

# Ranch vacation business proud of accomplishments

BY ROSE SANCHEZ  
SOUTHWEST ALBERTA

The second year as a finalist, Randy and Ginny Donahue, owners of Sierra West Cabins and Ranch Vacations near Lundbreck, were honoured to earn the Alberta Pride award at this fall's Alto awards ceremony.

Alto awards recognize people, groups and businesses in the Alberta tourism industry. There are 10 awards with this year's Alto Awards gala taking place earlier this fall in October in Banff at the same time as the Travel Alberta Industry Conference.

The Alberta Pride award, won by the Donahues, aims to capture the essence of the Alberta experience. This year, their competition for the award included Heritage Park Historical Village based in Calgary and Fort McMurray Tourism. Last year, when they were a finalist, they were up against the Calgary Tower and Jasper's

Alpine Village Resorts.

"It makes our hearts proud to know that no matter how small you are in the big scheme of things, it's your dedication, service and your determination that make you a winner," says Ginny Donahue. "Working hard for something we love isn't called work, it is called passion."

The Donahues welcome people from all over the world to their working ranch, but also see quite a few visitors from Alberta as well.

"Sierra West Cabins and Ranch Vacations has become well known for its portrayal of the western way of life by combining the working cattle ranch with the guest ranch," explains Ginny.

The ranch is located north of Lundbreck right along the Cowboy Trail (Highway 22x). It boasts views of the majestic Livingstone mountain range and features pioneer-style log cabins and a replica of an 1800s cattle

drive town called "Cowtown."

Guests to the ranch can immerse themselves in the ranching way of life, taking part in a cattle drive or a trail ride. They can also help sort cattle or learn to rope. Other visitors may choose just to enjoy a relaxing stay in one of the cabins, enjoying the serenity of the area.

The Donahues are proud their business has been showcased to people across Canada having been featured on television shows including *The Bachelor Canada* and *Born to Explore*. They have also hosted individuals involved with the Canadian All Girls Rodeo, Children's Wish Ride, Model T Tour, Ride to Conquer Cancer and many famous YouTube channel hosts, travel writers and film crews.

Ginny says the ranch has a policy of a minimum two-night stay, but most guests usually stay as long as four days. One guest who stayed the longest, was at the ranch for nine months.

Cabins are self-catering, so guests make their own food. They can choose to become as involved in ranch work and life as they want to be and the buildings can also be rented out for weddings or family reunions.

The ranch is only at most an hour and a half away from many tourist attractions such as the Bar U National Historic Site, the Crowsnest Pass, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and Waterton Lakes National Park.

"A lot of people want to get back to their roots," she explains. "Through the summer, most of our cattle is out on lease land, but there are always a few kept back if people do want to work cattle. We also host three



Photos contributed

**Randy and Ginny Donahue pose with their Alberta Pride Alto award.**

frontier cattle drives each year."

The Donahues have operated Sierra West Cabins and Ranch Vacations for about 15 years. Along with cattle, they also run about 35 head of horses.

"We are the ones trying to keep the western heritage alive," points out Ginny.

As more farming and ranching operations get larger, she adds, it's nice to have a smaller operation such as theirs, which offers people a chance to get back to their roots and remember life on a working cattle ranch.

Staying on the ranch is also a chance for city residents to introduce their children to a more rural way of life.

More information about the business is available online at: <http://sierrawestcabins.com/>.



Here, Randy and Ginny Donahue ride the range. This is one shot used on much of their promotional material for Sierra West Cabins and Ranch Vacations.

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