



High and Wild Horsemanship Learning Adventure - by Glenn Stewart



High and Wild is the name of the trip that The Horse Ranch opens to its students at the end of summer each year. It's called that because it's a horsemanship adventure high in the mountains and in the backcountry 80 miles from the nearest road, getting there is part of the adventure. The horses we use are mostly born and raised back in the mountains. They run wild until we round them up in the spring and bring



them in to halter break and begin the process of turning them into safe saddle and pack horses.

I've been going to these mountains since I was 17 and my first trip lasted 100 days. I liked it so much I returned each year for 15 more years. I've since only missed going to the mountains once in 36 years. It is the one place I've been that still amazes me in many ways. The country and the horses there are continually teaching me things about horses and horsemanship. Surprisingly, I learn as much now as I did the first year. As you might imagine, much has changed in 36 years, but some things have stayed the same. The horses aren't as wild now because we are much better at what we do in handling and training them. We also know that leaving them out there running the valleys and mountain tops untouched until they are 3 or 4 makes for a lot of extra work.

One would think that when you ride a horse every day for 100 days, sometimes up to 16 hours straight, you would learn a lot. You would be right to think that but, looking back, it is amazing how much I could have learned but didn't. I did learn some traits that sure are valuable when you're going to work with horses. It wasn't horsemanship but it sure helps. That's why I've been taking my family and clients from around the world to the mountains to learn some horsemanship, have some adventure, holiday a bit and learn a small piece of what the mountains can teach us.



Here's a story of just one day in the mountains years ago. As I said I was 17 when I went there the first time. I knew nothing about what I was getting into. My great Uncle was the boss and he was a good one. Probably the best I've ever had. He could get more out of you than you knew you had to give. I hadn't been there very long when it was time to round up the horses. They were scattered all over the mountains in small groups living where the chose. The job was to go find a group and bring them in. Sounds ok I guess except I didn't know where to even start to look. Luckily the boss would point at a mountain maybe 10 miles away say to ride up to the mountain and look up the valley to the east. Well at least you had a direction but even a herd 15 horses can hide easily in that mass of country. You might ride by 100 yards away and not see them. If



you did see them they usually were running fast, never in the direction of camp. Once you spotted some you had to stay with them, or they would vanish. The horses knew all the trails, gorge crossing, how to miss the windfall and had a plan of where they were going. No, it wasn't towards camp, it was generally in the opposite direction and you had to get around them somehow and turn them towards camp. Once you managed to turn them, they would take the next opportunity to take off again up a valley or mountain top. If you pushed them too hard, they would leave the trail and if you didn't stay close enough, they would vanish.

Your saddle horse could not pack you all day and keep up with the riderless, saddleless horses you were chasing, so you had to lead your saddle horse as much as possible and run yourself. None of this I knew about when I left camp on my horse that morning hoping to find a herd to bring in. The one thing I did know was my Great Uncle said, "don't come back to camp unless you got horses in front of you. Sleep under a tree, but don't come back here without horses". He meant it and whenever I think of him saying that to me I can't help but smile. I never had to sleep under a tree, so somebody was looking after me on those first few horse round ups because it sure wasn't my skill and knowledge that got the horses in. There were many things I learned on a deal like that. My uncle was real matter of fact about it all. This is the job go do it. Not getting it done was not an option for any reason.



The Horse Ranch is honored to offer the annual High and Wild to our students. There were clients from 6 different countries this past summer that came with us to the mountains and it was wonderful, as always, to try to have them experience and share a small part of the things I got to feel and learn. The High & Wild trip is not as adventuresome as when I started all those years ago, but it still has moments and opportunities for people to discover things about themselves that would be hard to find in other environments. This year will be 15 years of taking people on an adventure of a lifetime. Some people return each year for another taste. What are your summer plans? Are you ready for your adventure? Maybe you want to get High and Wild. Happy trails.