



Bobbi Wade and her husband Mike are the owners of [Blue Sky Sage Horseback Adventures](#). They both are ranch-raised Wyoming natives who have been on horseback most of their lives. Their careers have spanned nearly 40 years in the adventure tourism industry, exclusively in Wyoming, much of that time from the back of a horse on wilderness pack trips and in hunting camps. The past 16 seasons have been spent providing active horseback riding adventures in the Great Divide Basin and the western foothills of the Wind River mountains. Their clients come from all over the world to ride horses across the wide-open spaces, and to learn fundamental principles and practices of horsemanship in a real-world setting.



View of the Blue Sky Sage camp from above the corral

How do the experiences you offer at Blue Sky Sage give guests a unique perspective on the history, people or culture of Wyoming?

We were both born and raised in Wyoming, and have spent our entire adult working careers in outdoor adventure businesses related to horses and the backcountry. Both family backgrounds that revolved around horses, and owning our own horseback adventure business for 27 years have contributed to our unique knowledge and viewpoint of horsemanship and the wilderness areas of Wyoming, and our ability to share that with others. We didn't come here from someplace else, so our "lifetime immersion" runs deep.

How have the experiences that you offer evolved since their inception?

This is a bit humorous, but when we started the current adventure riding operation in 1999 as High Wild & Lonesome Cowboy Adventures, all of the marketing, imagery, copy, etc., was geared to a male audience, ala "Marlboro Man". When we put it out for public perusal, women saw right through all that, and wanted to do the type of active riding we were promoting. So, we finally figured that out, re-aligned our marketing to better target women riders, and became one of the first outfits to offer all-women horseback riding vacations, now doing business as Blue Sky Sage Horseback Adventures. Now, we still welcome men, but women are our core demographic.

What is one detail of an experience you provide that may go unnoticed by guests, but which you feel is important?

The efforts that we go to in selecting, training, and caring for all of our saddle horses are really "behind the scenes", and much of it is in advance of the actual field season. We seasonally lease all of our horses from a very reputable vendor that knows the type of horses we require, and once we make final decisions on specific horses that fit our program, we are able to get them back every season. Secondly, we make a great investment into the physiological care of these horses, which includes quality feed, and dental, acupuncture, chiropractic, and corrective hoof care. By making every effort to keep the horses' health in a optimum condition, we are trying to make sure they are pain-free and comfortable physically, which goes directly to their behavior and disposition. All of those characteristics relate to directly to the safety of both horse and rider, which is the number one priority for our company.

What do you wish every guest knew as they consider booking a riding vacation with Blue Sky Sage?

I think that we are a very unique couple in that we have spent our entire married life of 36+ years working together in the horseback adventure industry in Wyoming, from wilderness pack trips and hunting camps, to contract camp cooking and packing, to our current business. Many of our guests comment on how well we work together, and how we compliment each others' skills, abilities, and

personalities. Both of us are 3rd generation Wyoming-ites, so that history is pretty deep-rooted. When you book a ride with us, we are who you are spending time with, both riding and in camp, though we do have wonderful young people on staff to do a lot of the “heavy lifting”. We won’t send you out in the field with a “junior wrangler” who is just here for the summer – you will ride with one or both of us every day.

What is one travel trend that really excites you?

Hopefully, one that will grow is the belief that it is more valuable to DO THINGS instead of BUY STUFF. Spending your hard-earned money on yourself to experience a culture or a place has so much more potential to fulfill a longing than buying more useless stuff that takes up space and eventually will end up in a landfill.

What sets Blue Sky Sage apart from other, similar, companies?

Aside from our personal backgrounds, the fact that we only take six to eight maximum riders per week is unusual in our industry. The other feature is that we offer “open range” riding, meaning we encourage riders to get off the trail and not be in a “nose to tail” line. Horsemanship instruction is ongoing with every rider, every day, so the chance to become a more confident, secure rider is part of our program as well. If you just want to be a passenger on a horse, this isn’t the adventure for you.

What is one insiders tip to getting the most out of an experiential travel vacation?

It is proven out to us every year that what anyone gets out of a vacation like this is exactly what they bring with them as far as their attitude. If you come with a open heart and mind, then you might have some revelations that may change your life. If you bring your petty politics or bullying behavior, then expect some pushback and a different type of revelation. If you are going challenge every aspect of what the operator is providing you, then you might as well save your money and do it yourself; you already have everything figured out anyway.

What is one strategy that has helped your business to grow?

Prioritizing our marketing and advertising above all else was the most important thing we did, especially in the beginning. It’s been a long, steep learning curve, and the target is always moving, but we continue to build a integrated web presence that includes our website, online storefront, social media, email correspondence, prompt response to inquiries, a trade show, our return customer base and referrals from them, and a reputation for safety and service that is excellent. And, a consistent message of who we are and what we offer to you as a guest.

What is one personal habit that has helped you to be successful?

Taking our down time very seriously. We have to take care of our personal health and well-being so we can be ready to take care of our guests. Many people show up here exhausted, stressed, or just wired and we are here to help them decompress so they can be safe around the horses and enjoy their vacation. We have to be on top of our game to do that for the guests, our staff, and our horses.

Please share one instance where a guest had a moving or emotional reaction to the experience you provided to them.

There are many, however one that stays near the top is of a woman several years ago who booked into one of our Mustang Horse Adventure weeks just ten days before the trip started. She was a beautiful rider, very quiet, yet she was engaged with the group and had a wonderful time. About a month after she left, we received a letter from her stating that she wanted us to know how important the experiences we are offering can be to people such as herself; after her week in the wilderness with us riding good horses, sleeping in a tipi, seeing wild mustangs, and enjoying a camaraderie with other good people, she was able to clear her mind and heart, and make the decision to leave a mentally and verbally abusive relationship that was headed toward physical abuse for both herself and her young son. It really brought home to us that we have a responsibility to do the best we can to set things up to help people help themselves while they are with us.



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