

If the ever-narrowing gravel road isn't enough, you'll know you're in for a different kind of weekend as soon as you meet your host. Glen Mock — everyone calls him Mock — appears as if he just stepped out of a time capsule from the Old West.

Mock sports a bushy horseshoe moustache and dresses in Western clothes sewn by his wife, Connie. He's not just dressed up for guests. This has been his daily attire for as long as anyone who knows him can remember. He walks slightly bow-legged, a gait earned breaking colts and riding countless hours in the saddle.

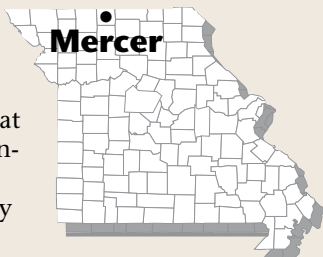
Within seconds of their arrival Connie appears to welcome visitors to the couple's spacious home, decorated with Western art and artifacts, animal mounts and functioning black powder rifles, each with its own tales of hunts on the Mock's guest ranch.

Located among the wooded hills of Mercer County, the Mockville Land & Cattle Co. guest ranch and hunting lodge is far removed from traditional tourist attractions. For guests to arrive at Connie and Mock's door, they must seek the place out — typically via the Internet — and they're usually not looking to share a destination with throngs of tourists.

"We get people who just want to get away," says Mock. "Get away from the city. Get away from traffic, horns and sirens. Ride horses, sit around the campfire, see the stars and just relax."

With seven cabins, a lodge building, horse stables, fishing ponds and 250 acres of woods and trails, Mockville offers visitors plenty of opportunity for relaxation and solitude, but it's the hospitable hosts that guests seem to recall most fondly.

"What really makes the place is Mock and Connie," says Annie Nelson, a newspaper reporter from Columbia, who first visited Mockville with a group of college friends and has returned twice. "There's just something about the remoteness of this place, and the quiet and the gentle welcoming that Mock and Connie offer their guests. It really does let you relax."



After directing their guests to their cabins, Connie and Mock often invite their new friends back to the house for a libation in Opal's Cantina. The reproduction saloon in the corner of the couple's home is just the first of many Old West experiences guest will enjoy at the ranch.

"If you want to step back in time and see what ranch life was all about come to Mockville," says Mock, a member of Grundy Electric Cooperative. "You can go as primitive or as modern as you want to go, but you're stepping back. Everything is going to be old timey."

Whiskey Ridge, Mock's original guest cabin, provides the most primitive lodging. The cabin has no electricity. Water is pumped from the well by hand. An outhouse and outdoor shower are provided, but guests may also use a modern bathhouse located adjacent to Mockville's horse barn.

For years, Whiskey Ridge was the only accommodation offered by Mock. A former carpet layer, law enforcement officer, restaurant owner, chuck wagon cook, silversmith and scrimshaw artist, Mock has treated weekend guests to an Old West experience at the primitive cabin since the mid 1990s. Seven years ago, he met Connie and began expanding the facility with the help of her brother,



For more than 18 years, Glen Mock has welcomed weary city and country folk alike to his piece of the old West in north-central Missouri. Today, the Mockville Land and Cattle Co. offers seven guest cabins, most with modern amenities.

FOR THE COWBOY IN ALL OF US

Guests step back to the Old West at Mockville Land & Cattle Co.

a building contractor from California.

In the past five years, Mockville Land and Cattle Co. has added six new cabins, each with its own theme rooted in the world of cowboys.

Lonesome Dove and Trapper Jack's are cozy



Connie Mock prepares Trapper Jack's for a guest.

couple's cabins with modern amenities, including air conditioning, private bathrooms and complete kitchens. Rosa Mae's is decorated like the West's finest bordellos, with a parlor and two bedrooms. Two larger cabins accommodate families or groups of friends. Lottie's Boarding House includes three bedrooms, a spacious living room, its own saloon (bring your own bottles) and a hot tub. Huckleberry's has five bedrooms — including one specifically intended for children — and a deck overlooking a fishing pond. Guests who only require a place to lay their heads may check into the Bunkhouse, which sleeps four in a simple cabin next to the horse barn.

Wherever they stay, guests quickly become immersed in the cowboy motif that permeates every cabin — from the Zane Grey novels and Western movies to the spare hats hanging from coat hooks.

"It's like we're 10-year-olds again, with a box of dress up clothes. Somebody puts on the chaps every time we're at Lottie's," says Nelson, who stays at Lottie's Boarding House with her friends when they visit Mockville. "For a bunch of city slickers, it's definitely fun."

The fun is affordable, too. Rates range from \$75 to \$135 per night for the first couple in a cabin. Additional guests are \$15 per person, while children under 8 stay free. Prices include ice, firewood and basic cooking staples.

From its inception, the ranch has catered to horseback riders. Guests may stable their horses in the barn, and the Lonesome Dove cabin features a small corral. Mock keeps seven horses on the ranch and regularly leads guests on trail rides on his property and neighboring land. The couple also tries to accommodate equestrians in search of a horse motel on weekdays.

For other guests, Mockville offers a chance to escape the pressures of jobs and city living.

"We go to Mockville to get away from the rat race," says Mike Steele, who has come to the ranch every summer for the past 18 years with his wife, Janet.

"I work in St. Joe and so does my wife. We go up there to relax and get away — forget about all of it for a couple of days," he says. "You can go and hunt. You can fish. You can ride horseback. Whatever you want to do. We've even helped him chore in the mornings and such."

In addition to overnight stays, Mockville also offers three- and five-day hunts during turkey and deer seasons. A new addition, the Broken Spoke Lodge, offers a charming meeting space for parties, family reunions, wedding receptions and other events.

Whatever attracts visitors to Mockville, they're sure to come away with just a

bit of the Old West stuck to their boots. With the cowboy theme displayed in all the cabins and an authentic cowhand as their host, you can't help but get in the spirit.

A guest from St. Charles, writing in the guest book at Lottie's Boarding House in 2004, may have said it best:

"You have the undeniable responsibility to help the lost souls of our world rediscover the cowboy in all of us. We seem to have lost that part of us that needs to be high on our steed, with no intention of pause or straying our course. We must remember our need to leave safety, comfort and predictability at home and surrender to adventure, and quiet and the simple life our predecessors knew well . . . Thank you for providing a reminder that, though we'll likely be city folks, we're all cowboys."

For more information, write the Mockville Land & Cattle Co., P.O. Box 473, Mercer, Mo 64661; call 660-382-5862; or log on to www.mockville.com.