bryce Canyon and Grand Canyon national parks, and the Houstons used their mobile kitchens to feed fire crews all over the West.

They pooled their resources to form Red Rock Ride.

"Right from the outset, they made everyone feel like family and took care of our every need," said Bob.

"The only thing you needed to do was make your lunch, be on the bus on time and stay on your mule.

"At the end of the trail ride each day, you handed the wrangler your reins — and they handed you a cold beverage of your choice," before they meandered over to a catered dinner — an end-of-the-day ritual those "greenhorns" with their sore backsides fully appreciated.

The first four nights were spent in sleeping bags in tiny wood cabins with bunk beds.

On the fifth morning they packed their luggage for others to transport to their next destination, Kanab, Utah.

While their luggage headed south on a highway, the group rode south 30 miles through Paria Canyon in Grand Staircase-



Calling themselves the "Magnificent 7," Jefferson County Backcountry Horseman, Buckhorn Range Chapter, members, from left, Jeff Chapman, Juelie Dalzell, Kris Lenke, Dave Peterson, Bob and Judith Hoyle and Jeanne Koester strike a pose on Day 3 of riding the Butch Cassidy Trail in Dixie National Forest in Utah.

Escalante National Monument.

At the end of the day, the group was treated to a night in a real bed in a hotel (where they'd also spend the sixth and final night).

On their last day they rode down the North Kaibab Trail into the Grand Canyon as far as Supai Tunnel, followed by a celebratory dinner at the Houstons' End of the Trail restaurant.

It was back to Vegas the next morning.

"The people couldn't have been nicer, the riding was superb, it was a dream vacation," said Bob. "I even got to drive a mule team down Paria Canyon.

"One couple in our group even decided to get married, and Judith loved her horse so much, a haflinger named Hoosier, that we brought him home, along with his brother, Nik, as the ultimate souvenirs."

Some of the group are

planning to go back in fall 2012.

For more information, visit the Web page, www.redrockride.com.

Events

■ **April 9, 7 p.m.** — Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, Buckhorn Range Chapter, meeting at Chimacum Grange Hall, 9572 Rhody Drive. Program: "Where To Ride — Local Area Trails," presented by chapter Director Jeff Chapman. Horse enthusiasts and those interested in keeping trails on public lands open for equestrian use are welcome to attend. Call Bob Hoyle at 360-531-2337 or e-mail bobhoyle@usa.net.

■ **April 10-13** — Greg Eliel Groundwork/Horsemanship Clinic at Freedom Farm. The four-day clinic is designed to give awareness, understanding and skills for you and your horse to become partners.

Contact Jennene Den-

ning at 360-643-3065 or cjdenning.1@gmail.com.

■ **April 16, 9 a.m.** — Baker Stables schooling show, 164 Four Winds Road, Port Angeles.

■ **April 7, 7 p.m.** — PSHA Trainers & Judges clinic at Waynora's Hair Care, Carlsborg. Phone 360-683-3902.

■ **April 23-25** — Backcountry Horsemen Leave No Trace training in the Port Townsend area. For more information, e-mail Sherry Baysinger at baysinger@centurytel.net.

■ **May 8, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.** — Tack & Rummage Sale & Equestrian Demonstrations, co-hosted by Buckhorn Range Chapter, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, and Chimacum Saddlery & Tack, at the tack store and arena at 1091 Chimacum Road.

For information, donations and table reservations, phone Judith Hoyle at 360-732-5042.

■ **May 8** — Freedom

Farm Horse Show & Play Day, 493 Spring Road, Port Angeles. Contact Mary Gallagher at 360-457-4897 or freedomfarms.net.

■ **May 1, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** — Tack sale and educational talks hosted by Backcountry Horseman and 4-H horse groups at Clallam County Fairgrounds. Sellers may reserve space in advance; phone 360-683-3306 or 360-582-7526.

■ Backcountry Horsemen Peninsula Chapter meetings, **7 p.m. on the fourth Monday of the month** at the Clallam County Courthouse — a new location — in Port Angeles; phone Betsy Wyatt, 360-457-3102.

Karen Griffiths' column, Peninsula Horseplay, appears every other Wednesday.

If you have a horse event, clinic or seminar you would like listed, please e-mail Griffiths at horseplay.kbg@olympus.net at least two weeks in advance. You can also write Griffiths at PDN, P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362.