



DOUBLE BAR X  
RANCH

## TRAIL & FIELD GUIDE



### HISTORY OF BAR X RANCH

Aspen was founded in the 1870s during a silver rush, and by 1891 it had become the nation's largest silver-producing mining district. During these prosperous times, two families, the Fosters and the Christians, homesteaded along Maroon Creek. That's when the feuding began. The problem? Trespassing chickens.

Luard Foster's chickens chomped on Martin Christian's oat field. This so infuriated Christian, he hit Foster with a rock. Foster answered with a warrant and the judge sent those chickens packing. Short trip. The chicks returned — Foster made his point with a pistol — Christian shot at Foster's chickens — Foster shot at Christian — Christian shot back, killing Foster.

A hung jury released Christian and eventually his son ended up managing the 279 acres known today as Double Bar X Ranch.

Noteworthy events: Stage Road was built for stagecoach service into Aspen from Glenwood Springs. (Though it won't take you to town anymore, it remains a quiet, pastoral entry to the Ranch.)

In the '30s, somebody realized Aspen Mountain could be a prime ski area. By '41, the mountain was hosting the U.S. Nationals.

In '49, Elizabeth and Walter Paepcke founded the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, and the town began developing its infamous cultural side, which remains world-class to this day.

Double Bar X Ranch lived out the next decades, peacefully, as a cattle ranch. That peace and quiet remain. Walk the land and all you hear are nature sounds. Walk a little more, you're in the center of Aspen. Quiet land or cultural hot bed, you have rich choices at the Ranch, where history was and will again be made.



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## POINTS OF INTEREST

**1 Double Bar X Camp — Tepee** — Tepee comes from the Sioux Indian "thípi", which means to dwell. Durable and portable, these domains were made to be set up and taken down quickly, so camps could follow game migration. The key differences between tepees and other tents? The opening at the top with smoke flaps, as well as the lining, were designed for both indoor cooking and to keep out the harsh winters.

**Fire Pit** — Find the Tepee, and you'll find the old-fashioned fire pit made from nearby river rock. A classic way to finish the day. Find some tinder, kindling, a few logs and melt a few s'mores, or grab a willow branch and see how many marshmallows you can kabob. And tell those camp stories you've been saving.

**Lichen-Covered Meditation Rock** — Near the Tepee is one of the largest, lichen-covered boulders on the Ranch. They have the distinction of being the preferred snack for reindeer, but this lichen has been undisturbed for a long, long time.

**2 Deer Tracks** — Along the gentle, open path of River Loop Trail, you'll find the tracks and scat of deer. It's as if they had a meeting and collectively chose the easy road, despite the fact that those long, powerful legs are perfect for rugged, woodland terrain. Good chance they were further enticed by the abundant shoots, soft twigs and lichen along the way.

3

**Beaver Stumps** — Take the River Loop Trail toward Paxton Pond, and you'll notice a cluster of beaver stumps. It's so odd that beaver would have traveled so far up from the creek to get to these trees. And, consider this. With only four 1-inch incisors, these characters can chew their way through a 10-inch diameter tree. In one night. Probably without stopping.

4

**Fishing on the Roaring Fork River** — The Roaring Fork River has been designated Gold Medal waters, meaning: 60 pounds of trout per acre foot and 12 trout per acre foot measuring 14 inches or longer. Native species you might catch (and release): cutthroat, speckled dace, mottled sculpin and bluehead, flannelmouth and mountain sucker. Non-native species: mountain whitefish, rainbow, brook and brown.

5

**Snack Time for Cows** — You'll see juniper on the property looking more like manicured evergreen trees than low-spreading shrubs. Double Bar X Ranch had a cattle ranching history, and cattle are quite the dependable pruners. Those cows chomped on the luscious juniper for so many years, the low branches have disappeared entirely.

6

**Juniper Creek** — Right behind Peak Pond, you'll find the mouth of a creek that flows steadily all summer long, fed by melting snow from nearby mountains. Spending time at Juniper Creek, listening to its burbles and babbles, can be as soothing as the berries themselves which have been the base of countless remedies.

7

**Wood Irrigation Box** — Dating back to the early 1900s, the box was a critical component of the Ranch's irrigation system for the last century. As water flowed through the ditches, the "box" controlled surges and directed its course.

8

**Stage Road Bridge Abutment** — The original access to Aspen was a road built for stagecoach service in the 1880s, appropriately named Stage Road. Although long-abandoned as a way into Aspen, this old road will still get you to Double Bar X Ranch. Look carefully across Maroon Creek, and you'll spot the remnants of the bridge abutment against the hillside for the stagecoach route into town.

9

**Benches** — Find a bench, rest awhile. Every bench gives you flora, fauna -- different nature sounds, big picture vistas, terrain details you could miss on a power hike. Find your favorite sitting place, track the changing seasons. Double Bar X Ranch is a dynamic environment and nature never repeats herself. Find a bench. Rest a while.

10

**The Homestead** — This building (otherwise known as the old white house with the green roof) was part of the original homestead in the 1880s. Few houses in Colorado have the distinction of being over 100 years old and, over the last century, the Homestead has sheltered many different families. Under the guidance of Aspen's Historical Preservation Commission, the Homestead will be restored and preserved. At Double Bar X Ranch, history stands its ground.

11

**Zoline Memorial Boulder** — This large lichen-covered rock, bordered by a grassy meadow, holds a special place in the hearts of the prior owners of the Ranch. It was here that the Zoline family would stop to give thanks for the land's natural beauty and the love of kin.

## ANIMALS & BIRDS

**BEAVERS** — Sociable animals, but cautious. They build dams as a protection against predators and for easy access to food during winter. Their building materials are mud and tree stems, their power tools are four incisors. Native Americans called the beaver the "sacred center" of the land, because their hard work created rich habitats for other mammals.



MULE DEER

**FROGS** — Double Bar X has Western Chorus, Northern Leopard and Boreal frogs. Each has a distinct call, and some are so loud, they can be heard, literally, a mile away.

**DEER AND ELK** — You'll see plenty of mule deer and elk around. Male deer are stags, harts, bucks or bulls; females are hinds, does or cows. During mating season, the buck's antlers get plenty of use from jousting to attract mates.

**COYOTES** — The coyote is part of the dog family and a close cousin to the wolf. Look for their signature bushy tails, held low to the ground. These creatures can move, clocking in at speeds up to 43 mph.

**FOXES** — You might see a red fox, or even a skulk of foxes hunting live prey using a pouncing technique practiced from an early age. They keep in touch through a language of sounds that spans five octaves.

**BLACK BEARS** — The black bear is the most common bear in America, with a population of over 800,000 roaming 40 states. Forget to clean up after a picnic, you could spot the occasional black bear looking for an eclectic meal.



RED FOX

**CHIPMUNKS** — Chipmunks are natural landscapers. All their harvesting and hoarding of seeds creates many saplings. Look for Hopi chipmunks (small, timid, and living in rock piles), and Least chipmunks who, you may have suspected, are even smaller.

**WYOMING GROUND SQUIRRELS (FLICKERTAILS)** — These squirrels scurry around the Ranch like they own the place. Enjoy their summer antics while you can, as they start hibernating in July.



BADGER CUB

**BADGERS** — Legend says the badger got his name from the "badge" describing the marks on his head. Fierce beyond their size, they'll fight bear to protect offspring. They catch food by digging. You could miss the badger, but you'll definitely see the large holes he left behind.

**DUCKS** — The Roaring Fork Watershed is home to: green and blue-winged teal, mallard, northern pintail, northern shoveler, gadwall, redhead, ring-necked duck, American wigeon, lesser scaup, common goldeneye, bufflehead, ruddy duck and common merganser. Who knew there were so many ducks?

**HAWKS** — Hawks in the valley come in sizes of small (sharp-shinned hawk), medium (Cooper's hawk), and large (red-tailed hawk). They're known for visual acuity, with 20/2 eyesight that makes them eight times better seers than we are.

**SWALLOWS** — Double Bar X Ranch hosts tree, violet-green, cliff and barn swallows. They build mud nests close to overhead shelter in protected locations. Listen. The swallow song is a simple, musical twittering.

**GEESE** — With all our ponds and streams, Canadian geese find the Ranch an attractive stopover during migration. Distinguished by a black head and neck with white "chinstrap", geese mate for life and share parenting chores.



HUMMINGBIRD

**HUMMINGBIRDS** — You're right. The name comes from the hum sounds those tiny wings give off at the astonishing rate of 80 flaps per second. They're the only birds who can fly backwards or vertically. You'll see at least four types flying around the Ranch: black-chinned, broad-tailed, rufous and calliope. If you want to see more, start tossing some red flowers into your garden mix.

RED-TAILED HAWK



## WILDFLOWERS



COLUMBINE

We'll start you off with a few names and details, but you could deepen your studies and have some fun with a pocket-size book on native flora. All the local bookstores carry them.

**LARKSPUR** — The larkspur flower has five petals that form a hollow flower with a spur at the end. It blooms from late spring to late summer.

**COLUMBINE** — This official Colorado state flower grows with abandon on our meadows. Distinctive flowers, generally bell-shaped, each petal is modified into an elongated nectar spur.

**CREeping PHLOX** — Creeping phlox love our Colorado weather. Its flowers come in rose, mauve, blue, white, and pink—appearing as a blanket of color in late spring and early summer.

**PENSTEMON** — Penstemon are as functional as they are beautiful. Those long roots will ease the pain of a toothache, of all things.



PENSTEMON

**SERVICEBERRY** — The preferred appetizer for birds, deer and rabbits, with flowers that pop out in early spring and a blackish-blue berry that's edible and sweet.



SERVICEBERRY

**RABBIT BRUSH** — A deciduous shrub similar to sagebrush, this native is identifiable by its standout white or yellow flowers, which arrive late in the summer.

# TRAILS

● **RIVER LOOP TRAIL** — The River Loop Trail winds around the property and the Ranch's 17-acre nature preserve. Look for the convergence of two great streams. The Roaring Fork River starts near Independence Pass, traveling 70 miles down valley to end at its confluence with the Colorado River. In these 70 miles, it falls more in elevation than the Mississippi River does in its entire length.

The headwaters of Maroon Creek begin at the Maroon Bells — the most photographed mountains in the country — and flow into the Roaring Fork on the northeast edge of the Ranch. Its waters are the source for snowmaking on Highlands, Buttermilk and Aspen Mountains.

● **JUNIPER TRAIL** — Stretch your muscles and test your physical prowess, there are challenges on this feisty trail. The juniper is the berry of many uses. The Greeks harvested it to increase the stamina of their Olympic athletes, and its oils are extracted for perfumes—but it's best known for providing the primary flavor in gin. Salute!

● **BEAVER TRAIL** — You may run into a few gnawed stumps, but you won't find the culprit. Beavers work in the dark, with water sounds stimulating them to keep on building. The largest discovered dam, by the way, was in Montana and was 2140 feet long, 14 feet high and 23 feet thick. These dams are so strong, sometimes only dynamite can take them apart.

● **ANNIE'S TRAIL** — In 1915, Frank and Annie Dwyer bought Double Bar X Ranch. A tireless mother of five, Annie Dwyer loved to walk or ride her horse along these parts. Along Annie's Trail, you can still see the old bridge abutment across Maroon Creek, which marks the former stagecoach route into Aspen.

**WILLOW POND** — Aspen's first residents were the Ute Indians, who turned these willows you see into practically everything. Baskets, bows, dome shelters, cradleboards, snowshoes, dyes, remedies. Even their sacred Bear Dance ritual happened in a willow-made circle.

**FOSTER POND** — Annie's Trail takes you all over the Ranch and eventually to Foster Pond. Say a quick thank you. If not for Foster's pesky chickens, you wouldn't be at Double Bar X Ranch today.

**PEAK POND** — Peak Pond is the largest on the Ranch and offers an astonishing view of four ski resorts and multiple peaks of the Elk Range. Notice Independence Pass, the second highest paved mountain pass in Colorado and once the mettle-testing route for miners between Aspen and Leadville.



**BRIDGE POND** — Across Maroon Creek are remnants of the bridge abutment for the old stagecoach access into Aspen. In 1880, it took six weeks to get from Twin Lakes to the Roaring Fork River. Same drive today? An hour and a half, and a lot less bumpy.

**PAXTON POND** — Paxton Pond is an ideal rest stop. The Paxtons were the second family to own the Ranch, purchasing it from the Christians in 1902. The pond is a reminder that the Ranch remains a special place to escape hectic schedules and to make lasting memories with family and friends.